Lord Chapter 2b

*Lord of the Flies*

Chapter 2 page \_\_\_

Complete the annotations on this handout.
Define the vocabulary words in the margin.

Together, joined in an effort by the burden, they staggered up the last steep of the

mountain. Together, they chanted One! Two! Three! and crashed the log on to the great pile.

Then they stepped back, laughing with triumphant pleasure, so that immediately Ralph had to

stand on his head. Below them, boys were still laboring, though some of the small ones had

lost interest and were searching this new forest for fruit. Now the twins, with unsuspected

intelligence, came up the mountain with armfuls of dried leaves and dumped them against the

pile. One by one, as they sensed that the pile was complete, the boys stopped going back for

more and stood, with the pink, shattered top of the mountain around them. Breath came

evenly by now, and sweat dried.

Ralph and Jack looked at each other while society paused about them. The shameful

knowledge grew in them and they did not know how to begin confession.

Ralph spoke first, crimson in the face.

"Will you?"

He cleared his throat and went on.

"Will you light the fire?"

Now the 1. **absurd** situation was open, Jack blushed too. He began to 2. **mutter** vaguely.

"You rub two sticks. You rub--"

He glanced at Ralph, who blurted out the last confession of incompetence.

"Has anyone got any matches?"

"You make a bow and spin the arrow," said Roger. He rubbed his hands in mime. "Psss.

Psss."

A little air was moving over the mountain. Piggy came with it, in shorts and shirt,

laboring cautiously out of the forest with the evening sunlight gleaming from his glasses. He

held the conch under his arm.

Ralph shouted at him.

"Piggy! Have you got any matches?"

The other boys took up the cry till the mountain rang. Piggy shook his head and came

to the pile.

"My! You've made a big heap, haven't you?"

Jack pointed suddenly.

"His specs--use them as burning glasses!"

Piggy was surrounded before he could back away.

"Here--let me go!" His voice rose to a shriek of terror as Jack snatched the glasses off

his face. "Mind out! Give 'em back! I can hardly see! You'll break the conch!"

Ralph elbowed him to ne side and knelt by the pile.

"Stand out of the light."

There was pushing and pulling and officious cries. Ralph moved the lenses back and

forth, this way and that, till a glossy white image of the declining sun lay on a piece of rotten

wood. Almost at once a thin trickle of smoke rose up and made him cough. Jack knelt too and

blew gently, so that the smoke drifted away, thickening, and a tiny flame appeared. The flame,

nearly invisible at first in that bright sunlight, enveloped a small twig, grew, was enriched with

color and reached up to a branch which exploded with a sharp crack. The flame flapped higher

and the boys broke into a cheer.

"My specs!" howled Piggy. "Give me my specs!"

Ralph stood away from the pile and put the glasses into Piggy's groping hands. His

voice subsided to a mutter.

"Jus' blurs, that's all. Hardly see my hand--"

The boys were dancing. The pile was so rotten, and now so tinder-dry, that whole limbs

yielded passionately to the yellow flames that poured upwards and shook a great beard of

flame twenty feet in the air. For yards round the fire the heat was like a blow, and the breeze

was a river of sparks. Trunks crumbled to white dust.

Ralph shouted.

"More wood! All of you get more wood!"

Life became a race with the fire and the boys scattered through the upper forest. To

keep a clean flag of flame flying on the mountain was the immediate end and no one looked

further. Even the smallest boys, unless fruit claimed them, brought little pieces of wood and

threw them in. The air moved a little faster and became a light wind, so that leeward and

windward side were clearly differentiated. On one side the air was cool, but on the other the

fire thrust out a savage arm of heat that 3. **crinkled** hair on the instant. Boys who felt the evening

wind on their damp faces paused to enjoy the freshness of it and then found they were

exhausted. They flung themselves down in the shadows that lay among the shattered rocks.

The beard of flame diminished quickly; then the pile fell inwards with a soft, cindery sound,

and sent a great tree of sparks upwards that leaned away and drifted downwind. The boys lay,

panting like dogs.

Ralph raised his head off his forearms.

"That was no good."

Roger spat efficiently into the hot dust.

