

Notes on Lord of the Flies

Mr. McBride

Chapter One

- 11 – the naming of Piggy; note how narration immediately adopts his name after Ralph suggests it
- 12 – description of platform; reference to parable of sower and seed, foreshadows trajectory of the boys efforts to form a society:
Matthew 13:3-8 – “And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow. And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up. Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth. And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them. But others fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold.”
- 13 – Ralph’s mention of father suggests longing for divine intervention
- 14 – Piggy’s reference to atom bomb
- 15 – finding of the conch; “He used to blow it and then his Mum would come”
- 17 – sounding of the conch; conch acts as an organizing principle, gathering the boys together from their isolation in the jungle and also giving everyone a voice at meetings
- 18 – note ironic parody of boy sucking thumb after “he received the reassurance that something purposeful was being done”
- 19 – approach of the choir
- 21 – “closed circuit of sympathy with Piggy outside”; this and Piggy’s turning pink foreshadows his exclusion and dehumanization from the group
- 22 – “toy of voting” again suggests a bitter parody of the organizing principles of modern society
- 24 – dismissal of Piggy’s desire to go on expedition again references theme of the nuance of social power
- 28 – pushing over of rock prefigures book’s ending; odd insertion of present tense perhaps suggests a kind of hypnotic effect of destructive behavior
- 31 – piglet caught in creepers; prefigures Jack’s transformation and Ralph’s terror

Chapter Two

- 33 – “We shall...”
- 33 – conch gives all voice, even Piggy
- 34 – “we can have a good time on this island”; Ralph’s words recur in Simon’s pig’s head vision
- 35 – boy with the mulberry colored birthmark is given the conch, speaks of the beast; faulty logic (“countries like Africa...”) is employed to allay fear
- 36 – boy makes statement that beastie turns into creepers in trees, associating it with the vines that held the piglet in terror

- 37 – queen’s map room; suggestion of divine omniscient knowledge
- 38 – Piggy brings conch
- 40 – use of Piggy’s glasses to start fire; Piggy’s intellect, as represented by his glasses, is needed by the group for survival
- 44 – “Piggy glanced nervously into hell and cradled the conch”; suggests a juxtaposition between order, as represented by the conch, and chaos, as represented by the fire
- 46 – loss of the boy with the birthmark; the association of burning creepers with snakes suggests that in fact the beast did eat him

Chapter Three

- 49 – Jack touches doodie; beginning of chapter three shows Jack in the forest, in contrast to Simon in the forest at the end of the chapter
- 52 – Simon makes reference to the growing fear of the beast
- 54 – conflict between Ralph and Jack allusion to Cain and Able
- 54 – pig versus rescue prefigures killing of pig with missing of ship in Chapter Four
- 56 – Simon as Christ passage; “Let the little ones come unto me...”
- 57 – Contrast the opening of the buds for Simon with Jack’s slashing them with a knife on page 30; in both instances the scent spills out

Chapter Four

- 59 – introduction of Percival
- 60 – Roger and Maurice kick sand castles, Maurice feels vestigial remorse
- 61 – Johnny imitates Roger, kicks sand in Percival’s eyes
- 62 – Roger’s arm conditioned, compare to Jack’s arm on page 31
- 63 – Jack masks himself; the threat of anonymous behavior is prefigured by Roger’s throwing of stones in the absence of being watched
- 63 – Jack ignores the twins’ request, orders them to leave the fire to help with the hunt
- 66 – Ralph sees the ship
- 68 – fire out, hunters appear with pig
- 71 – Jack breaks one of the two lenses in Piggy’s glasses; he needs them to make fire to cook the pig

Chapter Five

- 77 – why can’t they fix the log? Again Ralph loses the thought
- 81 – “We’ve got to make smoke up there – or die.”
- 83 – Jack names the beast
- 83 – note ominous juxtaposition of what they eat and Piggy’s name
- 84 – Jack responds to fear with warrior-like mentality, Piggy with rationality, suggesting that fear is at the root of these two archetypal responses
- 84 – Phil’s nightmare recalls the piglet struggling in the creepers

