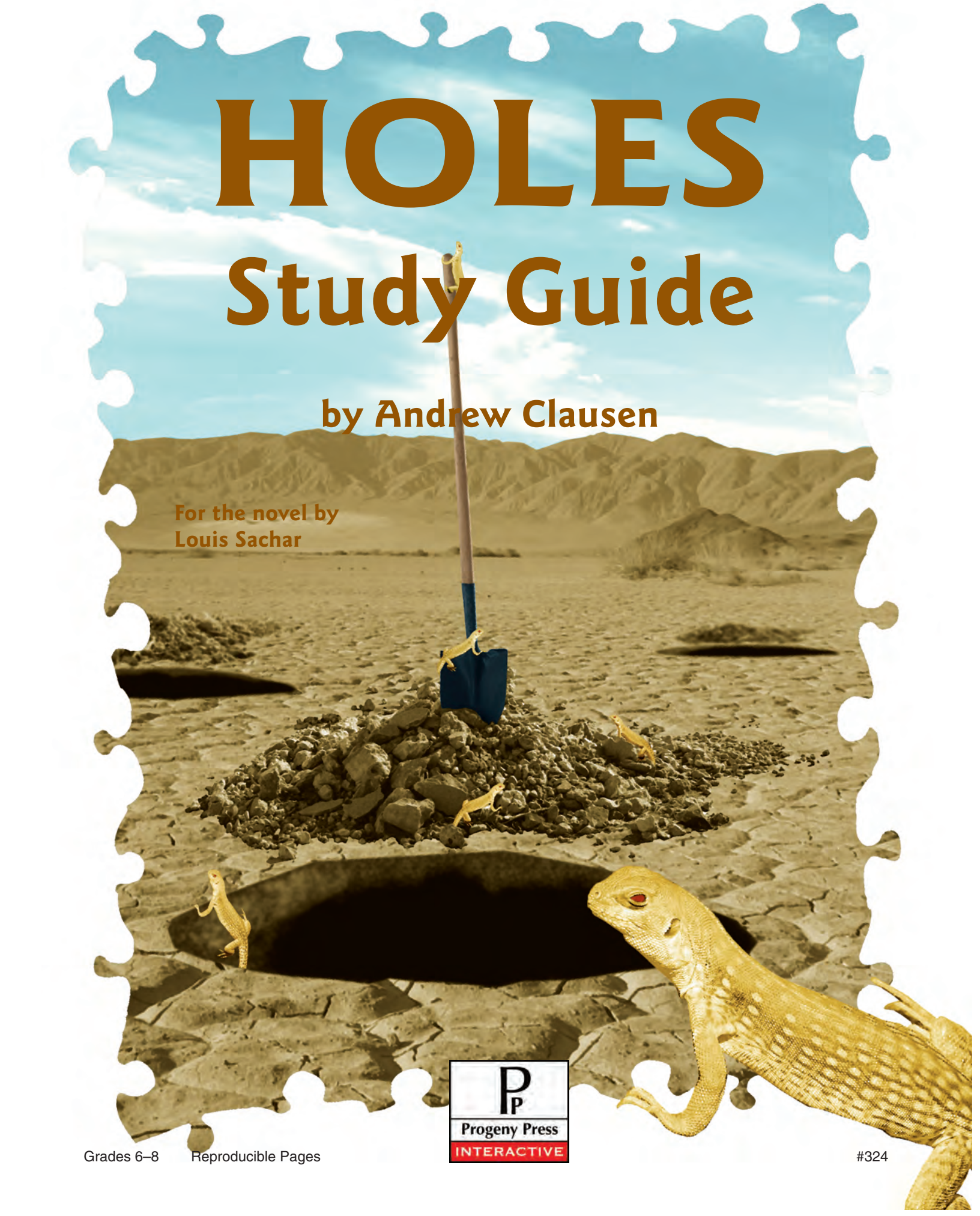
HOLES

Study Guide

by Andrew Clausen

For the novel by
Louis Sachar



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by Andrew Clausen

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Holes Study Guide
A Progeny Press Study Guide
by Andrew Clausen
edited by Rebecca Gilleland

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Study Guide Author

Andrew Clausen has been with Progeny Press since its inception as both a writer and editor of study guides. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin—Eau Claire with a Bachelor's Degree in Communications and Journalism. An avid reader and fan of children's literature, *Holes* is one of his favorite books of recent years for its mix of humor, mystery, and surrealism. When not reading, he enjoys hiking, birding, and digging holes in his garden.

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Peer Review Panel

The Rev. Michael S. Poteet is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA), currently pastoring a congregation in Clifton Heights, Pennsylvania. A native Texan, Mr. Poteet earned an undergraduate degree in English and Religion at the College of William and Mary in Virginia and earned his Masters of Divinity degree at Princeton Theological Seminary. In addition to writing for Progeny Press, Mr. Poteet also is an aspiring science fiction writer; his first professionally published short story appeared in *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds II* (Pocket Books, May 1999). He is married and has one child.

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Janice DeLong is Associate Professor of Education at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia where she teaches children's literature and supervises student teachers. Prior to coming to Liberty, she served on faculties in both public and private schools and has experience in homeschooling, as well. Her husband, Robert, teaches psychology at Liberty. They are parents of four children. Mrs. DeLong is co-author of three books: *Core Collection for Small Libraries, Contemporary Christian Authors,* and *Young Adult Poetry: A Survey and Theme Guide.*

Peer Review Panel membership as of May 2002.

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**Answer Key is located in separate folder.*

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Note to Instructor

How to Use Progeny Press Study Guides. Progeny Press study guides are designed to help students better understand and enjoy literature by getting them to notice and understand how authors craft their stories and to show them how to think through the themes and ideas introduced in the stories. To properly work through a Progeny Press study guide, students should have easy access to a good dictionary, a thesaurus, a Bible (we use NIV translation, but that is up to your preference; just be aware of some differences in language), and sometimes a topical Bible or concordance. Supervised access to the Internet also can be helpful at times, as can a good set of encyclopedias.

