# AQA English Literature GCSE

## *Lord of the Flies*: Character Profile

### Piggy

This work by PMT Education is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

# Piggy

## Character Summary



Piggy represents **intelligence**, **reason** and the **fragility of civilisation**. He embodies the moral and rational frameworks that society teaches, desperately trying to maintain order on the island by upholding the conch as a **symbol** of structured democracy and recreating the systems of school and society. He brings practical, useful ideas such as holding meetings, keeping a register of names and **rationalising** the boys' fear of the **Beast**.

Despite his intelligence, Piggy is constantly bullied because of his physical differences. His mistreatment reveals how reason and intellect are often dismissed in society. Piggy becomes a **metaphor** for the vulnerable members of society, who are essential but mocked. He is tormented and ultimately killed, signalling the **collapse** of civilisation on the island.

Golding uses Piggy to demonstrate that values of reason and intellect cannot survive without the structures and protection of civilisation. Once those structures **dissolve**, the boys' descent into savagery shows how quickly logic is silenced and how brutally the vulnerable are destroyed. His death is Golding's proof that intelligence and morality are powerless when society does not actively value and protect them.

## Key Chapters and Events

| Chapter | Piggy's Key Moments |
|---|---|
| **1** | • Piggy is introduced as an outsider.<br>• Piggy suggests they hold a meeting, and makes a list of names. They find the conch.<br>• The boys bully Piggy for his name and appearance. |
| **2** | • Jack grabs the glasses off Piggy's face to use for the fire.<br>• Piggy realises they have lost the boy with the birthmark. |
| **4** | • Piggy and Ralph are furious that Jack has let out the fire. |
| **5** | • Piggy denies the existence of a beast. |
| **9** | • Ralph and Piggy go to Jack's feast. They get involved in the mock hunt of Roger and the frenzied mob that kills Simon. |
| **10** | • Piggy refuses to admit Simon's death was murder, calling it an accident.<br>• Jack and his hunters steal Piggy's glasses. |

| | |
|---|---|
| 11 | • Piggy tries to stand up to Jack and his tribe, to get his glasses back. Roger releases a boulder that crushes Piggy and the conch. |

## How does Piggy change throughout *Lord of the Flies*?

**Beginning of the text: First Impressions (Chapter 1: The Sound of the Shell)**

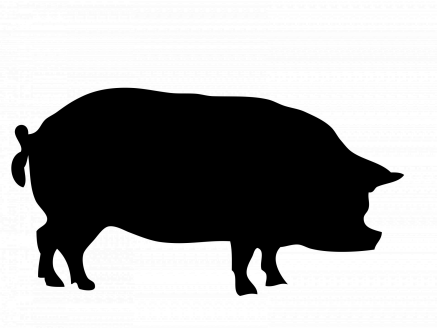
From the beginning, Piggy is presented as a **rational** and intelligent character, but one that is overlooked and mocked due to his appearance and physical differences. Golding introduces Piggy as different to the other boys, making him vulnerable.

He is described as: ***"...an outsider, not only by accent, which did not matter, but by fat, and ass-mar, and specs, and a certain disinclination to manual labour."*** The **listing** emphasises how many aspects of Piggy's identity set him apart, giving the boys multiple reasons to mock him. This highlights how quickly society identifies and targets differences. This immediately encourages readers to **sympathise** with Piggy and recognise how unfairly he is judged.



However, despite his physical weaknesses, Piggy is intellectually superior: ***"Piggy for all his ludicrous body, had brains."*** He is determined to establish order and structure on the island, realising the severity of the situation: ***"Nobody don't know we're here."*** He insists "***We ought to have a meeting"*** showing his instinct for organisation and **democracy**. Yet, Golding states that ***"Piggy was no chief"*** showing that intelligence and logic are not valued leadership qualities among the boys.

Despite civilisation relying on reason, Golding shows the boys value charisma and physical strength, which are qualities Piggy lacks. When they bully him, Golding describes ***"the boys were a closed circuit of sympathy with Piggy outside"*** showing he is excluded from their unity as a group. Piggy's logic is useless when no one listens which highlights Golding's message that rationality requires shared agreement within a society.



Golding never reveals Piggy's actual name. He goes from ***"the fat boy"*** to ***"Fatty"*** to ***"Piggy".*** This nickname **dehumanises** him and links him to the pigs that the boys later hunt, presenting him as **prey** that the boys will hunt and destroy.