"What d'you mean?"

"There wasn't any smoke. Only flame."

Piggy had settled himself in a space between two rocks, and sat with the conch on his

knees.

"We haven't made a fire," he said, "what's any use. We couldn't keep a fire like that

going, not if we tried."

"A fat lot you tried," said Jack contemptuously. "You just sat."

"We used his specs," said Simon, smearing a black cheek with his forearm. "He helped

that way."

"I got the conch," said Piggy indignantly. "You let me speak!"

"The conch doesn't count on top of the mountain," said Jack, "so you shut up."

"I got the conch in my hand."

"Put on green branches," said Maurice. "That's the best way to make smoke."

"I got the conch--"

Jack turned fiercely.

"You shut up!"

Piggy wilted. Ralph took the conch from him and looked round the circle of boys.

"We've got to have special people for looking after the fire. Any day there may be a

ship out there"--he waved his arm at the taut wire of the horizon--"and if we have a signal

going they'll come and take us off. And another thing. We ought to have more rules. Where

the conch is, that's a meeting. The same up here as down there."

They assented. Piggy opened his mouth to speak, caught Jack's eye and shut it again.

Jack held out his hands for the conch and stood up, holding the delicate thing carefully in his

sooty hands.

"I agree with Ralph. We've got to have rules and obey them. After all, we're not

savages. We're English, and the English are best at everything. So we've got to do the right

things."

He turned to Ralph.

"Ralph, I'll split up the choir--my hunters, that is--into groups, and we'll be responsible

for keeping the fire going--"

This generosity brought a spatter of applause from the boys, so that Jack grinned at

them, then waved the conch for silence.

"We'll let the fire burn out now. Who would see smoke at night-time, anyway? And we

can start the fire again whenever we like. Altos, you can keep the fire going this week, and

trebles the next--"

The assembly assented gravely.

"And we'll be responsible for keeping a lookout too. If we see a ship out there"--they

followed the direction of his bony arm with their eyes--"we'll put green branches on. Then

there'll be more smoke."

They gazed intently at the dense blue of the horizon, as if a little silhouette might

appear there at any moment.

The sun in the west was a drop of burning gold that slid nearer and nearer the sill of the

world. All at once they were aware of the evening as the end of light and warmth.

Roger took the conch and looked round at them gloomily.

"I've been watching the sea. There hasn't been the trace of a ship. Perhaps we'll never

be rescued."

A murmur rose and swept away. Ralph took back the conch.

"I said before we'll be rescued sometime. We've just got to wait, that's all."

Daring, indignant, Piggy took the conch.

"That's what I said! I said about our meetings and things and then you said shut up--"

His voice lifted into the whine of virtuous recrimination. They stirred and began to

shout him down.

"You said you wanted a small fire and you been and built a pile like a hayrick. If I say

anything," cried Piggy, with bitter realism, "you say shut up; but if Jack or Maurice or Simon--"

He paused in the tumult, standing, looking beyond them and down the unfriendly side

of the mountain to the great patch where they had found dead wood. Then he laughed so

strangely that they were hushed, looking at the flash of his spectacles in astonishment. They

followed his gaze to find the sour joke.

"You got your small fire all right."

Smoke was rising here and there among the creepers that festooned the dead or dying

trees. As they watched, a flash of fire appeared at the root of one wisp, and then the smoke

thickened. Small flames stirred at the trunk of a tree and crawled away through leaves and

**4. brushwood**, dividing and increasing. One patch touched a tree trunk and scrambled up like a

bright squirrel. The smoke increased, sifted, rolled outwards. The squirrel leapt on the wings

of the wind and clung to another standing tree, eating downwards. Beneath the dark canopy of

leaves and smoke the fire laid hold on the forest and began to gnaw. Acres of black and yellow

smoke rolled steadily toward the sea. At the sight of the flames and the irresistible course of

the fire, the boys broke into shrill, excited cheering. The flames, as though they were a kind of

wild life, crept as a jaguar creeps on its belly toward a line of birch-like saplings that fledged an

outcrop of the pink rock. They flapped at the first of the trees, and the branches grew a brief

foliage of fire. The heart of flame leapt nimbly across the gap between the trees and then went

swinging and flaring along the whole row of them. Beneath the capering boys a quarter of a

mile square of forest was savage with smoke and flame. The separate noises of the fire 5. **merged**

into a drum-roll that seemed to shake the mountain.

