**Chapter 1: The Sound of the Shell**

**Summary:**

1. A group of boys are stranded on an island after evacuation from a war zone.
2. Ralph and Piggy are first on the scene and use a conch to summon other survivors.
3. A group of choirboys led by the red haired Jack Merridew, head boy and chapter chorister enter the scene.
4. One of the choirboys, Simon, faints near the platform where the boys are sat.
5. Piggy’s nickname is revealed, to the boys’ general amusement.
6. The boys elect Ralph as chief. Jack believes the role should be his. He and Ralph agree that the choir will be the hunters, with Jack in charge.
7. Ralph, Jack and Simon decide to explore the island.
8. The three boys come across a piglet, which Jack almost kills before hesitating. He declares he will spill blood ‘Next time –‘ (p29)

**Why is this chapter important?**

A It establishes the **setting** – a desert island.

B Golding introduces us to the main characters – Ralph, Piggy, Jack, Simon and Roger – and aspects of their different personalities are revealed.

C We are introduced to some important aspects of the central characters.

D The importance of the **conch** is established and it becomes a **symbol** of authority.

**Characters – Ralph, Piggy and Jack**

Ralph and Piggy are the first boys we encounter. Ralph is clearly more **relaxed** on the island, taking the opportunity to go for a swim in the tropical heat. Piggy tries to be friendly, **confiding** in Ralph that ‘Piggy’ is his nickname. Ralph is indifferent, and insensitive to Piggy when he reveals Piggy’s name to the others, knowing it will hurt Piggy.

Piggy is fat, suffers from asthma and is far from physically fit. However, he thinks and acts like an adult and makes intelligent suggestions to Ralph, such as **‘We ought to have a meeting’** (p5). **Ralph is able to put Piggy’s ideas into action**.

Jack is head chorister and **sees himself** as a **natural leader**. When Piggy proposed that they make a list of names, Jack ridicules his list. He criticises ‘fatty’ (p17) for being too talkative and therefore promotes the idea of **physical action and its supremacy over intellectual judgement**. This **foreshadows** later events, when Jack shows his intense dislike for Piggy.

**BUT there are hints of danger and conflict (FORESHADOWING):**

1. Jack’s **humiliated** when Ralph is chosen as chief instead of him. This suggests there might be tension between the two boys later in the story.
2. Jack’s **frustrated** when he fails to kill a piglet that they find trapped in a creeper. This is the beginning of the **obsession** with hunting that splits the group later on.
3. The descriptions of the island **aren’t friendly** – the heat is a ‘**threatening weight’**, the coconuts are ‘skull-like’ and Piggy’s knees get ‘scratched by thorns’. Golding is **hinting** that their time on the island won’t be only fun and adventure.
4. The boys bully Piggy – it’s cruel but still ‘acceptable behaviour’ according to the rules of their old lives. This sets **Piggy up as an outsider who’s different from the others.**

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

1. Ralph is elated that there are no adults. He’s immature though, swimming etc instead of getting things organised.
2. Piggy reveals he’s an orphan, and why he’s overweight.
3. Piggy is uneducated in his voice, but says smart things – a thematic statement by Golding.
4. Jack arrives as a shadow – metaphoric.
5. Jack did not kill the pig because he is not yet far enough removed from civilisation. Later, he does!
6. The boys names are sometimes symbolic, but we never learn of Piggy’s real name: no one ever asks.