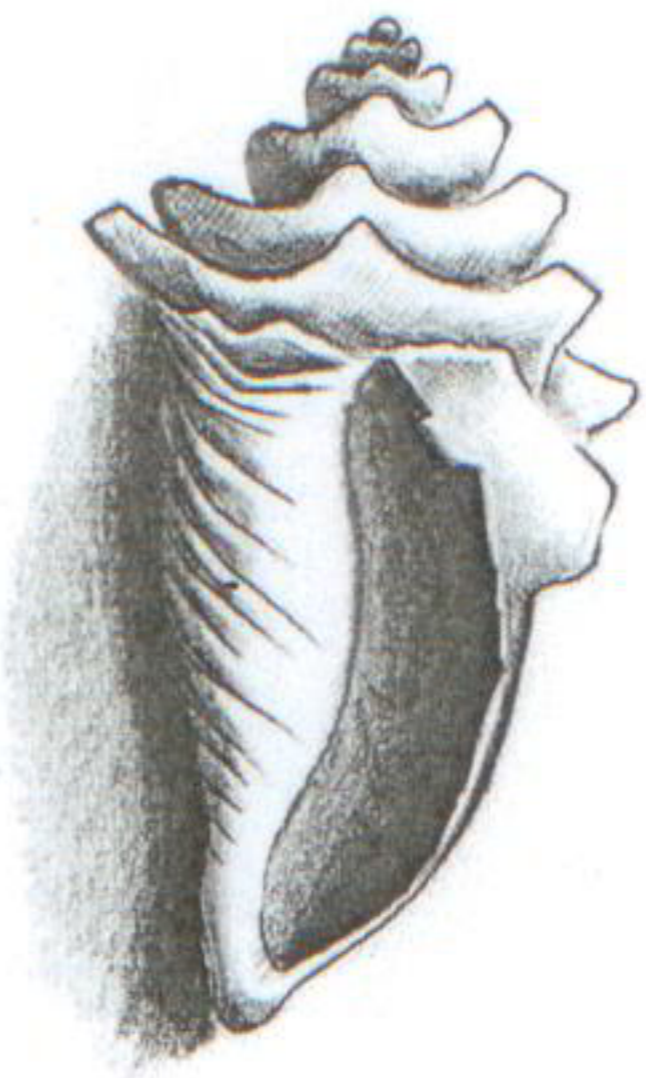


The Sound of the Shell



1. What happens in the chapter?

This is the boys' first day on the island. There is a war raging and some boys are evacuated from England on an aeroplane. The plane that carried the boys was shot down and crashed on an uninhabited island.

Ralph meets Piggy at a lagoon on the beach, which is just a short distance from the site of the plane crash. When Ralph realises there are no adults on the island he is delighted, but Piggy is worried. Ralph finds the conch and Piggy, who recognises what it is, is quick to realise its importance. Ralph blows the conch and other boys, big and little, come from other parts of the island to join him on the beach.

The boys see the need to have a leader. Roger suggests they vote and Ralph is elected, much to Jack's disappointment. To keep Jack happy, Ralph tells him that he will be in charge of the choir boys, who will be the hunters. Ralph also tells everyone about Piggy's nickname. This upsets Piggy because he has told Ralph that he hates being called by that name.

Ralph, Jack and Simon explore the island and when they are on the peak (the highest point) of the mountain they realise that nobody lives on the island. They find a piglet (a young pig), but Jack cannot yet bring himself to kill it. Jack vows that next time "there would be no mercy", he will not draw back from the gruesome act of killing. He will be brave enough to do it. Jack and Ralph seem to be friends and the island seems to be a paradise.

2. Who is involved?

Ralph

- Ralph is good-natured: there is "a mildness about his mouth and eyes that proclaimed no devil".
- Ralph appears to be innocent: he stands on his head in delight because there are no adults on the island.
- Ralph is insensitive (does not consider how someone else might feel) when he tells the others Piggy's nickname. However, he shows that he is not always insensitive and can empathise with others, for example, when the boys vote for Ralph to be leader he realises Jack is disappointed and says he should be leader of the hunters.
- Ralph is calm and makes the other boys feel confident as "there was a stillness ... that marked him out."

Piggy

- Piggy is intelligent, knowledgeable and has common sense – he knows that the adults at home have been killed and realises that the boys' situation is a problem rather than fun. He also knows that the conch is valuable and can be used to call people to come together.
- Piggy understands the need for some order and asks for the children's names and tries to remember them.
- Piggy is mocked by the other boys because he is overweight. This makes him feel separate from the others: "the boys were a closed circuit of sympathy with Piggy outside".

Jack

- The first time Jack is mentioned his shadow is compared to a bat and then we read that "something dark was tumbling along". This gives us an uneasy feeling that will be developed later.
- Jack is arrogant when he immediately says he should be chief.
- Jack is authoritarian – it seems that the choir boys dare not disobey him and they vote for him to be chief "with dreary obedience", without enthusiasm. The fact that he cannot kill the pig suggests that he is still influenced by the way he was brought up at home. He sees this inability to kill the pig as a weakness, not as kindness or respect for life.

Simon

- Simon faints when he reaches the platform where Ralph is standing.
- Simon is sensitive to beauty, comparing the flower buds to candles. (Unlike Jack, who destroys them.)