Chapter Nine:

A View to a Death

**Summary:**

1. Simon sees the dead parachutist and discovers the truth about the beast. He heads off to tell the others.
2. Ralph and Piggy join Jack’s party where they are eating meat and having a feast.
3. Jack asks who will join his tribe and he and Ralph argue over where the conch can be used.
4. There is a thunderstorm and Piggy senses trouble.
5. Jack encourages his tribe to do their dance.
6. Simon stumbles into the dancing circle.
7. The boys see Simon as the beast and kill him in a frenzied attack.
8. The bodies of Simon and the parachutist are washed out to sea.

**Why is this chapter important?**

A It shows the **contrast** between both Jack’s camp and the earlier assemblies and Jack and Ralph’s **leadership qualities**.

B Simon discovers the **truth** concerning the beast but is **unable to bring the truth** to the others.

C Simon’s **death** marks a **change** in the hunters’ attitude towards death. It also allows Jack to play on the boys’ fears.

D The death also brings about a **burden of guilt** as all took part in the **murder**.

E Golding uses **nature, colour and imagery** to effect in the chapter.

F The disappearance of the parachutist’s body is a **convenient plot device**, as it removes the possibility that it will be discovered and revealed for what it is.

**Foreshadowing the dramatic events:**

The heat is **oppressive** as the thunder clouds gather. Golding has introduced **natural forces** in this chapter, to re-introduce later when the chanting and dancing is as its height. This makes Simon’s murder dramatic and plausible. Remember, using the weather to create atmosphere or reflect character is **PATHETIC FALLACY**.

Piggy has a headache, which makes him yearn for cool rain. Piggy and Ralph decide to visit Jack’s camp to have some **meat**. Piggy again shows himself to be both **parental and protective** in his anxiety to visit Jack’s camp ‘to make sure nothing happens’ (p. 163).

***THINK****:*

*What do you think Piggy feared would happen? Could Piggy have anticipated the outcome of the dance? Is it significant that, like Simon, Piggy has a headache before it happens?*

**SIMON – the martyr for the truth:**

Simon is determined to reach the top of the mountain where, in a sense, the truth lies – both literally and **metaphorically**. Simon **frees** the dead airman, who is then give the **dignity of a burial at sea**. Simon, too, is consigned to the sea after his murder.

The news of ‘a body on the hill’ (p.169) provides a clear piece of Christian imagery. Simon can be viewed as a prophet and visionary, with a **parallel** between the parachutist on the mountain and Christ on a hill at Calvary. **The description of the halo of creatures that surround him with light as he floats out to sea is both poignant and significant.**

The fact that **Simon’s news is ignored** by the boys may also be worth some consideration – **is Golding saying that Christ’s message to us is, on the whole, ignored?**

**Simon finds the dead airman:**

1. Simon finds the body of the dead airman. He understands that it’s ‘the beast’ and that he needs to tell the others it’s ‘**harmless’**.
2. Piggy senses that **trouble** is coming. He suggests that they go to Jack’s feast ‘to make sure nothing happens’ and later he urges Ralph to leave, saying ‘There’s going to be trouble’.

**THEME: Nature:** Golding creates the sense that something terrible will happen by **describing** the **storm** that’s developing. **The air’s ‘ready to explode’ and the clouds ‘brooded’**.

**Jack’s power grows:**

1. **All** of the boys go to Jack’s feast – even Ralph and Piggy. They’re attracted by the promise of meat, and the ‘partly secure society’ of the larger group.
2. Jack wears garlands ‘like an idol’ and is **ordering** the boys around – he’s **abusing** his power. He promises ‘food’, ‘fun’ and protection ‘from the beast’ to get the boys to join his tribe – **he uses their fear to control them**.
3. Jack says the conch ‘doesn’t count’ at his end of the island. **He’s rejecting civilisation and the rules of their old life.**

**The tribe murders Simon:**

1. Ralph points out that a storm’s coming and that Jack has no shelters – the boys react ‘uneasily’, showing that **they’re still drawn to civilisation**. Jack **distracts** them by **ordering** them to “Dance!’
2. Simon crawls into the centre of the dance. He’s described as ‘a thing’ and ‘the beast’ – the tribe is **confused and scared** by the darkness, the storm, and the **savage** dance. He’s also described as ‘Simon’ – deep down **the boys recognise him, but they’re too scared and frenzied to stop.**
3. The boys act as a ‘**single organism’** when they murder Simon – they’ve lost their **individual identities**. They kill him without ‘words’, only ‘the tearing of teeth and claws’ – they’ve become **inhuman** and their **savage instincts** have taken over.

**Theme – Nature:** The storm reaches a **climax** during the dance – the air is ‘dark and terrible’ with the ‘explosion’ of lightning. After Simon’s death, Golding creates a **peaceful atmosphere** to **contrast** with the manic dance and to emphasise Simon’s **innocent and spiritual** nature.

**Writing about Nature and Colour:**

Nature and colour are used to great effect in this chapter. Golding’s description of the bad weather coming onto the island actually opens the chapter and is detailed. He mentions that colours ‘drained from water and trees’ (p. 160) and **contrasts** this with the ‘spilt guts’ (p. 160) of the pig, that ‘look like a heap of glistening coal’ (p160). The blood that ‘gushed out’ (p.160) from Simon’s nose would be red and this adds another **contrast** to colourless nature, as the storm reaches the island.

Further into the chapter, Ralph notices the flames against the ‘dull light’ (p.165). He is able to recognise the beginning of a storm. When evening arrives, he sees it has come **‘not with calm beauty but with the threat of violence**’ (p165). This indicates that **nature is in harmony** with the events that are about to unfold.

When lightening strikes, it is described as a ‘blue-white scar’ (p.168). During the climax of chanting, dancing, thunder and lightning, Simon emerges from the undergrowth. Finally, stars in the night sky pick out strange, luminous creatures which **surround Simon’s body with light**.

Golding has cleverly used **neutral nature** as a **hostile force** to make the boys **afraid**. When they see Simon, it is through flashes of lightning and in the dark (almost like a strobe – light effect). **This makes it believable that they see Simon as the beast.**

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

1. *Images of* ***dark and light, clear and opaque*** *are important throughout the book but are particularly strong in this chapter. They could represent the* ***good and evil in the boys’ minds*** *or the* ***good and evil existing on the island****. In this chapter the storm corresponds to the boys’ mood (pathetic fallacy).*
2. *Reread Golding’s* ***descriptions*** *in this chapter. How do they* ***combine*** *with the actions?*
3. *What* ***fate*** *do Simon and the parachutist share and why is this* ***significant****?*
4. *Notice how the* ***narrative perspective shifts*** *so that we see Simon as ‘the beast’ through the* ***boys’*** *eyes: ‘The beast was on its knees in the centre, its arms folded over its face’. (p168)*