

CLOSE READING PASSAGES

Excerpt from Chapter 1

“Let’s have a vote.”

“Yes!”

“Vote for chief.”

“Let’s vote.”

This toy of voting was almost as pleasing as the conch. Jack started to protest but the clamor hanged from the general wish for a chief to an election by acclaim of Ralph himself. None of the boys could have found good reason for this; what intelligence had been shown was traceable to Piggy, while the most obvious leader was Jack. But there was a stillness about Ralph as he sat that marked him out; there was his size, and attractive appearance; and most obscurely yet most powerfully, there was the conch...

“Him with the shell.”

“Ralph! Ralph!”

“Let him be chief with the trumpet-thing.”

Ralph raised a hand for silence. “All right. Who wants Jack for chief?”

With dreary obedience the choir raised their hands.

“Who wants me?”

Every hand outside the choir except Piggy’s was raised immediately. Then Piggy, too, raised his hand grudgingly into the air.

Ralph counted. “I’m chief then.”

The circle of boys broke into applause. Even the choir applauded; and the freckles on Jack’s face disappeared under a blush of mortification. He started up, then changed his mind and sat down again while the air rang. Ralph looked at him, eager to offer something.

“The choir belongs to you, of course.”

“They could be the army—”

“Or hunters—”

“They could be—”

The suffusion drained away from Jack’s face. Ralph waved again for silence. “Jack’s in charge of the choir. They can be—what do you want them to be?”

“Hunters.”

Jack and Ralph smiled at each other with shy liking. The rest began to talk eagerly.

Excerpt from Chapter 2

[Piggy] “I got the conch”

Jack turned fiercely. “You shut up!”

Piggy wilted. Ralph took the conch from him and looked round the circle of boys. “We’ve got to have special people for looking after the fire. Any day there may be a ship out there” —he waved his arm at the taut wire of the horizon—“and if we have a signal going they’ll come and take us off. And another thing. We ought to have more rules. Where the conch is, that’s a meeting. The same up here as down there.”

They assented. Piggy opened his mouth to speak, caught Jack’s eye, and shut it again. Jack held out his hands for the conch and stood up, holding the delicate thing carefully in his sooty hands. “I agree with Ralph. We’ve got to have rules and obey them. After all, we’re not savages. We’re English, and the English are the best at everything. So we’ve got to do the right things.” He turned to Ralph. “Ralph, I’ll split up the choir—my hunters, that is—into groups, and we’ll be responsible for keeping the fire going—“

This generosity brought a splatter of applause from the boys, so that Jack grinned at them, then waved the conch for silence.

Excerpt from Chapter 3

[Jack] “We want meat.”

[Ralph] “Well, we haven’t got any yet. And we want shelters. Besides, the rest of your hunters came back hours ago. They’ve been swimming.”

“I went on,” said Jack. “I let them go. I had to go on. I—”

He tried to convey the compulsion to track down and kill that was swallowing him up. “I went on. I thought, by myself—” The madness came into his eyes again. “I thought I might kill.”

“But you didn’t.”

“I thought I might.”

Some hidden passion vibrated in Ralph’s voice.

“But you haven’t yet.”

His invitation might have passed as casual, were it not for the undertone.

“You wouldn’t care to help with the shelters, I suppose?”

“We want meat—”

“And we don’t get it.”

Now the antagonism was audible.

“But I shall! Next time! I’ve got to get a barb on this spear! We wounded a pig and the spear fell out. If we could only make barbs—”

“We need shelters.”

Suddenly Jack shouted in rage. “Are you accusing—?”

“All I’m saying is we’ve worked dashed hard. That’s all.”

They were both red in the face and found looking at each other difficult.