Chapter Eight:

Gift for the Darkness

**Summary:**

1. Ralph, Jack and Roger report what they have seen. Jack argues that the hunters can kill the beast.
2. Ralph describes the hunters as ‘Boys armed with sticks’ (p. 137) which hurts Jack.
3. Jack tries to overthrow Ralph as leader but he is rejected as the new chief and leaves, soon to be joined by most of the older boys.
4. A fire is relit by the platform.
5. Jack goes off with his hunters to kill pigs. They kill a sow who has piglets and decide to invite the others to a feast in order to steal their fire.
6. They sever the sow’s head and put it on a stick.
7. Simon, alone in the forest, sees the pig’s head and has a ‘conversation’ with it, before losing consciousness.

**Why is this chapter important?**

A It shows just how much Jack **hates** Ralph.

B Golding highlights Ralph and Piggy’s **realistic approach** when they concede that the boys would be powerless against a beast.

C The chapter signals the split of the survivors into **two groups**: the conch group and the hunters. This is the **natural development** of the differences between the two main characters.

D There is further evidence that **Jack’s style of leadership** is a descent into the primitive**. Debate and discussion are replaced by rehearsed and ritualised responses:** ‘The Chief has spoken’ (p. 155)

E We witness Simon’s **strange** behaviour when he communicates with the ‘Lord of the Flies’ (p 157) but we also see a **courageous** side to his character.

**Jack as a leader:**

Jack is **upset** by Ralph’s analysis of the boys’ abilities. Piggy senses that there will be trouble and he tells Ralph, ‘**Now you done it. You been rude about his hunters’ (p. 137)**

It is **Jack who, for the first time**, blows the conch and calls an assembly. Here he **conforms** to law and order and hopes to use it to his **advantage**. The first words he utters relate to the beast. When questioned, he shouts, ‘Quiet!’ and ‘You listen!’ (p. 138) which signs that debate will not be allowed.

Jack informs his hunters that he’s ‘going to be chief’ (p. 146) and he becomes an authoritarian leader, making it clear that those who disobey will be punished. When the hunters find a sow with her piglets the atmosphere is both tense and violent.

Jack’s attempts to **persuade** the others that there is no beast. It appears that he hedges his bets or **deliberately** **uses the fear** of the beast to his own advantage. This is why he offers the pig’s head as a gift. The possible existence of a beast gives a **new importance to Jack’s hunters**. They are now defending the boys.

**THE LORD OF THE FLIES:**

There are references in ancient history to a ‘god of the flies’ being worshipped by Pagan civilisations. Although Jack has said that they are going to forget about the beast, the pig’s head is still left as a gift. This can be seen as **symbolic** as people would leave offerings to Pagan Gods. Jack’s tribe are echoing this ritual.

There is a **grudging** acceptance of, and respect for, this unnamed being that has been raised to the status of a **God**. There is a **parallel** between the way the boys refer to their ‘god’ – the Lord of the Flies – and the way that they **idolise Jack**. Jack is, in a sense, lord over *them* – his own flies or ‘slaves’.

Simon’s behaviour raises certain questions. We already know he is prone to fainting; in Chapter 9 it appears he is **epileptic**. ‘Simon’s fit passed’ (p 160). His actions, then, may be governed by his medical condition and he may be hallucinating. However, he seems to **understand and sympathise** with the creature in an almost spiritual sense.

**Jack’s NEW group viciously kills a pig:**

1. Jack **declares himself** leader of the new group, saying ‘I’m going to be chief’. The other boys don’t question this – they no longer expect **democracy**.
2. They slaughter a pig, laughing at the blood and smearing it on their faces. **They find violence funny** – this contrasts with Jack’s **failure** to kill the piglet in Chapter 1.
3. Jack leaves the pig’s head for the beast. **Superstitious** behaviour like this is common in **primitive** cultures – it shows how **savage** the boys have become.

**THIS IS A TURNING POINT – JACK SEIZES POWER WITHOUT A VOTE!**

**SYMBOLISM:** Ralph’s group stays by the homely shelters while Jack’s group sets up camp on the wild, unfriendly side of the island – this reflects their **different** values.

**Simon finds the Pig’s head – the Lord of the Flies:**

1. Simon’s **terrified** of the Lord of the Flies – he sees that it represents the **evil inside of everyone** and he’s **afraid that it’s in him too**.
2. He has a choice – he could **accept** his savage side and ‘have fun’ with the others, or he could ignore the Lord of the Flies threat that ‘we shall do you’ and try to stop their slide into savagery. He chooses to warn the others – this shows his **bravery** and **goodness**.

**Theme – NATURE:** Golding usually describes Simon’s experiences of nature as **beautiful** and **spiritual** but here he sees the **dark**, **dirty**, **brutal** side of nature.

**Writing about Ralph and Piggy’s feelings:**

The split into two groups was **anticipated in earlier chapters**. Ralph is initially bewildered by Jack’s departure and feels he will come back. Piggy, however, is **relieved** that Jack has gone.

Piggy and Ralph consider reorganising things and making a list of names – only to find that many of the older boys have drifted away. They suspect that these, like Jack, are the trouble makers.

Ra**lph believes they are better off without Jack**. Neither Ralph nor Piggy can foresee that Jack and his hunters will not leave their group alone … until they are destroyed.

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

1. *What do you think the voice of the school master represents?*
2. *Simon communicates with the pig’s head both verbally and with silent understanding. He is a solitary child with insight, who feels the beast is telling him ‘There isn’t anyone to help you’ (p 158). Simon has to discover the truth on his own.*
3. *Think about changes in mood. There are two periods of optimism – when the boys are first on the island and when Jack leaves. Both periods of optimism are destroyed by Jack!!*