Most middle grades and high school study guides take from eight to ten weeks to complete, generally working on one section per week. Over the years, we have found that it works best if the students completely read the novel the first week, while also working on a prereading activity chosen by the parent or teacher. Starting the second week, most parents and teachers have found it works best to work on one study guide page per day until the chapter sections are completed. Students should be allowed to complete questions by referring to the book; many questions require some cross-reference between elements of the stories.

Most study guides contain an Overview section that can be used as a final test, or it can be completed in the same way the chapter sections were completed. If you wish to perform a final test but your particular study guide does not have an Overview section, we suggest picking a couple of questions from each section of the study guide and using them as your final test.

Most study guides also have a final section of essays and postreading activities. These may be assigned at the parents' or teachers' discretion, but we suggest that students engage in several writing or other extra activities during the study of the novel to complement their reading and strengthen their writing skills.

As for high school credits, most Christian high schools with whom we have spoken have assigned a value of one-fourth credit to each study guide, and this also seems to be acceptable to colleges assessing homeschool transcripts.

Internet References

All websites listed in this study guide were checked for appropriateness at the time of publication. However, due to the changing nature of the Internet, we cannot guarantee that the URLs listed will remain appropriate or viable. Therefore, we urge parents and teachers to take care in and exercise careful oversight of their children's use of the Internet.

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Synopsis

Sentenced to a crime he did not commit, Stanley Yelnats is sent to Camp Green Lake, a juvenile detention camp. But there is no lake at Camp Green Lake; only a dried-up lake bed. Every morning, the boys at Camp Green Lake are sent out to the lake bed where they are made to dig a hole five feet deep and five feet wide. "You're digging to build character," the counselors tell Stanley.

As Stanley digs holes under the hot Texas sun, readers dig into Stanley's family history and the tale of Stanley's great-great-grandfather, Elya Yelnats. Elya's desire to marry the beautiful (but empty-headed) Myra Menke puts him on the receiving end of a family curse when he fails to fulfill a promise made to Madame Zeroni. Though Stanley doesn't really believe in the family curse, he is quick to blame his great-great-grandfather for all his bad luck. It feels good to be able to blame *someone*.

Readers also learn about the history of the town of Green Lake and the tragic incident that drove the town schoolteacher to become Kissin' Kate Barlow, the notorious bandit who once robbed Stanley's great-grandfather and left him in the desert to die.

As he continues to dig holes, Stanley begins to suspect that he and the other boys at Camp Green Lake are being made to look for something—something that the camp's warden wants.

The mystery of the warden's secret desire, the history of the town of Green Lake, and Stanley's own family history all fit together like pieces of a puzzle as choices made in the past continue to have an effect on the present. Soon Stanley's very life depends on events that happened over 100 years ago.

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About the Author

Louis Sachar (pronounced "SACK-er") was born in 1954 in East Meadow, New York. When he was nine years old, his family moved to California. He enjoyed school, especially math, but in high school, he developed an intense love of reading.

After high school he attended college in Ohio for one year, but upon the death of his father, he returned to California. He worked briefly as a door-to-door salesman before returning to school at Berkeley College in California. He majored in economics, but also took creative writing courses and continued to indulge his love of reading. His enjoyment of Russian literature prompted him to enroll in Russian classes so he could read these novels in their original language. After a year of study, he felt he was still unable to grasp the language, and he dropped out of his Russian classes.

At this point fate intervened. While looking for another course to take, an elementary school girl handed Sachar a leaflet recruiting teacher's aides for her school. When he learned that it would earn him the three credits he lost dropping the Russian class, he signed on to become a teacher's aide. His enjoyable experiences working with children inspired him to write a book of short, interrelated stories about a fictional school called "Wayside." Sachar recalls, "I probably had more fun writing that book than any of my others, because it was just a hobby then, and I never truly expected it to be published."

After graduating from Berkeley in 1976, he continued working on his Wayside School stories and sent off his manuscript at the same time he applied to law school. The book, *Sideways Stories from Wayside School,* was accepted for publication during his first week at Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco. For the next few years he struggled over being a writer or a lawyer. When he learned he had passed the bar exam, allowing him to practice law, he was not as excited as his classmates. He was still unsure of what he wanted to do.

Sachar practiced law part-time to support himself while continuing to write children's books. His next few books, *Johnny's in the Basement, Someday Angeline, There's a Boy in the Girl's Bathroom,* and *Sixth Grade Secrets* were all written while Sachar practiced law. In 1989, he made his decision to devote himself to writing full time.

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For his next book, Sachar returned to familiar territory with *Sideways Arithmetic from Wayside School.* Three more collections of Wayside School stories followed. Sachar also wrote a series of chapter books for younger children, featuring the character of Marvin Redpost.

In 1999, Louis Sachar won the Newbery Medal for *Holes,* his 17th book for children. *Holes* was partly inspired by the extreme Texas heat Sachar experienced when he and his family moved to Austin. It took him 18 months to write *Holes*—coincidently the same length of time Stanley was sentenced to Camp Green Lake.

Sachar still lives in Austin, Texas, and continues to write books for children.

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Suggestions for Pre-reading Activities

- *Family History:* With the help of some older members of your family, create a family tree. (Use the worksheet on the next page.) For how many generations back can you supply names? What details do you know about the oldest generation on your family tree?

- *Family Stories:* Are there any stories about your family that have been handed down through generations? Ask your parents, grandparents, aunts, or uncles to share some stories about your family. You may wish to interview family members and record them as they tell the stories.

- *Juvenile Detention Centers:* Find out about juvenile detention centers close to your home. Write a brief report describing the facility. Why are juvenile offenders sent there? What is required of the young people kept there? How much freedom do they have? Does the detention center have teachers and educational facilities?

