Chapter Ten:

The Shell and the Glasses

**Summary:**

1. Piggy and Ralph talk about the events of the previous night.
2. Sam and Eric join them. Guilt-ridden, the four boys lie to each other about their involvement.
3. Jack and his hunters set up camp at the far end of the island.
4. Ralph, Piggy and the twins try, unsuccessfully, to re-light the fire. Ralph shows signs of confusion and they give up on the fire for the evening.
5. In their shelters that night, they hear noises outside.
6. Jack and two of his hunters attack and steal Piggy’s glasses.
7. Jack is delighted at his achievement – **‘He was chief now in truth’** (p186).

**Why is this chapter important?**

A We witness **discussions**  about Simon’s death, which Piggy insists was an **accident**.

B Now that Jack has become chief we understand that he has **unchecked powers**.

C When one of the boys, **Wilfred**, is **punished** for some undisclosed offence, this **demonstrates Jack’s authoritarian leadership**.

D Golding shows how **Jack is revered and set apart** as important in his camp, where he is chief. This **contrasts sharply** with the assemblies, where everyone was considered of **equal value**.

E We learn how the hunters, under Jack’s leadership, are willing to **use violence to obtain what they want** – in this case, Piggy’s glasses.

**The aftermath of Simon’s murder:**

The tone of this chapter is one of **hopelessness** and **gloom** among both the conch group and the savages of Castle Rock following Simon’s murder. Interestingly, both groups, in one way or another, **try to brush the incident aside by childish denials.**

Only Ralph recognises the death for what it is – a **murder**!

It is useful to reflect on what all the boys have experienced during their time on the island – **fear, deprivation, discomfort, lack of parental care, illness, intimidation and depression**. After all this comes the terrible crime of murder – a crime of which they are **all guilty** in a sense.

**SYMBOLISM: The shell and the glasses**

This chapter is called ‘The Shell and the Glasses’, both of which are **symbols**. The shell could **represent democracy, the voice of reason or decency**. It is of **no use in itself** beyond being a beautiful object – its use is in what it represents or symbolises to the boys.

The glasses are useful to Piggy but have a **function beyond** that for everyone else so they can start a **fire**. The ability to make fire is something that sets **human beings apart from animals**. The glasses, therefore, symbolise fire, but also **knowledge** – enlightenment – and **mastery** over primitive instincts.

**It is notable that Piggy perceives the conch as the more valuable item; holding it – literally – with respect and affection during the events of the next chapter.**

**The boys react in different ways:**

1. Ralph is the **only character** who admits that it was **murder**. He’s still **civilised enough to take responsibility for his actions**, but he accepts Piggy’s excuse that they were ‘only on the outside’.
2. Piggy claims it was just an accident caused by the dance and won’t take any responsibility – **he can’t accept that the savagery and evil he sees in Jack is also in himself and Ralph**.
3. Jack tells the tribe that they attacked the beast, but **says that it can’t be killed.** He also says the beast was disguised – this suggests that the tribe might have to attack someone else if Jack tells them it’s the beast. It’s also a way for them to **avoid feeling guilty** about it.

**THEME: Evil:** Simon’s murder makes Ralph see that there’s evil in everyone – even himself.

**Ralph has lost all power to Jack:**

1. Only Ralph, Piggy, Sam and Eric are left to look after the littluns and keep the fire going. Piggy insists that Ralph’s ‘still chief’, but Ralph realises that **Jack has all the power**.
2. Ralph is ‘cradling’ the conch and holding it ‘caressingly’ – he’s trying to get some **comfort** from this symbol of civilisation. **It’s useless now – the rules of civilisation mean nothing.**

**THEME: Power & Leadership: Jack is ‘going to beat Wilfred’ for no reason – this senseless violence stops the boys from challenging his authority.**

**Jack’s tribe steal Piggy’s glasses:**

1. Jack attacks Ralph’s group in the night and takes Piggy’s glasses so his tribe can make fire. It’s the first act of **planned violence** towards other humans. It **foreshadows** Piggy’s murder in the next chapter.
2. The signal fire **represents** the boys’ hope of being rescued. The fire has died, and there isn’t any way of relighting it without Piggy’s glasses. This **symbolises the death of hope in Ralph’s group**.

**Theme – Civilisation & Barbarity:** Ralph **gradually** **forgets** what the fire is for. This shows that he’s **losing his grip** on civilised values.

**Ralph is surprised that they didn’t take the conch. He hasn’t realised that the conch – and all it stands for – is of no interest to Jack.**

**Writing about Jack as a leader:**

This chapter shows Jack’s camp, now set up at Castle Rock. It is guarded by sentries who challenge Roger. He says he could still climb up the rock if he wants to, at which they show him a simple device to deter unwelcome visitors.

The device is a lever pushed under the highest rock, so that it can be **dropped on enemies** approaching along the narrow strip of land leading to the camp. Jack obviously planned this device to do harm – to Ralph and friends or to the beast?

Roger (the cruellest hunter) admires the ingenuity of Jack, who he regards as a ‘proper chief’. It is Jack who orders the attack on Ralph’s group to steal Piggy’s glasses. The organisation of Jack’s group is significant. **He is placed in a prominent position with a semi-circle of boys around him and is almost revered as a god.**

Jack denies that the boys killed Simon and warns them about the beast, saying they ‘can’t tell what he might do’. He suggests that they leave the head of **each kill as a gift** to keep the beast happy with them.

Golding lives through the era of **dictators** in the 1930s and 1940s. Is Jack pagan in his outlook or has he established a **dictatorship**? His style and the way he assumes leadership could be compared to Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin.

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

1. *How does Piggy avoid his feelings of guilt for Simon’s death?*
2. *Ralph and Eric, by accident, fight each other in the darkness. Could this symbolise the pointlessness of violence – used without thought or reason?*
3. *How does Jack conduct his meetings? Why is it significant?*
4. *Thinking originally, does Jack believe in the beast or is he using fear as a method of control?*