- 86 – memory of boy with the birthmark makes Ralph flinch at the sight of Percival; imagery used to show this, “...could bring it to the surface,” prefigures suggestion that the beast could come from the sea
- 87 – Maurice’s clowning suggests that the comic impulse is also at root an effort to quell fear
- 88 – moment when Percival suggests that the beast comes from the sea; this suggestion, previously un-thought of silences the group, suggesting the futility of the warrior, rational, and comic responses; the sea can be seen to represent the unconscious, while that which is above land represents the conscious mind.
- 88 – Maurice’s comment that they hadn’t found all the animals in the sea contrasts the earlier statement about the queen’s map room
- 88 – Maurice’s grab for the “whiteness in the gloom” suggests the tenuous link between the conch and social order
- 89 – Jack has already touched the answer to Simon’s query, “what is the dirtiest thing there it?” suggesting that he is (perhaps) in the thrall of the beast
- 89 – note how darkness has fallen both literally and figuratively in the course of the meeting
- 90 – note irony of voting on whether or not there are ghosts; suggests futility of rational discourse in confronting the irrational
- 91 – the social order finally breaks down with Jack’s disobedience of Ralph’s command
- 92 – Piggy’s comment in regards to the possibility of the existence of ghosts, “Cos things wouldn’t make sense. Houses an’ streets, an’ – TV – they wouldn’t work,” suggests that all of civilization is a struggle against the forces of irrationality. He is reciting a list of totemic objects as an incantation against the forces of fear and disorder
- 94 – Note asking for a sign
- 94 – Percival’s terror again calls to mind the piglet struggling in the creepers

Chapter Six

- 96 – note contrivance of the dead parachutist’s position
- 99 – fear has finally found an object
- 99 – Ralph’s failure to blow the conch, instead merely holding it up, suggests the degeneration of the boy’s social rituals
- 102 – Jack’s statement, “who needs the conch” suggests danger of power without legal limitation; i.e. – Extraordinary Rendition
- 102 – confrontation between Ralph and Jack again comes to head with Ralph winning
- 103 – what of Simon’s vision of “a human at once heroic and sick”?
- 106 – description of this feature of the island important later

Chapter Seven

- 111 – Simon’s comment to Ralph, “You’ll get back to where you came from,” very untypical, mark of Simon’s character, points to the general lack of compassion between the boys
- 113 – Note Ralph’s intoxication at having thrown the spear
- 114 – play becomes serious as Robert is nearly injured
- 123 – Ralph sees the beast

Chapter Eight

- 124 – Ralph has lost faith, believes in beast, seems to have even convinced Piggy
- 125 – “that thing squats by the fire as though it didn’t want us to be rescued,” reinforces idea that by succumbing to a belief in the beast the boys have abandoned their efforts to form a civilization
- 127 – Jack makes a stand to be leader, his saying he doesn’t “want to play” reminds reader of the boys’ age
- 129 – note how Ralph cannot say “beast” sense of word becoming unspeakable, taboo, like mention of the boy with the mark on his face
- 133 – Simon is in his hiding place by the spot where the pig will be killed, transition suggests that he was a witness to the killing of the sow
- 133 – narrator’s mention of the ragged black caps of the hunters and their once angelic voices suggests the proximity of good and evil
- 134 – killing of the sow suggests matricide, the irrationality of killing a nursing sow also underscores the idea that the boys are not hunting for food
- 135 – Roger’s sodomizing the sow with his spear gives the killing a clear sexual overtone; this is a thinly veiled rape/murder scene, demonstrative of the state of degradation to which the society has fallen
- 136 – sharpening of a stick at both ends prefigures ending of book; what to make of “a stick sharpened at both ends”?
- 137 – Simon sees the pig’s head as “dim with the infinite cynicism of adult life”
- 138 – narration gives name to the pig’s head; “Lord of the Flies,” a translation of a Hebrew word meaning “god of the insects,” often mistranslated as “fly god”
- 139 – Piggy says he sometimes doesn’t care about the fire after saying it was the only thing that could save his life; make analogy to smoking, seatbelts, etc.
- 140 – Is Piggy correct when he blames the breakup of society on Jack?
- 140 – Piggy grasps conch to protect himself from the threat of the hunters, an ironically vain gesture
- 142 – note how Ralph forgets purpose of fire, is reminded by Piggy
- 143 – Simon’s dialogue with the beast
- 143 – Simon’s repetition of “pig’s head on a stick” suggests his struggle to see things for their actuality, not their malignant symbolism, prefigures his recognition of the parachutist on the mountain
- 143 – Lord of the Flies’ statements all contain truth; “I’m part of you”; “I’m the reason why its no-go”; “You know perfectly well you’ll only meet me down there”

- 144 – “we’re going to have fun on this island” a demonic echo of Ralph’s sunny statement at the book’s opening
- 144 – Simon’s falling into the mouth of the beast suggestive of the archetypal hero’s journey in which he passes through death, often in the form of a cave; as the Christ story is an example of this, this passage further reinforces symbolic connection between Simon and Jesus