- *Prison Ministries:* There are many different ministries that work with prisoners. Find a prison ministry operating close to your home. Write a brief report describing that organization's purpose and activities. If you cannot find a local ministry, see what information you can find about one of the nationally recognized organizations, such as Prison Fellowship Ministries.

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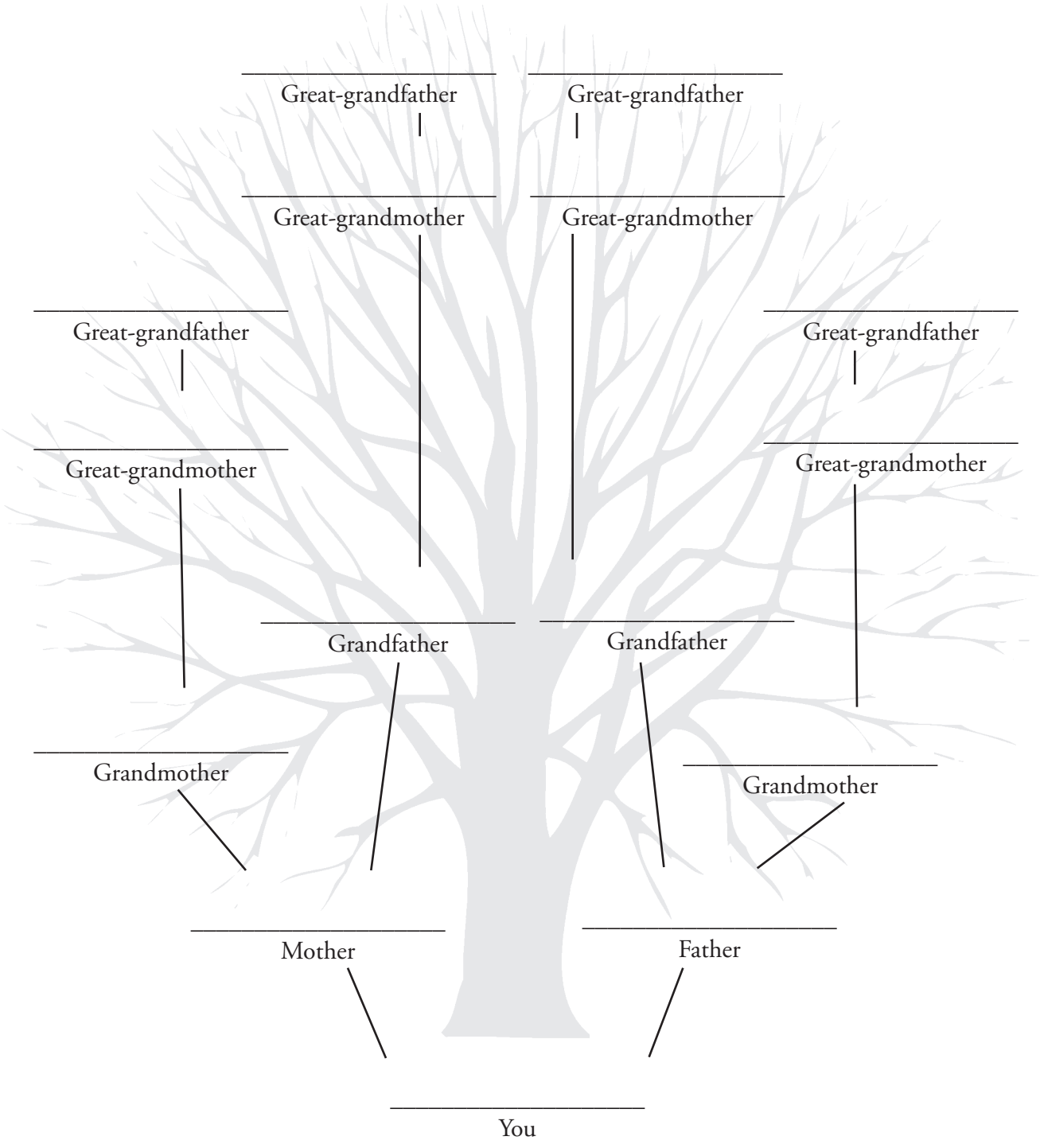
Family Tree



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Chapters 1–6

Vocabulary:

For each blank below, choose a word or phrase from the word box that comes closest in meaning to the underlined word preceding it. Not all the words in the word box will be used.

Word Box

disgraceful	humid	uninhabited	clean
wealth	persistence	fertile	populated
unfertile	suffocating	cluttered	unusual

1. The bus wasn't air-conditioned, and the hot, heavy air was as <u>stifling</u> (_____) as the handcuffs.

2. To be an inventor you need three things: intelligence, <u>perseverance</u>, (_____) and just a little bit of luck.

3. The land was <u>barren</u> (_____) and <u>desolate</u>. (_____) He could see a few rundown buildings and some tents.

4. Theodore spit a thin line of saliva between his teeth, causing some of the other boys to complain about the need to keep their "home" <u>sanitary</u>. (_____)

5. The judge called Stanley's crime <u>despicable</u>. (_____)

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Introducing the Characters:

1. An author will usually begin a novel by introducing readers to the various characters, and in particular, to the novel's *protagonist*. The protagonist is a novel's main character. Who is the protagonist of *Holes?*

2. List five character traits that describe the protagonist of *Holes.*

   _____ _____
   _____ _____
   _____

3. Write a paragraph describing the novel's protagonist, using the character's name and the five character traits you listed in the previous exercise.

4. One of the ways we learn about a character is by comparing or contrasting that character with another character. Both Mr. Sir and Mr. Pendanski are counselors at Camp Green Lake. How are Mr. Sir and Mr. Pendanski different? (Consider the difference between the way each of the counselors treats Stanley.)

