Chapter Six:

Beast from Air

**Why is this chapter important?**

A The **dead parachutist** is seen as the **beast**, which has huge implications for the group.

B The role of Sam and Eric, **speaking as one voice**, is evident in this chapter.

C The revelation that the beast exists is **reassuring** as it is now recognised as real, something that can be hunted. This reinforces the importance of Jack’s hunters.

D The conch **loses** importance as the need to hunt down the beast now dominates the boys’ minds. Golding shows us Ralph’s leadership qualities and bravery in action.

E The differences between Jack and Piggy are further highlighted.

F Simon begins to understand the true nature of the beast.

**Summary:**

1. A dead parachutist lands on the island.
2. As Sam and Eric tend the fire, they mistake the parachutist for the beast.
3. At a meeting, Jack announces that the beast should be hunted down and he ridicules the importance of the conch.
4. The bigger boys, without Piggy, set off to find the beast.
5. Ralph bravely goes first to the unexplored part of a rocky outcrop. He is soon joined by Jack.
6. The boys discover that the end of the island would be a good place for a fort.
7. Ralph stresses the boys’ practical needs and the others reluctantly go on with the journey.

**Jack and Piggy – very different people:**

Jack is **delighted** at the prospect of a hunt. At last, the power is shifting his way. He is able to **ridicule** Piggy’s fear of the beast and the importance of the conch, seeing the ritual of holding the conch to speak to the assembly as **pointless and unproductive**.

It is Jack who initially leads Ralph and the bigger boys in search of the beast. They look around the tail end of the island – the only part Jack previously failed to visit. **Jack is aggressive, physically able and impulsive**.

Piggy is not physically active. However, he is intelligent and able to express his ideas and opinions. Despite dismissing ghosts earlier, he admits to being frightened, suggesting that they stay where they are rather than search for the beast.

**Writing about courage:**

Ralph’s courage is shown throughout the chapter. He displays common sense and an almost **obsessive determination**.

He attempts, despite Jack’s **resentment**, to push through some of the points he made during the previous night’s assembly. He **bravely** leads the exploration of the far end of the island, and shows real courage in facing up to Jack over the **supremacy** of the conch.

Despite Jack’s bravado and Piggy’s thinking skills, **neither of them shows the courage of his convictions**. Jack is keen to hunt the beast but finally cannot do so. While Piggy’s **rational mind** may tell him ghosts do not exist, he declares his fear of the beast and stays to look after the littluns.

**Ralph and Jack have different plans to deal with the beast:**

1. Ralph wants to **think** things through, but Jack wants to track the beast immediately. He says ‘This is a hunter’s job’ – he uses the beast to gain power.
2. The boys’ fear of the beast is more immediate than their desire to be rescued – this tips the balance in **favour of Jack’s leadership**. **Ralph only keeps his leadership by agreeing to hunt.**

**Theme: FEAR**: Jack **forces** Ralph to hunt the beast by suggesting he’s afraid.

**Theme: POWER AND LEADERSHIP:** Ralph is **terrified** of going first when they get to Castle Rock, but **forces himself** to because that’s what the chief should do. He knows he **needs to seem brave** to stop Jack taking over as leader.

**Ralph and Jack feel differently about Castle Rock:**

1. The two boys’ **reactions** to Castle Rock reflect their leadership styles and how **civilised or savage** they are.
2. Jack thinks it would be a good place for a fort, and he imagines defending it from enemies. It suits his **aggressive leadership** style and his urge towards savagery.
3. Ralph thinks it’s **a ‘rotten place’** to set up a base. There’s **no food or shelter** and not much fresh water. Golding is showing the reader that **Ralph’s civilised values are more sensible than Jack’s savage ones**.

**Theme: POWER & LEADERSHIP:** When Ralph asks the boys to relight the signal fire, **they obey him ‘mutinously’** – he’s **losing authority** all the time now.

**Theme: GAMES:** The game of rolling boulders is developed here. Jack gets the idea to push a rock onto the ‘narrow causeway’ if an ‘enemy’ comes. This **foreshadows** Piggy’s death in Chapter 11.

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

1. *When commenting on Golding’s use of description, point out that his* ***natural descriptions*** *are mingled with events. The first two paragraphs of this chapter set the scene and action. Golding writes ‘A sliver of moon rose over the horizon’ (p103), going on to describe the battle from the vantage point of the island. Notice ‘but there were other lights in the sky that moved fast, winked or went out’ (p103).*
2. ***Simon emerges as a complex and important minor character****. Despite the fact that he says and does comparatively little, his speech and actions are highly significant. Take careful note of what happens whenever his name is mentioned.*