



## RALPH

### RALPH'S ROLE IN THE NOVEL

Ralph is the chief and uses the conch to control meetings. He has the responsibility of looking after the other survivors. In the novel he:

- blows the conch to summon other survivors (see Ch. 1, pp. 12–13)
- decides to build a fire to help the boys get rescued (see Ch. 2, p. 37)
- attempts to build shelters for the younger boys (see Ch. 3, p. 50)
- raises issues to aid survival and rescue (see Ch. 5, pp. 84–8)
- shows courage, exploring a part of the island where the other boys think the beast may lurk (see Ch. 6, pp. 114–15)
- is hunted by the savages and saved by the naval officer (see Ch. 12, p. 222).

### RALPH'S IMPORTANCE TO THE NOVEL AS A WHOLE

As the first **character** we meet, then elected chief, Ralph is the novel's **protagonist**. He represents order and civilisation and Golding uses him to show a practical and rational approach to the problems that face the boys.

Ralph is an easy character to sympathise with, as he seems ordinary (having none of Simon's strangeness or Piggy's social difficulties, for example) and reasonable. Furthermore, Golding makes him a sympathetic character because it is usually Ralph's view that is presented sympathetically in the novel. This shows that Golding views him as admirable.

At the end of the novel, Ralph is perhaps the least changed boy left, having not given in to savagery. He is the only one to communicate at all coherently with the naval officer.



#### TOP TIP

A02

It is significant that Ralph notices the conch and insists on the need for signal fires, as both of these elements are linked to the idea of civilisation.

### TOP TIP: WRITING ABOUT RALPH AND PIGGY'S RELATIONSHIP

A01

When you are writing about Ralph and Piggy's relationship, make sure that you track how Golding uses this to show changes in Ralph throughout the novel. Remember that although Ralph is dismissive of Piggy at the start of the novel, he does not possess Jack's malice. Having upset Piggy by using his nickname to raise a laugh, he appreciates Piggy's sense of humiliation and finds a way out: *'Better Piggy than Fatty ... I'm sorry if you feel like that'* (Ch. 1, pp. 21–2). This apology shows that he is able to act diplomatically, demonstrating his leadership abilities in handling other people's feelings. Through listening to Piggy, Ralph learns to take his responsibilities seriously – thinking of rescue and shelter.

#### KEY CONTEXT

A03

One possible way of viewing the text is as a struggle between democratic and totalitarian forces (represented in Golding's day by the West – the USA, UK, etc. – and the USSR, now Russia).

### EXAM FOCUS: WRITING ABOUT RALPH

A01

Key point	Evidence/Further meaning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ralph has no hidden depths or unhealthy character traits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>'there was a mildness about his mouth and eyes that proclaimed no devil.'</i> (Ch. 1, p. 5)</li> <li>• Suggests that Ralph is gentle and can be trusted, as he is exactly what he seems.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ralph's efforts are directed to keeping the fire going.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>'They'll see our smoke.'</i> (Ch. 4, p. 69)</li> <li>• Shows Ralph's focus on practical matters, and his ability to plan for longer-term goals.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ralph listens to Piggy's advice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>'new understanding that Piggy had given him.'</i> (Ch. 7, p. 129)</li> <li>• Reveals Ralph's awareness that Piggy's thinking skills are superior and have helped him lead effectively.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only Ralph is able to come to terms with the reasons why Simon was killed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>'Don't you understand, Piggy? The things we did—'</i> (Ch. 10, p. 173)</li> <li>• Shows his true leadership qualities. He is willing to share the blame and responsibility for Simon's death.</li> </ul>

### REVISION FOCUS: RALPH



Try making a list of Ralph's qualities. For example, Ralph is:

- Able to see the good in people and in the island
- Easy to like and naturally at ease
- Tall, blond, good-looking and one of the older boys
- Able to speak at meetings and considers other people
- A natural leader

Find up to three quotations from different parts of the novel to show each of these qualities.

## RESPONDING TO WRITERS' EFFECTS

The two most important assessment objectives are **AO1** and **AO2**. They are about *what* writers do (the choices they make, and the effects these create), *what* your ideas are (your analysis and interpretation), and *how* you write about them (how well you explain your ideas).

### ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE 1

What does it say?	What does it mean?	Dos and Don'ts
<p>Read, understand and respond to texts.</p> <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response</li> <li>● Use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations</li> </ul>	<p>You must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use some of the literary terms you have learned (correctly!)</li> <li>● Write in a professional way (not a sloppy, chatty way)</li> <li>● Show you have thought for yourself</li> <li>● Back up your ideas with examples, including quotations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Don't write:</b>  <i>Ralph is a good character. Golding describes him using nice words like 'fair'. He has 'a mildness about his mouth and eyes that proclaimed no devil.'</i></p> <p><b>Do write:</b>  <i>Golding consistently presents Ralph as a moral and decent character. For example, in Chapter 1, when Golding describes him as having 'a mildness' to his face which 'proclaimed no devil', using the noun 'mildness' shows that he is gentle.</i></p>

### IMPROVING YOUR CRITICAL STYLE

Use a variety of words and phrases to show effects:

**Golding suggests ..., conveys ..., implies ..., explores ..., demonstrates ..., signals ..., describes how ..., shows how ...** I/we (as readers) **infer ..., recognise ..., understand ..., question...**

For example, look at these two paragraphs by different students about Piggy. Note the difference in the quality of expression.

Student A:

This sounds as if William Golding is speaking!

It could 'mean' this, but there are other possibilities.

Golding says that Piggy is whiny when the boys do anything he doesn't like. In Chapter 5 he says 'What's grown-ups going to say?' This means that Piggy thinks adults will tell them off when they get rescued. Golding is saying that Piggy is more like a grown-up than the other boys, because he thinks like a grown-up but this annoys the other boys who find him boring.

Very chatty and informal

Quite a limited range of vocabulary, making the point repetitive

Student B:

Good level of vocabulary

Neat way to also show a wider appreciation of Piggy's character

Golding presents Piggy as the boys' link to the adult world when he criticises their behaviour. For example, in Chapter 5 he asks, 'What's grown-ups going to say?' This reveals his expectation that they will be rescued and have to explain themselves to adults. This is one of many times that Golding explicitly links Piggy with grown-up thought, perhaps to remind us that he represents reason and an adult outlook.

This helps the student include another idea about Piggy by examining assumptions behind his speech

Explores the idea rather than stating it bluntly as fact

### ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE 2

What does it say?	What does it mean?	Dos and Don'ts
<p>Analyse the language, form and structure used by the writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.</p>	<p>'Analyse' – comment in detail on particular aspects of the text or language.</p> <p>'Language' – vocabulary, <b>imagery</b>, variety of sentences, dialogue/speech, etc.</p> <p>'Form' – how the story is told (e.g. first person narrative, letters, diaries, chapter by chapter?)</p> <p>'Structure' – the order in which events are revealed, or in which characters appear, or descriptions are presented</p> <p>'Create meaning' – what can we, as readers, infer from what the writer tells us? What is implied by particular descriptions, or events?</p> <p>'Subject terminology' – words you should use when writing about novels, such as <b>protagonist, imagery, setting</b>, etc.</p>	<p><b>Don't write:</b>  <i>The writing is really descriptive in this bit so I get a good picture of the island.</i></p> <p><b>Do write:</b>  <i>Golding conveys the sense that the island setting is significant, as it is presented with connotations of both tranquillity and danger. Golding's use of the awkward-sounding phrase 'interrupted abruptly' (makes the platform sound like an intrusion on the landscape, while the nouns 'coolness and shade' imply that it is a safe place.</i></p>

### THE THREE 'I'S

- The best analysis focuses on specific ideas, events or uses of language and thinks about what is **implied**.
- This means looking beyond the obvious and beginning to draw **inferences**. On the surface, Golding's initial description of the island is visual, but what deeper ideas are suggested about how the setting will affect the boys' adventure?
- From the inferences you make across the text as a whole, you can arrive at your own **interpretation** – a sense of the bigger picture, a wider evaluation of a person, relationship or idea.