5. Which of the two counselors do you like better? Why?

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6. Below is a list of the boys from D tent. Match the nickname of each boy with his real name.

Nickname	Real Name
a. X-Ray	___ Lewis
b. Squid	___ Theodore
c. Barf Bag	___ José
d. Zero	___ Rex
e. Armpit	___ Ricky
f. Zigzag	___ Alan
g. Magnet	___ Unknown

Questions:

1. Why was Stanley arrested?

2. How long is Stanley's sentence?

3. What does Stanley's father do? What is his latest project?

4. How did Stanley's great-grandfather make his fortune? How did he lose it?

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5. What must the boys at Camp Green Lake do each day?

6. Why aren't there guard towers or a fence around Camp Green Lake?

Thinking About the Story:

7. *Irony* is a difference between appearance and reality, or between what is expected and what actually occurs. An author can use *irony* to surprise readers or for a humorous or satirical effect.

   What is *ironic* about the name "Camp Green Lake"?

8. Who do Stanley and his father blame for their bad luck? Why?

9. When they reflect on the story of the first Stanley Yelnats, Stanley's great-grandfather, Stanley and his father tend to focus on his bad luck. How was Stanley's great-grandfather unlucky?

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10. Stanley's mother tends to focus on his good luck instead of his bad luck. How was Stanley's great-grandfather lucky?

11. Which set of facts about Stanley's great-grandfather seems most important to you? His good luck or his bad luck?

Dig Deeper:

12. Describe Stanley's experiences at school. If you were Stanley, how would these experiences affect you?

13. What is *destiny*? How does destiny compare to the concept of "luck"?

When Clyde Livingston's sneakers fell from the sky, Stanley "felt like he was holding destiny's shoes." What does this tell us about how Stanley viewed the event?

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14. How do you react when you have "bad luck"?

The author writes that in spite of all their bad luck, Stanley's family always remained hopeful. They reasoned, however, that if they weren't always hopeful it wouldn't hurt so much when their hopes were crushed.

Which of the following best describes your outlook? Which of the following do you think is the best outlook to have? Why?

- ◯ "Hope for the best; expect the best."
- ◯ "Hope for the best; expect the worst."
- ◯ "Hope for the best; have no expectations."
- ◯ "Do not hope; have no expectations."
- ◯ "There is no hope."

15. Reread the song that Stanley's father sang to him. What feelings or emotions are expressed in the song?

The song repeats the phrase "if only." How do people use the phrase "if only"? Do they generally use it to reflect on how things might have been, or how things could be? Does this song express hope?

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16. Isaiah 40:28–31 and Jeremiah 17:7–8 talk about having hope and trust in God. Read these verses. What promises for those who place their hope in God are found in these verses?

17. We often use the word *hope* as a synonym for *wish*. For example, people will say they *hope* the weather will be favorable. In the Bible, however, the word *hope* is often used as a synonym for *confidence*. To "have hope" means to wait confidently, with expectation. (Compare, for example, different translations of Jeremiah 17:7 and Isaiah 40:31 to see how the original Hebrew words are translated to convey the idea of hope as confidence and expectation.)

    Read Romans 4:18–5:5. How does the idea of hope as *having confidence* affect your understanding of this passage? Write one or two paragraphs explaining your thoughts on these verses.

Optional Exercise:

Stanley's full name—Stanley Yelnats—is a *palindrome*. A palindrome is a word or phrase that reads the same forward as it does backward. The names "Bob" and "Anna" are both palindromes. Here are some other palindromes:

A nut for a jar of tuna.
Dennis sinned.
Don't nod.
No lemons, no melon.
So many dynamos.

What would your name be if it was a palindrome structured like Stanley's? (That is, if your last name were your first name backwards?) Try to compose some palindromes of your own.

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Chapters 7–9

Vocabulary:

Define the underlined words as they are used in each of the passages below. Then tell whether the word is being used as a *noun, verb, adjective,* or *adverb*.

1. He glanced helplessly at his shovel. It wasn't <u>defective</u>. *He* was defective.
   Definition:

   Part of Speech: _____

2. He unearthed several shovelfuls of dirt in this manner, before it occurred to him that he was dumping his dirt within the <u>perimeter</u> of his hole.
   Definition:

   Part of Speech: _____

3. He popped some sunflower seeds into his mouth, <u>deftly</u> removed the shells with his teeth, and spat them into Stanley's hole.
   Definition:

   Part of Speech: _____

4. "Why not let Myra decide?" suggested Elya. "That's <u>preposterous</u>!" exclaimed Igor, expelling saliva as he spoke.
   Definition:

   Part of Speech: _____

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5. He grimaced as he sliced off a chunk of dirt, then raised it up and flung it onto a pile.
   Definition:

   Part of Speech: _____

6. Stanley leaned back against the torn vinyl upholstery.
   Definition:

   Part of Speech: _____

7. Despite his shower, his body still radiated heat.
   Definition:

   Part of Speech: _____

8. Zero stared at him for a moment, with the same intensity with which he had been staring at the letter.
   Definition:

   Part of Speech: _____

Questions:

1. What are the boys supposed to do if they find anything "interesting or unusual" while digging their holes? What is the potential reward?

2. Who is Elya Yelnats?

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3. Why does Elya Yelnats go to see Madame Zeroni?

4. What advice does Madame Zeroni give Elya?

5. In spite of her feelings, Madame Zeroni agrees to help Elya win the hand of Myra Menke by giving him a runt piglet. What does she instruct Elya to do with the piglet? Why?

6. What part of the agreement does Elya fail to keep? What does Madame Zeroni say will happen if Elya doesn't keep his promise?

Thinking About the Story:

7. A *flashback* is a literary device by which an author presents scenes or incidents that happened before the beginning of the story. What flashback is found in Chapter 7? How does the story related in this flashback differ from Stanley's understanding of how the family came to be cursed?