**End of the Text: Piggy's Death + Death of the Conch**

At the end of the text, Piggy is killed by Roger, who deliberately releases a boulder that crushes him: ***"The rock struck Piggy a glancing blow from chin to knee; the conch exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist"*** (Chapter 11: Castle Rock). This violent, intentional act of murder shows the triumph of human **evil** on the island. This reinforces Golding's message that morality requires **enforcement** as Jack's tribe ignores **ethical limits** without consequences.



The shattering of the conch symbolises the final **collapse of democracy** and civilisation. There is nothing to uphold reason or **innocence** on the island. Civilisation and logic cannot survive against the stronger and violent forces of savagery.
The sea collects his body, eradicating his existence: ***"the water boiled white and pink over the rock; and when it went, sucking back again, the body of Piggy was gone."*** (Chapter 11: Castle Rock). He receives no burial or remembrance from the boys, showing how easily society discards those who are **undervalued**.

Only at the end does Ralph fully understand Piggy's worth, remembering ***"the true, wise friend called Piggy"*** (Chapter 12: Cry of the Hunters). Golding shows how Piggy's loyalty and intelligence were never appreciated until they were lost. His death haunts the island, marking the moment the boys lose their morality and can no longer return to childhood **innocence**.

## Key Themes

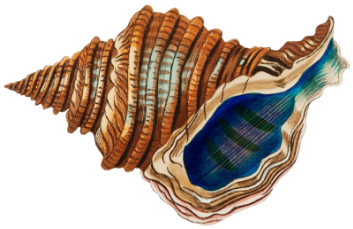
### Civilisation vs savagery

Piggy tries to uphold civilisation on the island, relying on logic and rules to guide the boys. He takes on the role of the adult, becoming frustrated at their failure to prioritise rescue and responsibility. Piggy understands that survival depends on maintaining order and democratic structures.

Piggy's faith in adults reflects his **naive** belief that they are figures of morality and reason: ***"Grownups know things...They'd meet and have tea and discuss. Then things 'ud be all right—"*** (Chapter 5: Beast from Water.) Golding shows his misplaced confidence in an adult world that is already in destructive chaos. Piggy's hair also ***"never seemed to grow"*** (Chapter 4: Painted Faces and Long Hair) **symbolising** how he remains connected to civilization as the island descends into savagery.


CC BY NC ND

He attempts to recreate civilised society by making a list of names: ***"asking names and frowning to remember them"*** (Chapter 1: The Sound of the Shell) recognising that **identity** and **accountability** are essential for a functioning society. Piggy is the only one who notices the disappearance of the boy with the birthmark: ***"That little 'un that had a mark on his face—where is—he now?"*** (Chapter 2: Fire on the Mountain) showing his concern for taking care of every individual in their 'society'.



Piggy's respect for the **conch** highlights his commitment to civilisation. He treats it as the most important object on the island, aware of its fragility and power. The conch gives him a voice he lacks and he speaks on behalf of the Littleun's by ***"listening and interpreting to the assembly."***(Chapter 2: Fire on the Mountain.) He tries to hold **authority** by repeatedly insisting ***"I got the conch!"*** when others won't listen to his ideas. Golding shows how civilisation protects vulnerable members of society, until it begins to break down.

However, Golding shows that even the most rationalised and civilised characters are not immune to savagery. At Jack's feast, Piggy is ***"Betrayed by his stomach"*** (Chapter 9: A View to a Death) giving in to the temptation of meat and the security of the group. Ralph and Piggy become ***"eager to take a place in this demented but partly secure society."*** (Chapter 9: A View to a Death.) Golding suggests civilised structures are **inherently** weak and require constant effort to maintain, even for the most rational individuals.

Despite this, Piggy continues to fight for order. At Castle Rock, he refuses to carry a weapon: ***"You can take spears if you want but I shan't. What's the good?"***(Chapter 11: Castle Rock) showing his refusal to adopt violence. Piggy pleads to the boys: ***"Which is better—to have rules and agree, or to hunt and kill?***"(Chapter 11: Castle Rock) showing his final attempt to defend reason against savagery. Piggy's death shortly after marks the complete destruction of civilised values.