"You got your small fire all right."

Startled, Ralph realized that the boys were falling still and silent, feeling the beginnings

of awe at the power set free below them. The knowledge and the awe made him savage.

"Oh, shut up!"

"I got the conch," said Piggy, in a hurt voice. "I got a right to speak."

They looked at him with eyes that lacked interest in what they saw, and cocked ears at

the drum-roll of the fire. Piggy glanced nervously into hell and cradled the conch.

"We got to let that burn out now. And that was our firewood."

He licked his lips.

"There ain't nothing we can do. We ought to be more careful. I'm scared--"

Jack dragged his eyes away from the fire.

"You're always scared. Yah--Fatty!"

"I got the conch," said Piggy bleakly. He turned to Ralph. "I got the conch, ain't I

Ralph?"

Unwillingly Ralph turned away from the splendid, awful sight.

"What's that?"

"The conch. I got a right to speak."

The twins giggled together.

"We wanted smoke--"

"Now look--!"

A pall stretched for miles away from the island. All the boys except Piggy started to

giggle; presently they were shrieking with laughter.

Piggy lost his temper.

"I got the conch! Just you listen! The first thing we ought to have made was shelters

down there by the beach. It wasn't half cold down there in the night. But the first time Ralph

says 'fire' you goes howling and screaming up this here mountain. Like a pack of kids!"

By now they were listening to the tirade.

"How can you expect to be rescued if you don't put first things first and act proper?"

He took off his glasses and made as if to put down the conch; but the sudden motion

toward it of most of the older boys changed his mind. He tucked the shell under his arm, and

crouched back on a rock.

"Then when you get here you build a bonfire that isn't no use. Now you been and set

the whole island on fire. Won't we look funny if the whole island burns up? Cooked fruit,

that's what we'll have to eat, and roast pork. And that's nothing to laugh at! You said Ralph

was chief and you don't give him time to think. Then when he says something you rush off,

like, like--"

He paused for breath, and the fire growled at them.

"And that's not all. Them kids. The little 'uns. Who took any notice of 'em? Who

knows how many we got?"

Ralph took a sudden step forward.

"I told you to. I told you to get a list of names!"

"How could I," cried Piggy indignantly, "all by myself? They waited for two minutes,

then they fell in the sea; they went into the forest; they just scattered everywhere. How was I

to know which was which?"

Ralph licked pale lips.

"Then you don't know how many of us there ought to be?"

"How could I with them little 'uns running round like insects? Then when you three

came back, as soon as you said make a fire, they all ran away, and I never had a chance--"

"That's enough!" said Ralph sharply, and snatched back the conch. "If you didn't you

didn't."

"--then you come up here an' pinch my specs--"

Jack turned on him.

"You shut up!"

"--and them little 'uns was wandering about down there where the fire is. How d'you

know they aren't still there?"

Piggy stood up and pointed to the smoke and flames. A murmur rose among the boys

and died away. Something strange was happening to Piggy, for he was gasping for breath.

"That little 'un--" gasped Piggy--"him with the mark on his face, I don't see him.

Where is he now?"

The crowd was as silent as death.

"Him that talked about the snakes. He was down there--"

A tree exploded in the fire like a bomb. Tall swathes of creepers rose for a moment

into view, agonized, and went down again. The little boys screamed at them.

"Snakes! Snakes! Look at the snakes!"

In the west, and unheeded, the sun lay only an inch or two above the sea. Their faces

were lit redly from beneath. Piggy fell against a rock and clutched it with both hands.

"That little 'un that had a mark on his face--where is--he now? I tell you I don't see

him."

The boys looked at each other fearfully, unbelieving.

"--where is he now?"

Ralph muttered the reply as if in shame. "Perhaps he went back to the, the--" Beneath

them, on the unfriendly side of the mountain, the drum-roll continued.