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8. Why do you think Elya tells Myra to marry Igor?

9. Why does Elya fail to keep his promise to Madame Zeroni? Why does he look for Madame Zeroni's son once he arrives in America?

10. Elya sings the "pig lullaby" to his new wife. Where have we encountered the pig lullaby before in the story? How was the pig lullaby different the first time we heard it? Why do you think the two versions we've heard are different?

11. After digging his first hole, Stanley feels proud. "He knew it was nothing to be proud of, but he felt proud nonetheless." Why do you think Stanley feels this way?

12. *Foreshadowing* is when an author gives hints or clues suggesting what will happen later in a story. Chapter 8 is entirely dedicated to the description of yellow-spotted lizards. What might the author be foreshadowing by devoting an entire chapter to details about the yellow-spotted lizards?

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Chapter 8 ends with the author letting readers know that yellow-spotted lizards eat, among other things, "the shells of sunflower seeds." What might be the significance of this? What might the author be foreshadowing?

13. What nickname do the boys give Stanley? Why do you think they give him this name?

Dig Deeper:

14. What do you think are important qualities to look for in a spouse? What qualities does Elya's love for Myra seem to be based on?

15. What does Madame Zeroni cite as Myra Menke's failings?

16. Read Proverbs 31:10–31. How do the qualities mentioned in these verses compare or contrast with Myra Menke's qualities?

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17. The author writes that Elya thought nothing of the curse. He was just 15, and even a week seemed like an "eternity" to him. What dangers do you think there are in not considering the future?

18. Read Proverbs 16:1–4, 9; Proverbs 19:20–21; and Jeremiah 29:11–13. What do these verses tell us about how the plans of people relate to the plans of God?

19. Considering the above verses, do you think it makes any sense to bother planning for the future? (Consider also Matthew 6:19–21, Matthew 7:24–27, 2 Corinthians 4:16–18, and Hebrews 10:23–25.)

Go Figure:

The formula for finding the volume of a cylinder is $\pi \times r^2 \times h$, where r = the radius of the cylinder, and h = the height. The holes the boys dig must be five feet deep with a diameter of five feet. Approximately how many cubic feet of dirt must be dug to create a hole with these dimensions? Round the answer to one decimal place.

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Chapters 10–15

Vocabulary:

Define each of the following words, then use it in a sentence to demonstrate your knowledge of its meaning.

1. **arced**
   Definition:

   Sentence:

2. **fossilized**
   Definition:

   Sentence:

3. **metallic**
   Definition:

   Sentence:

4. **engraved**
   Definition:

   Sentence:

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5. **excavated**
   Definition:

   Sentence:

6. **paranoid**
   Definition:

   Sentence:

Questions:

1. In Chapter 10, what does Stanley find while digging?

2. What happens when Stanley reports his find to Mr. Pendanski?

3. Describe the object that Stanley digs up in Chapter 13. What letters are inscribed on it? What do you think the object is and what do you think the letters mean?

4. Describe the Warden's physical appearance. Describe the Warden's behavior and mannerisms.

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5. What does the Warden order the boys to do?

6. What do you think the Warden is looking for? How did Stanley know that they wouldn't find what the Warden was looking for?

Thinking About the Story:

7. Why does Stanley agree to give anything he might find to X-Ray? Do you think this was wise?

8. What did it mean to Stanley to be given a nickname like the other boys?

9. At the end of Chapter 13, X-Ray tells Stanley to move up one place in line. What might this indicate?

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10. An author will use *repetition*—the repeated use of a word or phrase—to emphasize an idea. What sentence is repeated three times in the first six paragraphs of Chapter 13? What is being emphasized through this repetition?

11. *Personification* is the assigning of human characteristics or behavior to inanimate or abstract things. Identify the personification in the following passage from the novel:

> A cloud had appeared earlier in the day. It was the first cloud he could remember seeing since coming to Camp Green Lake. He and the other boys had been watching it all day, hoping it would move in front of the sun. Occasionally it got close, but it was just teasing them.

Dig Deeper:

12. Use a dictionary to define *fatalism*. How does it differ from the concept of *self-determination?* Does Mr. Pendanski's advice to the boys in Chapter 12 express a belief in self-determination or fatalism? Explain your answer with examples from the book.

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13. Does Stanley express a belief in self-determination or fatalism? Explain your answer with examples from the book.

14. Do you, personally, believe that you control your own destiny, or is your destiny controlled by some outside force? Briefly explain why you believe as you do.

Class Discussions:

1. The concepts of fatalism and self-determination have been discussed by philosophers for centuries. Many Christians believe that the course of a person's life is completely directed by God (rather than the more vague notion of "fate"). They believe in the concept of "predestination," or the notion that God sets the eternal destiny for each person's life. Others believe that people have free will to make their own choices apart from the will of God and are therefore responsible for their own eternal fate. There is a great deal of middle ground between these extremes, taking into account both God's sovereignty and mankind's free will.

   After considering your response to question 14, participate in a class discussion on the question of whether the course of a person's life is "predestined" or whether each person freely chooses his or her own fate. Here are some verses that may help direct your discussion.

   - A few verses that support predestination: Psalm 139:1–4, 13–16; Proverbs 16:4, 9; Proverbs 19:21; Jeremiah 1:4–5; John 15:16; Romans 8:28–30; Ephesians 1:4–12; Ephesians 2:8–10.
   - A few verses that support free will and personal responsibility: Proverbs 1:29–33; Matthew 7:21–23; Romans 10:9–13; Romans 11:20–23.

   Students are encouraged to do their own research.