CC BY NC ND

**Human Nature and Evil**

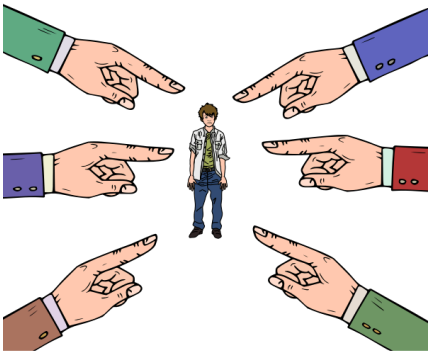
The boys' treatment of Piggy exposes the darker side of human nature and reveals how quickly cruelty emerges and intensifies when there are no consequences to stop them. They mock his weight, asthma and intelligence and their **prejudices** against Piggy shows mankind's instinct to isolate and belittle the vulnerable. Their cruelty progresses from teasing to physical violence to intentional murder. Piggy's death, alongside the conch, shows how reason and morality are annihilated at the hands of evil.



Piggy's logical mind cannot process the idea that mankind is **innately evil.** When Simon is murdered, Piggy cannot accept that ordinary young boys were capable of **brutality** and intentional violence, insisting ***"It was an accident...and that's that."*** He tries to **rationalise** their actions: ***"It was dark...we were scared!"*** (Chapter 10: The Shell and the Glasses) refusing to face the truth of human cruelty and preferring to justify it with excuses. Golding suggests that the real challenge for humans is not resisting evil, but acknowledging one's own capacity for harm.

**Fear and the Beast**

Piggy denies the existence of a Beast because he believes that fear should be approached with logic rather than superstition. His insistence that ***"I know there isn't no beast—not with claws and all that, I mean—"*** (Chapter 5: Beast from Water) shows his attempt to calm down the boys by dismissing their terror as irrational. He criticises the Littluns' **hysteria** reinforcing his belief that fear only exists when people allow themselves to imagine beasts. Piggy claims that ***"Life... is scientific" (Chapter 5: Beast from Water)*** which reveals his reliance on evidence and **rationality**.



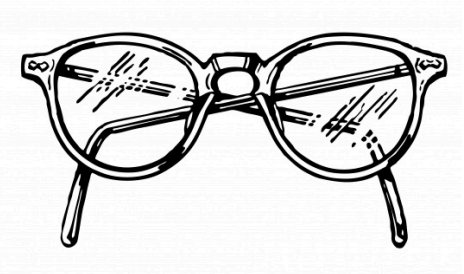
Piggy does recognise fear itself is real, saying "***Unless we get frightened of people"*** (Chapter 5: Beast from Water) which shows he understands humans, not monsters, can be dangerous.

However, he cannot accept Simon's suggestions that the real Beast is the boys themselves. His reaction,***"Nuts!"*** (Chapter 5: Beast from Water) and calling Simon ***"cracked"*** (Chapter 8: Gift for the Darkness) shows how strongly he rejects this idea of internal evil as it goes against his civilised reason. The truth feels too illogical and dark for him to face. Although Piggy understands fear, he cannot comprehend the deeper truth.


CC BY NC ND

## Key Symbol

### Piggy's Glasses



Piggy's glasses **symbolise** reason, intelligence and the last traces of order on the island. As the boys shed their clothes and uniform, the glasses remain as a relic of the civilised world they have left behind. Piggy uses them to "see" both **metaphorically** and literally. They allow him to think logically, make plans for survival and maintain a rational perspective. Although the boys mock Piggy, they rely on his glasses to light the **signal fire**, a **symbol** of hope and rescue. Their inability to light the fire themselves shows how they exploit Piggy's intellect without respecting him and they depend on his logic for survival.

The glasses also represent **technology** and **scientific progress.** When Jack steals them, Golding shows how easily science can be abused when placed in the wrong hands. This reflects the destructive misuse of technology in war, such as the atomic bomb.

Piggy's emotional vulnerability is revealed through his glasses. They often become misted with tears or humiliation, so Piggy's judgement becomes clouded by fear and shame. Golding suggests that the abuse of intelligence leads to a loss of clarity. Without them or his rationality, Piggy is helpless and vulnerable, lacking physical or emotional power.



As the glasses become damaged and are eventually stolen, Golding **symbolises** the gradual destruction of reason and civilisation on the island. Piggy's physical vulnerability means his ideas cannot survive in a violent, unrestrained environment without protection.

