Chapter Two:

Fire on the Mountain

**Summary:**

1. The three explorers – Ralph, Jack and Simon – return and Ralph blows the conch to call a meeting. He confirms they are on an uninhabited island.
2. Jack points out than an army is required for hunting, while Ralph is more concerned with immediate practical issues.
3. The younger boys (the ‘littluns’) express their concern about ‘beastie’ (p35) on the island.
4. At Ralph’s suggestion, the boys agree to start a fire to attract the attention of passing ships.
5. Jack offers to keep the fire going – ordering his hunters to work in rotation.
6. The fire on the mountain-top, started using Piggy’s glasses, burns out of control.
7. Piggy tells the boys they need to ‘act proper’ (p45) if they are to be rescued.
8. Piggy discovers the boy with the birthmark has disappeared.

**Why is this chapter important?**

A It establishes the idea that the beast might lurk on the island.

B Ralph and Jack’s different priorities are shown.

C Golding introduces the idea of lighting a fire as a main way of being rescued. This will be important throughout the story.

D The idea that the hunters watch over the fire will break down later in the novel.

E The first death occurs, through the boys’ **carelessness**. This death **foreshadows** later tragedies.

**Jack and Ralph: DIFFERENCES**

Jack stresses the logical need, as he sees it, for hunters – particularly as they have discovered pigs which could provide them with meat. **Jack’s cruel streak** is hinted at. When he exclaims to the group **‘We’ll have rules!’ he adds, ‘Then when anyone breaks ‘em – ‘ (p32), the suggestion being that rule breakers will be punished.**

On the other hand, Ralph continues to explore more pressing matters. He points out that until the grown-ups come to rescue them, which could take a while, the boys must fend for themselves. He argues that whoever holds the conch can speak, telling the boys that the speaker ‘won’t be interrupted’ (p31). This will ensure that discussions remain orderly.

Ralph is **positive**, mentioning the island is a ‘good island’ (p33). Jack, on the other hand, is **negative**, wanting punishments for anyone who breaks the rules. You can see his power driven mentality breaking through.

**The fire and Piggy:**

The fire has 2 purposes – it is a **practical** aid to the boys’ rescue and a **source** of fun. Under normal circumstances boys between 6 and 12 years old would not be entrusted with fire, even with adult supervision, and certainly not on this scale. **Notice how the atmosphere changes when the fire becomes not fun but fatal.**

Piggy supports Ralph in this chapter. Ralph has explained their predicament and suggests the idea of a fire, but even he does not follow the idea through. It is **Piggy** who explains the need for smoke not flame. There is **IRONY** in the face that although his sight is poor (‘Jus’ blurs, that’s all. Hardly see my hand’ – p40) **Piggy’s foresight (perception and understanding of the consequences of actions) is excellent.**

While the boys see the potential for enjoyment of the fire, Piggy sees its possible dangers. His manner and tone in this chapter are almost **parental**: ‘My! You’ve made a big heap, haven’t you?’ (p40). He also urges the need for practical considerations, like shelters, after the cold of the previous night.

Notice **Jack’s lack of patience** with Piggy. When he needed Piggy’s glasses to light the fire, **he ‘snatched’** (p40) them, a **VERB** suggesting rough treatment. Later, the hunters steal Piggy’s glasses to light their fire. ***QUESTION: What do these two events tell us about Jack?***

**How to write about the beast:**

*This section is really important because it establishes the fact that there might be something malevolent and fearsome on the island. The older boys try to dismiss the ‘beastie’ (p34) as a figment of the younger boys’ imaginations. One of the older boys points out that the little boy with the birthmark ‘must have had a nightmare’ (p35).*

***Once the idea of a ‘beastie’ is openly spoken about it casts a shadow of doubt in all the boys’ minds. It signals the end of innocence on the island. Later on in the novel, Piggy rightly mentions that the only evil on the island is the evil in the minds of the boys. This is Golding suggesting that evil is not eternal but internal (SEE CONTEXT REVISION PAGES).***

**Things to think about for an A grade:**

1. Ralph and Jack get on well in this chapter. They grin at each other and share ‘that strange invisible light of friendship’ (p39). Look out for any evidence in the coming chapters that shows the deterioration of their relationship.
2. Look at the language Golding uses to describe Jack’s treatment of Piggy. What does his choice of words tell you?
3. Is the island too small for both Jack and Ralph? Why and how have you decided on your answer?