**Excerpt 2 from Coral Island by R.M.Ballantyne – All groups**

We clawed our way up the cliffs overlooking the shore and fell to the ground when we reached the top, gasping for breath. We could see the deserted beach and the rowing boat bobbing in the surf. The pirates were nowhere in sight. When he had caught his breath, Jack gasped, “We have to escape.” “How can we?” Peter cried. “We have no way of reaching another island.” He was right. We had no boat, and it would have been impossible to swim that far. But Jack was not listening. “Let’s get away from here!” he said, and he made for the undergrowth. We had to fight our way through the dense jungle along the edge of the cliffs. Stinging insects buzzed in the air. There was little sound apart from our heavy breathing and the high screech of parrots. At last, we emerged from the undergrowth. There were rocks all around us, as if left after a rockfall or earthquake. The sea thundered down below. “I stumbled upon this place a few weeks ago,” Jack said. He led us through a maze of sandy passages between the rocks. Suddenly, we turned a corner and found ourselves standing on a narrow ledge. A sheer drop lay before us, and a deep pool that was hidden among the rocks. I leant forward and stared down into the water. Jack pointed. “Down there,” he said quietly, “is a cave.” I looked again, surprised by his words. The water was very clear. White sand shone at the bottom of the pool. But I could see no cave. “You see that light?” Jack said. I did. There was a strange, green light in the water which shone out from the side of the rocks, about ten feet below the surface. “That light is shining from a cave,” Jack said. “I found it when I was looking for shellfish. We can dive down into the pool and swim through the entrance. Inside the cave, there is dry rock and room to hide. I’ve been hiding supplies there for weeks.” Peter stiffened. “I can’t dive,” he insisted. Before he could say any more, we heard a branch breaking, and a man’s cough. “They’re close,” Jack whispered. “You must decide, Peter. We can either dive or stand and fight.” Peter let out a frightened laugh. The colour drained from his thin face. “I’d rather die than dive down there,” he said firmly. He began to back away. “I won’t do it.” “Listen, Peter…” I tried to say, but he glared at me in terror. “I told you, I can’t do it!” he said desperately.

Jack looked determined. “Then we must fight,” he said. “We will never leave you.” “There are five of them, Jack,” I pointed out. “We haven’t got a chance.” “Then we will die.” There was a brief silence. Peter took a deep breath. He was struggling to control his fear. I felt certain he would lose the struggle. “Come on then!” he cried suddenly, the words bursting out of him. And before we could move to stop him, he had walked to the edge of the rocks, closed his eyes, and plunged forward into the silent waters.