## Context

Piggy represents social and physical vulnerability and Golding uses him to expose how society treats those who are seen as "**Other**." His working class accent, asthma, weight and reliance on glasses immediately position him outside the boys' power hierarchy. Although he is the most intellectually capable boy on the island, he is consistently excluded and mocked. Piggy's insights are often undervalued because of the boys' **prejudices** against him. Golding shows how societies, especially ones with authoritarian or fascist structure often devalue individuals who do not fit certain ideals.


CC BY NC ND

His treatment reflects how minorities are often stereotyped and **scapegoated**, **exploited** for knowledge and labour while being despised.



Golding suggests that when civilisation and democracy weaken and **fascist** movements rise, those that are already **marginalised** become the first targets of violence because they are easier to blame and destroy. Piggy's death ultimately reveals how a society can turn on its most vulnerable members when fear, power and **conformity** replace moral and social responsibility. This reinforces Golding's message that without strong ethical boundaries, those that are "othered" are not just excluded, but erased.



In one interpretation of the text, Piggy is said to represent the **superego**, the part of the **psyche** that enforces rules, morality and social responsibility. With Piggy's death, Jack's **id** violently dominates the island and Ralph's **ego** can no longer balance the competing forces. Golding shows the ability of mankind's innate savage impulses to collapse order.

## Key Relationships

### Relationship with Jack

From their first meeting, Jack is hostile towards Piggy. Golding describes how Piggy ***"shrank to the other side of Ralph"*** (Chapter 1: The Sound of the Shell) showing his fear of Jack's **authority**. Jack relentlessly mocks and shames him, mirroring the bullying Piggy experienced at school. His early rejection of "***We don't want you"*** (Chapter 1: The Sound of the Shell) establishes Piggy's **outsider** status and shows how quickly **hierarchies** form based on strength and confidence. Jack frequently tries to silence Piggy's voice saying ***"Shut up, Fatty"*** (Chapter 1: The Sound of the Shell) Piggy's intelligence threatens Jack's dominance, so he must humiliate him to prevent him from challenging his decisions.

As Jack's power grows, his cruelty intensifies. He moves from verbal insults to physical violence, punching Piggy in the stomach and later hitting his glasses off his face. Piggy becomes terrorised by Jack, his voice rising ***"to a shriek"*** (Chapter 2: Fire on the Mountain) echoing the screams of the pigs the hunters kill. Golding blurs the line between Piggy and the sow, **foreshadowing** how Jack's savagery will escalate from animal to human victims.


CC BY NC ND

Jack's dependence on Piggy's glasses exposes the **hypocrisy** of his leadership. He rejects civilisation, yet he relies on Piggy's rationality. The theft of the glasses is an act of violence that effectively blinds Piggy, taking away his ability to see and think clearly.



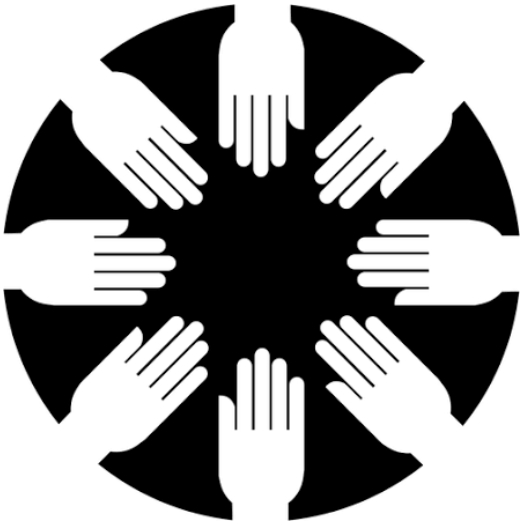
Jack uses the glasses to create fires for his tribe's rituals and cooking, showing how reason can be **exploited** as a tool for savagery.

Golding uses Jack's escalating cruelty towards Piggy to illustrate how civilisation collapses when instinct and aggression overpower morality and rational thought. Their relationship becomes a **microcosm** of Golding's warning about human nature and our competing impulses of reason and destruction.

**Relationship with Ralph**

Ralph and Piggy are the first to meet on the island. Together they discover the conch and call the initial assembly, linking them through a shared desire to recreate order and **civilisation**. However, Ralph often overlooks Piggy and joins in mocking him. Golding suggests that pressure to conform can override empathy and **moral judgement.** Civilisation can be weakened when people prioritise popularity over their **principles**.