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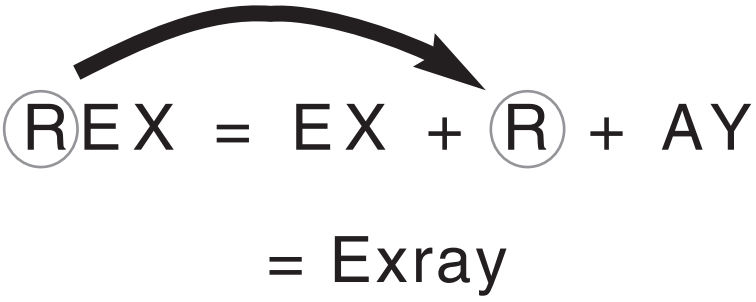
2. In Chapter 12, Mr. Pendanski talks to the boys about the day they will leave Camp Green Lake. He asks them what they enjoy doing and what they want to do with their lives. Discuss what you like and what you want to do in the future. What careers would correspond to the things you enjoy doing?

Optional Activity:

Pig Latin:

In Chapter 11, X-Ray reveals that his nickname is just pig latin for "Rex," his real name. Pig latin is a pretend language created by the transposition of letters in a word. To change a word into pig latin, remove all the letters up to the first vowel in a word. Place the removed consonants at the end of the word. Then add the suffix "ay."

For example:



Remember that *all* letters up to the first vowel in a word are removed and placed at the end of that word. Sometimes that may be one letter, as above. Sometimes it may be more than one letter:

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If a word already begins with a vowel, some people will add "way" to the end of a word instead of just "ay":

ELYA + WAY = Elyaway

Using the rules described here, write down the "pig latin" names of the rest of the boys in Group D.

a. Theodore
b. José
c. Ricky
d. Alan
e. Zero

The following secret message is written in pig latin. See if you can decode it.

"Ifway ouyay indfay omethingsay interestingway ilewhay iggingday, easeplay eportray itway otay ethay ardenway."

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Chapters 16–22

Vocabulary:

Match each word in the left-hand column with its definition found in the right-hand column. Not all definitions on the right will be used.

1. ____ intently
2. ____ callused
3. ____ condemned
4. ____ toxic
5. ____ recede
6. ____ shrill
7. ____ writhed
8. ____ agony
9. ____ defiance

a. emitting a sharp or high-pitched sound
b. bitterness
c. intense pain; anguish
d. confusion
e. twisted or distorted
f. with attention or strong concentration
g. jumped or bounced
h. hardened or thickened, as with skin or tree bark.
i. resistance; willingness to fight
j. destined
k. misdirection
l. fearfully or cautiously
m. pronounced guilty; doomed
n. aimlessly
o. to move away or to grow smaller; diminish
p. poisonous

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Questions:

1. List three things we learn about Zero in this section of the novel.

2. What was the "special ingredient" in the Warden's nail polish?

3. How long had Stanley's great-grandfather survived in the desert before being found by rattlesnake hunters? Where did he say he found refuge?

4. What arrangement does Stanley make with Zero?

5. At the end of Chapter 22, Stanley suddenly recognizes the object he'd dug up. What was it?

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Thinking About the Story:

6. How does the Warden's attitude toward the boys change as they continue digging and widening their holes in Chapters 16 and 17?

7. The author writes:

> [Stanley's] muscles and hands weren't the only parts of his body that had toughened over the past several weeks. His heart had hardened as well.

What does the author mean?

8. What does Stanley witness in the brief scene at the beginning of Chapter 19? What does this tell us about Squid? What might this indicate about the other boys in Group D?

9. What does Magnet steal from Mr. Sir? Why do you think Stanley takes the blame?

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10. When the Warden tells Stanley that Mr. Sir won't die, why do you think she adds the phrase "Unfortunately for you"? What does she mean?

11. When Stanley returns from the warden's cabin, he discovers that the hole he had been digging is nearly finished. What clue at the end of Chapter 21 tells us that Zero is the one responsible for digging Stanley's hole?

Dig Deeper:

12. What was Stanley's opinion of Zero at the beginning of this section of reading? What factors may have contributed to Stanley forming this opinion?

13. Think about the first time you met someone. What factors went into forming your opinion of that person? Do you think you had a fair first impression? How does your first impression compare with what you know now about that person?

14. Read 1 Samuel 1:1–18. What wrong first impression did Eli have about Hannah?

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15. Read 1 Samuel 16:1–13. What lesson regarding first impressions can we learn from this story?

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Chapters 23–28

Questions:

1. Which chapters in this section of reading consist entirely of *flashback?*

2. Why was Charles Walker given the nickname "Trout"?

3. What was Katherine Barlow's role in the town of Green Lake? What was Sam's role?

4. Where did Sam get the onions he sold to the townspeople of Green Lake?

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5. List at least five ways that Sam's onions were said to benefit people.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. Why wasn't Sam allowed to attend Katherine Barlow's classes?

7. How does Katherine Barlow die?

Thinking About the Story:

8. What repetition can you find in Chapter 25? What does this repetition emphasize?

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9. Why do you think Hattie Parker said "God will punish you" when she saw Sam kiss Katherine Barlow?

10. What is Zero's real name? What is the significance of Zero's real name to Stanley's family history?

11. Look at the description of Green Lake that opens Chapter 23. How does the Green Lake of 110 years ago compare or contrast with the Green Lake of the present?

12. How does the town of Green Lake change 20 years after Sam is killed?

Dig Deeper:

13. How did the whole town of Green Lake find out that Sam kissed Miss Katherine?

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14. Read Leviticus 19:16 and Proverbs 16:28. How do these verses illustrate what happened to Sam the onion man?

Questions for Discussion:

15. There are times when we *should* share information with someone else, and there are times we should keep it to ourselves. How do you, personally, decide what information should be shared, and what is simply gossip that should not be spread? Read Matthew 12:34–37. How do these verses relate to gossiping?

16. Both Hattie Parker and the sheriff stated that God would punish Katherine Barlow for kissing Sam. After relating the events of Chapter 26, the author writes, "That all happened one hundred and ten years ago. Since then, not one drop of rain has fallen on Green Lake. You make the decision: Whom did God punish?"

