

# Themes and contexts

## Savagery versus civilisation

### Rules: 'the rules are the only thing we've got!'

When the boys first arrive on the island, under Ralph's leadership they begin to set up a civilisation that is similar to the society they had come from and the society that both a post-war reader as well as a modern reader would recognise. This society has assemblies, where voting is used to make democratic decisions, replicating the structure of Parliament. Ralph's society also has 'rules' – just like our laws – to ensure that society works in an orderly way for all. Jack's initial response to rules is seemingly positive, 'We'll have rules!...Lots of rules! Then if anyone breaks 'em – I.' Despite Jack embracing the idea of rules, his focus on punishment for anyone breaking the rules is clear. Later in the novel, we see Wilfred tied up waiting to be beaten for some misbehaviour that is not clear to Sam and Eric or the reader. Here we see Jack's approach to the rules. When those rules don't suit his purposes ('The conch doesn't count on top of the mountain') he will shed them, but he maintains his focus on punishment as a means of controlling the tribe.

### DO IT!

- 1 For each type of brutality, annotate with a character from the novel, specific events and what it shows you about Golding's message.
- 2 Using your annotations in the diagram, are any examples more acceptable than others? Explain your ideas.

### Brutality: 'He was batty. He asked for it.'

In the novel we see many acts of brutality that increase in their severity as the novel progresses. This fits with Golding's message of the darkness within all humankind. However, within autocratic leadership absolute power can also lead to acts of brutality (see also page 71).