At the start, he reveals Piggy's hated nickname despite being asked not to. Piggy feels deeply betrayed by this: ***"His face flushed, his mouth trembled."*** (Chapter 1: The Sound of the Shell.) However, he is eager to form a friendship with Ralph, clinging to him for security. Piggy values the small moments of kindness he gets from Ralph: ***"Piggy grinned reluctantly, pleased despite himself at even this much recognition."*** (Chapter 1: Sound of the Shell). He holds **unwavering loyalty**, supporting him as chief and offering guidance. Through their relationship, Golding shows how civilisation depends on **cooperation**.



Ralph's treatment of Piggy changes throughout the novel as he gradually comes to appreciate Piggy's intelligence and **morality.** Piggy repeatedly reminds him of their priorities: ***"Ralph – remember what we came for. The fire. My specs."*** (Chapter 11: Castle Rock), acting as Ralph's voice of civilisation when he acts impulsively. They become unlikely **allies**. Golding reveals how civilisation relies on cooperation and that leadership without reason becomes unstable. After Piggy's death, Ralph realises the weight of the loss of the only true friend he had: ***"What was the sensible thing to do? There was no Piggy to talk sense."*** (Chapter 12: Cry of the Hunters).


CC BY NC ND

## Key Quotations

***"With the martyred expression of a parent who has to keep up with the senseless ebullience of the children"*** (Chapter 2: Fire on the Mountain)

- This presents Piggy as a **metaphorical** parent figure, emphasising his superior maturity and his role as the voice of reason on the island.
- The **adjective** "***martyred***" suggests he suffers while trying to maintain sense on an island where the boys are becoming progressively more savage.
- Golding shows Piggy's frustration as he tries to manage their impulsive and "***senseless***" behaviour. He is **isolated** as a sensible character committed to order and remaining connected to the adult world.

***"Acting like a crowd of kids"*** (Chapter 2: Fire on the Mountain)

- This **simile** shows Piggy's irritation that the boys are not prioritising responsibilities like building shelters and keeping the signal fire burning.
- This is **ironic** as, although they are actually children, Piggy behaves with more responsibility following the law and order of the adult world.
- While the others celebrate the freedom of having no adults, Piggy feels a weight of duty to maintain school-like structure and order.

***"What are we? Humans? Or animals? Or savages? What's grownups going to think? Going off—hunting pigs—letting fires out—and now!"*** (Chapter 5: Beast from Water)

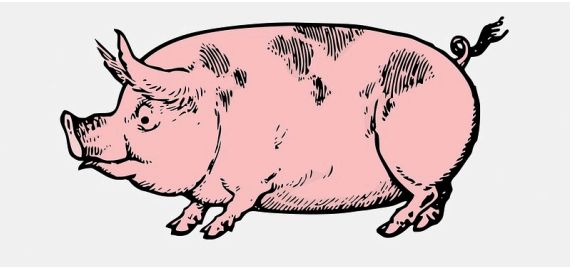
- Golding uses a series of **rhetorical questions** to show Piggy's desperation as he attempts to make the boys recognise how far they have drifted from civilisation. By moving from "***humans"*** to "***animals"*** to "***savages"***, Golding emphasises the loss of rationality and morality on the island.
- Piggy's question "***What are we?***" highlights their loss of **identity.** His mention of ***"grownups"*** shows that he still holds himself to the standards of the adult world, which is ironically at war itself.
- The **fragmented speech**, represented by the **dashes**, shows his frustration at the boys prioritising the thrill of hunting over logical survival. His plea reinforces his role as the voice of reason, trying to restrain the island from descending into savagery.

"***His head opened and stuff came out and turned red. Piggy's arms and legs twitched a bit, like a pig's after it has been killed"*** (Chapter 11: Castle Rock)

- The description of Piggy after his death **dehumanises** him, aligning him with the sow that the boys hunted earlier. The **simile** ***"Like a pig"*** removes the boundary between human and animal, presenting him as vulnerable prey. Human life has become worthless to the boys.


CC BY NC ND

- The noun "***stuff***" reduces Piggy's brain to something meaningless, showing the boys **ignorance** of intelligence and rationality.
- Golding uses Piggy's death to show how when civilisation disappears, the values of rationality and morality die with it.




CC BY NC ND