

CONTEXTUAL QUESTION ON *LORD OF THE FLIES*

Read the following extract and answer the questions that follow:



Argument started again. Ralph held out the glimmering conch and Maurice took it obediently. The meeting subsided.

“I mean when Jack says you can be frightened because people are frightened anyway that’s all right. But when he says there’s only pigs on this island I expect he’s right but he doesn’t know, not really, not certainly I mean” - Maurice took a breath - “My daddy says there’s things, what d’you call’em that make ink - squids - that are hundreds of yards long and eat whales whole.” He paused again and laughed gaily. “I don’t believe in the beast of course. As Piggy says, life’s scientific, but we don’t know, do we? Not certainly, I mean-”

Someone shouted.

“A squid couldn’t come up out of the water!”

“Could!”

“Couldn’t!”

In a moment the platform was full of arguing, gesticulating shadows. To Ralph, seated, this seemed the breaking-up of sanity. Fear, beasts, no general agreement that the fire was all-important: and when one tried to get the thing straight the argument sheered off, bringing up fresh, unpleasant matter.

He could see a whiteness in the gloom near him so he grabbed it from Maurice and blew as loudly as he could. The assembly was shocked into silence. Simon was close to him, laying his hands on the conch. Simon felt a perilous necessity to speak; but to speak in assembly was a terrible thing to him.

“Maybe,” he said hesitantly “maybe there is a beast.”

The assembly cried out savagely and Ralph stood up in amazement.

“You, Simon? You believe in this?”

“I don’t know,” said Simon. His heartbeats were choking him. “But.....”

The storm broke.

“Sit down!”

“Shut up!”

“Take the conch!”

“Sod you!”

“Shut up!”

Ralph shouted.

“Hear him! He’s got the conch!”

“What I mean is ... maybe it’s only us.”

“Nuts!”

That was from Piggy, shocked out of decorum. Simon went on.

“We could be sort of ...”

Simon became inarticulate in his effort to express mankind’s essential illness. Inspiration came to him.

“What’s the dirtiest thing there is?”

As an answer Jack dropped into the uncomprehending silence that followed it the one crude, expressive syllable. Release was like an orgasm. Those littluns who had climbed back on the twister fell off again and did not mind. The hunters were screaming with delight.

Simon’s effort fell about him in ruins; the laughter beat him cruelly and he shrank away defenceless to his seat.

At last the assembly was silent again. Someone spoke out of turn.

“Maybe he means it’s some sort of ghost.”

Ralph lifted the conch and peered into the gloom. The lightest thing was the pale beach. Surely the littluns were nearer? Yes - there was no doubt about it, they were huddled into a tight knot of bodies in the central grass. A flurry of wind made the palms talk and the noise seemed very loud now that darkness and silence made it so noticeable. Two grey trunks rubbed each other with an evil squeaking sound that no had noticed by day.

Piggy took the conch out of his hands. His voice was indignant.

“I don’t believe in no ghosts - ever!”

Jack was up too, unaccountably angry.

“Who cares what you believe - Fatty!”

“I got the conch!”

There was the sound of a brief tussle and the conch moved to and fro.

“You gimme the conch back!”

Ralph pushed between them and got a thump on the chest. He wrested the conch from someone and sat down breathlessly.

“There’s too much talk about ghosts. We ought to have left all this for daylight.”

A hushed and anonymous voice broke in.

“Perhaps that’s what the beast is - a ghost.”

The assembly was shaken as by a wind.

- 1.1 What do the boys argue about? (2)
- 1.2 Why are the boys concerned about things coming out of the water? (2)
- 1.3 What causes the breaking up of sanity on the island? (line 14) (4)
- 1.4 Why did blowing the conch help to quieten down the children? (2)
- 1.5 Why is Ralph amazed about Simon’s statement that maybe there is a beast? (2)

- 1.6 When Ralph asks Simon if he believes in this, what does the “this” (line 23) refer to? (2)
- 1.7 Which storm broke? (line 25) (2)
- 1.8 What does Simon mean with maybe the beast is “only us”? (line 33) (3)
- 1.9 Why was Piggy shocked out of decorum by Simon’s statement? (Line 35) (2)
- 1.10 What does it mean to be become “inarticulate”? (line 37) (2)
- 1.11 What do you think is mankind’s essential illness? (line 37) (1)
- 1.12 Why does Simon ask the group what the dirtiest thing is they know? (Line 39) (2)
- 1.13 Why is it significant that Jack is able to express in this way the dirtiest thing they know? (3)
- 1.14 Why was Jack angry when Piggy spoke and said he did not believe in any ghosts? (line 54) (1)
- 1.15 Why was the assembly shaken by the idea that the beast may be a ghost? (1)

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