    This story is, of course, a work of fiction. But consider this question seriously, as if it really happened. Assuming that the lack of rain was a punishment from God, in your opinion whose actions resulted in this punishment?

Optional Exercise:

Research paper: Do some research on "Jim Crow laws." What were they? What effect did *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) have on the Civil Rights Act of 1875? What effect did *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954) have? Collect your findings in a one- to two-page research paper.

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Chapters 29–35

Vocabulary:

A word is *in context* if we see it in the sentence in which it was written. It is *out of context* when the word is by itself. Consider how each underlined vocabulary word is used in context. Write a brief definition of each term in your own words. Compare your definition to the dictionary definition.

1. No one ever knew what he meant by that. He was <u>delirious</u> when he said it.
   Your Definition:

   Dictionary Definition

2. Mr. Sir was no longer <u>depriving</u> him of water. After having to get by on less water for a week or so, Stanley now felt like he had all the water he could want.
   Your Definition:

   Dictionary Definition

3. Stanley made a <u>feeble</u> attempt to punch Zigzag, then he felt a flurry of fists against his head and neck.
   Your Definition:

   Dictionary Definition:

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4. "He's a ward of the state," Mr. Pendanski told her. "He was living on the streets when he was arrested."
   Your Definition:

   Dictionary Definition:

5. There wasn't any water. It was a mirage caused by the shimmering waves of heat rising off the dry ground.
   Your Definition:

   Dictionary Definition:

6. "I tried to bring you the whole water truck, but," he smiled sheepishly, "I drove it into a hole."
   Your Definition:

   Dictionary Definition:

Questions:

1. What does Stanley think he sees in the flashes of lightning?

2. How many holes has Stanley dug by July 8th? How has Stanley changed physically since he dug his first hole?

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3. Why do the other boys start to resent Stanley? How does Stanley justify this to himself?

4. Why do the Warden and Mr. Pendanski tell Stanley to stop teaching Zero to read?

5. Why does the Warden tell the counselors not to shoot Zero after Zero hits Mr. Pendanski with the shovel?

6. What does the Warden expect to happen to Zero?

7. How does the Warden plan to cover up the incident with Zero?

8. Who arrives at Camp Green Lake to take Zero's place in Group D? Why was he sent to Camp Green Lake?

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9. Why does Stanley steal the water truck? What happens to the water truck?

10. Where does Stanley find Zero? How had Zero managed to survive?

11. What was the "sploosh" and where had it come from?

12. At the end of Chapter 35, Stanley considers returning to Camp Green Lake. What deal does Stanley want to make with the Warden?

13. When Stanley asks Zero what the mountain looks like, how does Zero respond? What does this confirm for Stanley?

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Thinking About the Story:

14. Chapter 29 is also the beginning of Part 2 of the novel. How do the opening sentences of Chapter 29 suggest that there is a big change coming in the story?

15. When Zigzag begins punching Stanley, Mr. Pendanski tells Stanley to "teach the bully a lesson" by hitting Zigzag back. Do you think this is a proper solution to a fight? If not, how would you have intervened?

16. Three times in Chapter 31, the phrase "It wasn't impossible" occurs. What isn't impossible? Find two more uses of repetition in this section of reading.

17. At the beginning of Chapter 31, why is Stanley angry with himself? What change in Stanley's attitude toward fate does this indicate?

18. How is this change demonstrated in Chapter 32?

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For Discussion:

In this section of reading, we see Stanley beginning to take action instead of behaving passively. We also see Stanley taking responsibility for his actions instead of just blaming things on bad luck or the family curse.

Read Matthew 12:36, Romans 14:10–12, and Hebrew 4:13. These verses tell us that we will have to give an account before God for our words and actions. How does this knowledge personally affect your behavior? Given this, how should we live our lives?

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Chapters 36–42

Vocabulary:

Read the sentence from the book, then answer the question about the underlined word.

1. Unlike the eastern shore, where Camp Green Lake was <u>situated</u>, the western shore did not slope down gradually.
   Another word for <u>situated</u> is ____.
   a. elevated
   b. placated
   c. located
   d. constructed

2. He was able to lift Zero high enough for him to grab the <u>protruding</u> slab of rock.
   A <u>protruding</u> slab of rock ____.
   a. lies flat
   b. sticks out
   c. is loose
   d. is hidden

3. If there was no water, no <u>refuge</u>, then they'd have nothing, not even hope.
   A place of <u>refuge</u> offers ____.
   a. food
   b. friendship
   c. safety
   d. financial assistance

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4. It became too steep to go straight up. Instead they zigzagged back and forth, increasing their altitude by small increments every time they changed directions.

   Another word for altitude is ____.

   a. elevation
   b. ballast
   c. gravity
   d. air pressure

5. As the ground flattened, a huge stone precipice rose up ahead of him, just barely visible in the moonlight.

   A precipice is ____.

   a. a monument carved from stone
   b. the very steep face of a cliff or mountain
   c. a canyon
   d. a rocky valley

6. "I'm glad Becca's all right," Hattie said contritely.

   To be contrite is to be ____.

   a. snobby
   b. worried
   c. amused
   d. repentant

Similes and Metaphors

Similes and *metaphors* are figures of speech that state or imply a comparison between two unlike things that have something in common. A simile uses words such as *like* or *as* to compare. For example, in Chapter 23 the author says that Green Lake was "full of clear cool water, and it *sparkled like a giant emerald* in the sun." In this sentence, the author uses a simile to compare the lake to an emerald.

A *metaphor* is a comparison of two different things where one thing is said to *be* the other thing. For example, in the same chapter, the author writes that "Green Lake

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was 'heaven on earth' and that Miss Katherine's spiced peaches *were 'food for the angels.'*" Here, the author uses two metaphors to compare Green Lake to heaven, and the spiced peaches to food for angels.

