Chapter Seven:

Shadows and Tall Trees

**Summary:**

1. Ralph is dismayed by the dirty state of the boys and considers the harsher terrain of the other side of the island.
2. Simon tries to reassure Ralph that he’ll get home safely.
3. Jack discovers the tracks of a wild boar.
4. The boys make up a ritual dance to celebrate the hunt. They claim it is just a game, but Robert is hurt.
5. Ralph, Jack and Roger hunt for the beast on the mountain-top. They discover the dead parachutist whom they assume is the beast.
6. Terrified by their discovery, they flee down the mountain.

**Why is this chapter important?**

A We see further evidence of the boys’ **decline** through Ralph’s observations about their lack of **cleanliness**.

B We witness Ralph’s **awe at the immensity and power** of the ocean, which he sees as a **barrier** between the island and the civilised world.

C Ralph’s reflections on the comforts of his typically English middle-class home provide a **contrast** between the **civilised** adult world and the island. There is a sense of **loss**.

D The boys’ playful re-enactment of their hunt is yet further evidence of the **boys’ descent into savagery**.

E Golding develops the theme of **leadership**, as Jack and Ralph try to prove their **courage** and right to lead.

**Natural images:**

Natural **images** and descriptions are plentiful in this chapter. Ralph’s continuing thoughts about the **vastness** of the sea (see chapter 6) are **repeated** at greater length.

The description of the forest is **vivid**; the undergrowth on one side is **impassable**, the sea and cliffs on the other are **threatening**. This gives emphasis to the fact that the boys are **trapped** on the island.

Ralph called the island ‘good’ (chapter 2 p.33) but in this chapter the natural forces appear **hostile**. Ralph is able to understand the **power** of the sea against humanity. The sea has the power to ‘suck down’ (p. 120). Golding uses a **simile**, comparing the seaweed to ‘shining hair’ (p.121) which reinforces the sea’s **strength**.

The author uses description of the **natural** elements to show the reader ‘the divider, the barrier’ (p. 121) between the world of adults and the boys’ world.

**TRIBAL DANCE:**

The enactment of the hunt is reminiscent of tribal dances, which are a ritualistic representation of a **successful** hunt that the tribe hopes for in the future. This, coupled with Jack’s **mask** and the rallying **chant** of earlier chapters, highlights the **move away from conventional behaviour**. It also shows us the **descent** into paganism, i.e. beliefs outside of the main world religions.

At first, the enactment is **controlled**, the boys were ‘all jabbing at Robert who made mock rushes’ (p125). Soon, ‘Robert was screaming and struggling with the strength of frenzy’ (p. 125) and is eventually reduced to ‘frightened snivels’ (p. 125).

Notice how the enactment almost gets **out of control**. Ralph is ‘carried away’ by the moment. This shows that the **desire to hunt and kill is deep** **within the male human psyche**. This makes **Simon’s murder believable** in a later chapter.

The sentences in this part of the chapter are **short** and they are interspersed with short speeches, which are either **pleas** or **commands**.

**Ralph joins the pig hunt:**

1. Ralph gets **carried away** while hunting a pig, and he begins to understand how appealing hunting can be. He feels that **he’s earned a ‘new respect**’ after wounding the pig.
2. The boys re-enact the hunt, and even Ralph joins in. It gets out of hand and only ends when Jack pretends to kill Robert. Ralph ‘uneasily’ reminds himself it was ‘just a game’. When Robert suggests using a pig next time because they’ve ‘got to kill him’, **Jack jokes that they should use ‘a littlun’.**

**Theme: NATURE**: At first, Golding described the novel’s setting as a ‘tropical paradise’ but now **the island has become a prison**, trapping the boys with each other.

**Theme: POWER:** Jack puts Ralph down by saying he ‘threw badly’. He sees himself as the leader of the hunt and can’t stand Ralph **challenging** his power.

**Theme:** **CIVILISATION AND BARBARITY:** Ralph’s involvement in the hunt and the re-enactment is a further step towards **savagery** and a hint that Jack’s **violent leadership** will soon replace Ralph’s **civilised** morals.

**Ralph and Jack struggle for control of the group:**

1. Ralph wants to wait until morning to climb the mountain, but Jack challenges him, suggesting he’s ‘frightened’. Neither of them wants to look like a **coward** in front of the others.
2. Their struggle for power **overcomes** their fear of the beast and they go up the mountain with Roger. They see the dead airman – in the dark they mistake him for the beast.

**Theme – FEAR:** It’s the **boys’ fear of looking like cowards** that makes them go up the mountain in the dark. If they’d waited for light they’d have seen the ‘dead airman’, not the beast. Golding is showing that the beast is a **reflection of their own fear and savagery**.

**Writing about the use of language:**

Golding uses a **flashback** – Ralph pondering on his previous existence in Devonport, Plymouth – to create a further **contrast** between life on the island and the boys’ previous lives.

Golding also uses carefully chosen words such as ‘uncompromising’, ‘impossible’ and ‘sheer’ (p 128) to suggest the **boys’ isolation**. This word choice now gives the impression that the island is a **prison** rather than a Coral Island-type paradise.

As you read through the chapter, notice how Golding further implies the idea that the island is a **hostile** place.

Remember to mention the **linguistic devices** and **figurative language** used – such as **similes** and **metaphors** and explain their effect on you as a reader.

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

1. *What is the value of Simon’s imagination?*
2. *What is the source of the rising tension between Jack and Ralph?*
3. *Notice how some of the themes are developed in this chapter. They include crowd mentality, civilisation versus tribalism and the qualities needed for leadership.*