

## Beast from Water

### 1. What happens in the chapter?

The evening of the day that the ship passed by Ralph is upset by everything that happened on the mountain and realises it is very difficult to be a leader. He goes for a walk by himself to decide what needs to be done to bring more order to the island. He wishes he was as clever as Piggy, who thinks in an original way. He decides he must call an assembly "to put things straight", even though the sun is setting and it is getting dark. Ralph compares the way things have gone wrong to how hopeful he felt when the three boys first explored the island.

At the assembly Ralph lists the things that have gone wrong on the island:

- The water shells are not kept filled;
- No-one helped him and Simon to build the third hut;
- The area is dirty because people go to the toilet wherever they want; and
- The signal fire is not kept alight.

Ralph makes a new rule that the only fire allowed is the signal fire on the mountain, and the boys must take their food there to cook it. The boys protest against this rule.

Ralph changes the subject by talking about the boys' fears. He says they have to discuss the beast and "decide there's nothing in it". A littun claims he saw a beast during the night, but it seems it was only Simon. Then little Percival says the beast comes out of the sea. Simon suggests the beast is "only us" but is not able to explain what he means. Jack makes a bold statement that if there is a beast he and his hunters will pursue it and kill it.

Jack challenges Ralph's leadership, shouting Ralph down when he tries to restore order, saying rules are rubbish. The boys are easily worked up by Jack and do not behave properly, causing the meeting to break up in disorder. In the end they go off to play and scream with laughter or fear. Ralph is depressed and wants to give up as chief, but Piggy and Simon persuade him not to. The three boys wish there were adults to take control.

### 2. Who is involved?

#### Ralph

• Ralph is growing in insight and understanding, for example:

1. He realises the importance of thinking wisely, but has difficulty in making decisions quickly and needs to think about them first: "The trouble was, if you were a chief you had to think, you had to be wise."

2. He recognises that he cannot think as clearly as Piggy does: "I can't think. Not like Piggy." However, he decides to call an assembly and plans the speech he will make "point by point".

• Ralph is also losing hope: "The world, that understandable and lawful world, was slipping away. Once there was this and that; and now - and the ship had gone." The chaos of the meeting makes him feel as if the world has gone mad. At the end of the chapter he will not risk blowing the conch because he is scared the boys will ignore it.

• Ralph is so disheartened (he has lost his confidence) that he wants to give up being the chief.

#### Piggy

• Piggy thinks reason and science can solve all problems and does not believe in the beast. He is so angry about the boys' talk of the beast and of ghosts that he asks: "What are we? Humans? Or animals? Or savages?"

• Piggy believes in civilised behaviour and measures the behaviour of the boys against the behaviour he was taught by adults. He is horrified and asks: "What's grown-ups going to say?"

• Like Ralph, Piggy longs for adults to take charge and restore order.

• Piggy shows insight when he suggests that what they have to fear could be people. (Later we see Piggy is correct.) He also realises that Jack hates him and hates Ralph for being the leader.