Chapter Nine

- 145 – threatening of a storm breaking foreshadows what’s to come
- 146 – as he ascends the mountain, Simon sees the “beast” raise his head, but continues to push through this moment of fear
- 146 – flies around parachutist’s head clearly connect him back to the pig’s head on a stick; the flies’ forming a cloud around the head and resettling allude to the beast/parachutist’s dual nature, between fact and illusion
- 146-7 – Simon sees the nature of the beast; “pig’s head on a stick/dead parachutist on the mountaintop”; frees the parachutist from the entanglement of lines, frees the island from the illusion
- 149 – entire group coalesces around a common target of derision, Piggy
- 149 – Piggy and Ralph succumb to the temptation of the pig; pig is considered an unclean animal unfit for consumption by both Muslims and Jews
- 150 – thunder booms at Jack’s denunciation of the conch
- 151 – Jack’s “We shan’t hear it” ironically contrasts the propriety of his speech with the degradation of society; note that Piggy, whose grammar is the worst, is the most civilized of the group; calls to mind Nazis listening to Beethoven and Wagner
- 152 – note allure of the ritual that seems to contain rampant fear, even for Piggy and Ralph
- 152 – change in gender of possessive pronoun in chant; “...*slit* his *throat*”; the mother has been violated and killed, the father is next?
- 152 – Simon crawls into the circle crying something about a dead man on a hill, Golgatha?
- 153 – at moment of Simon’s death, the parachutist blows out to sea; the ritual in which Simon has been killed has a cleansing effect
- 154 – Simon anointed by phosphorescent creatures, washed out to sea with the beast and the plane

Chapter Ten

- 155 – contrast between Piggy and Ralph’s degeneration and the conch and assembly place, which still seem undiminished
- 157 – Piggy, the rational man, rationalizes Simon’s death, even as it foreshadows his own
- 158 – new social code requires denial of Simon’s murder

- 159 – Roger’s loose tooth simultaneously reminds the reader of his youth and foreshadows the dropping of the loose boulder
- 160 – even the narrator now refers to Jack as “the chief”
- 160 – the “triangle of startling pink” that flashes out of Jack’s mouth calls to mind the allure of hunting pigs that has drawn the group to him
- 160 – Jack’s assertion that the beast (Simon) was “disguised” suggests the idea that the beast is whoever the hunters decide it their enemy
- 160 – note how the belief in the immortality of the beast becomes a rationalization for the killing of Simon
- 161 – belief in the beast now takes the form of a religion; “theological speculation”
- 162 – Ralph’s allusion to communists suggests a reading of the novel as a parable for the cold war
- 165 – Ralph’s pushing the “creepers” from his hair suggests a connection to the creepers in the forest, which had already been connected to the beast
- 168 – Ralph and Eric fight each other
- 168 – note the humor of Piggy’s ignorance in saying, “I thought they wanted the conch”
- 168 – the hunters have stolen fire, an anti-Promethean act

Chapter Eleven

- 169 – fire now finally out, no more glasses
- 171 – Piggy’s belief that Jack can’t do more to him than he already has again shows his naiveté
- 171 – “what’s right’s right” Is this so?
- 173 – note how the relationship between Ralph and Piggy is revealed by Ralph’s inability to remember why they need smoke
- 175 – Roger’s throwing of a rock “to miss” recalls earlier scene at the beach, prefigures what is to come
- 177 – agreement to use spears as sabers shows some vestige of social compact
- 181 – the death of Piggy

Chapter Twelve

- 183 – Ralph’s intended death, which would be the fourth, represents a progression from accidental death (boy with the mark), to death committed in the midst of a mob frenzy (Simon), to intentional death committed in the throws of passion (Piggy), to the intentional premeditated murder of Ralph
- 185 – note ironic contrast between the conch and the bleached skull of the Pig’s Head on a Stick
- 185 – skull splits widening the mouth to six feet; the mouth that swallowed Simon
- 186 – note intrusion of Piggy’s voice
- 188 – when Sam says “They’re going to do you” it recalls the voice of the Lord of the Flies/Simon

- 190 – Ralph, still believing in the value of friendship, reveals his plans for hiding to Sam and Eric; could they represent the victims of fascist governments who became the perpetrators of fascist horrors?
- 192 – Ralph is betrayed by the twins
- 196 – Ralph is now the piglet from the first chapter
- 197 – hunters are willing to destroy the island to kill Ralph
- 199 – “You’ll get back” echoes the words of Simon to Ralph
- 200 – perspective change shown by reference to “little boys, their bodies streaked with colored clay...”
- 201 – the officer’s comment, “I saw your smoke,” is wickedly ironic
- 201 – Percival has forgotten his name
- 201 – Jack starts forward when officer asks who is boss
- 201 – they still don’t know how many of them are there
- 202 – how to interpret the last line? Why do the eyes of the officer “rest on the cruiser in the distance”?

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- 204 – Why does Golding say, “And who will rescue the adult and his cruiser”?