Identify the comparison made in each passage below. Then write an S in the blank if the comparison is a simile, or an M in the blank if the comparison is a metaphor. See the example below.

"Myra's head is as empty as a flowerpot."

Comparison: **Myra's head is being compared to a flowerpot.**

__S__

1. [Zigzag's] head seemed to bob up and down on his neck, like it was on a spring.

   Comparison:

   _____

2. As Stanley made his way across the room, he tripped over an outstretched leg. "Hey, watch it!" said an orange lump on a chair.

   Comparison:

   _____

3. It was the first time Stanley had ever seen Zero smile. He usually had such an angry expression on his face. Now he had such a huge smile it almost seemed too big for his face, like the smile on a jack o' lantern.

   Comparison:

   _____

4. That part of [Stanley's] head, between his neck and ear, was considerably swollen. There were no mirrors in camp, but he imagined he looked like he had a hard-boiled egg sticking out of him.

   Comparison:

   _____

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5. His real name was Charles Walker, but everyone called him Trout because his two feet smelled like a couple of dead fish.
   Comparison:
   _____

6. Onion Sam had turned the old run-down schoolhouse into a well-crafted, freshly painted jewel of a building that the whole town was proud of.
   Comparison:
   _____

7. When they reached flat ground, Stanley looked up to see the sun, a fiery ball balancing on top of Big Thumb. God was twirling a basketball.
   Comparison:
   _____

Questions:

1. At the beginning of Chapter 36, what have Stanley and Zero resolved to do?

2. When Stanley considers the possibility of dying, what scares and worries him the most?

3. How does Stanley realize they'd found a source of water?

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4. What else does Stanley find in the water hole?

5. What was Zero's "confession" to Stanley?

6. What does Stanley think when he sees how far he'd climbed carrying Zero?

Thinking About the Story:

7. What is ironic about the boys' conversation about Mary Lou?

8. As Stanley and Zero journey toward Big Thumb, they give each other the thumbs-up sign. What is the generally accepted meaning of this gesture?

9. In literature, a *symbol* is something which stands for or suggests something else. Symbolically, what does Big Thumb represent for Stanley and Zero?

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10. What had Elya Yelnats failed to do for Madame Zeroni? How does Stanley fulfill this promise four generations later?

11. In Chapter 42, Zero suggests that Big Thumb must have water in it, because "[w]ater doesn't run uphill." What is the significance of this statement?

12. Why do you think Stanley is happy to be in their current predicament?

13. As Zero tells his story in Chapter 41, Stanley sits eating an onion one layer at a time. Halfway through Zero's story, the author interrupts to say, "Stanley peeled off another layer of his onion." How is peeling an onion an appropriate metaphor for what is happening in Chapter 41?

Dig Deeper:

14. Read Hebrews 10:23–25. On their journey to Big Thumb, how do Stanley and Zero encourage each other. List three ways that you can help encourage your family and friends.

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15. As Stanley attempts to carry Zero up the mountain, the author writes, "He thought only about each step, and not the impossible task that lay before him." How do you accomplish tasks that seem too large? Why is it often easier to accomplish a large task "one step at a time"?

16. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10 and Philippians 4:12, 13. What promises found in these verses can you keep in mind when working on a large task?

17. What attitude toward work is recommended in Colossians 3:23, 24. How do you, personally, respond to this recommendation?

Optional Projects:

- Onions are bulbs; we harvest them by digging them out of the ground. But onions also produce very unique flowers. If it's the right time of year, plant onions in your garden and observe them as they grow. Or find someone who does grow onions and ask to visit their garden to see the onions in bloom. Do onion flowers smell like an onion? If it isn't possible to view onions in bloom, see if you can find pictures in a book or magazine. Compare the flowers produced by the onion to the description in the novel. Compare different kinds of onions. Also compare them to ornamental varieties that are not eaten but grown just for the flowers.

  Using colored pencils, create an illustration of an onion plant. Draw the flowers, the leaves, and the bulb.

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- List all the food items you can think of that contain onions. Gather some of these items or prepare some dishes that contain onions. (Some suggested foods include salsa, onion rings, onion soup, sour cream and onion-flavored potato chips, stir-fry dishes, raw onions eaten on sandwiches, pizza, etc.) Prepare a meal consisting entirely of onion dishes. What is your favorite way to eat onions? What might it be like to eat onions at every meal?

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Chapters 43–50

Vocabulary:

Part One:
Synonyms are words that have nearly the same meaning as the original word; *antonyms* have the opposite meaning. For each word listed below, demonstrate your understanding of its meaning by providing an antonym and a synonym. In some cases, brief synonymous or antonymous phrases are acceptable.

Original Word	Synonym	Antonym
1. inexplicable	_____	_____
2. indistinct	_____	_____
3. adjacent	_____	_____
4. precarious	_____	_____
5. authentic	_____	_____
6. legitimate	_____	_____
7. tedious	_____	_____

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Part Two:

Define each of the underlined terms as they are used in the following sentences.

1. In her last letter, his mom was worried that they might be evicted from their apartment because of the smell of burning sneakers.

2. "That woman's going to ask a lot of questions. The A.G. will most likely initiate an investigation."

3. "I have the right to check the personal property of any of the detainees."

4. "He is no longer under your jurisdiction," said Stanley's lawyer.

5. "You are released pursuant to an order from the judge."

6. "He was obviously incarcerated for a reason."

7. These consisted of stock certificates, deeds of trust, and promissory notes.

Questions:

1. Explain Stanley and Zero's plan for returning to Camp Green Lake.

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2. What else do we learn about Zero in Chapter 43?

3. How does Zero demonstrate his skill during their return trip?

4. What do Stanley and Zero dig up? What happens just as they lift it out of the hole?

5. How does Stanley react when he hears that he was found innocent and his lawyer had arrived to get him while he was gone?

6. What do the lizards do as the sun rises?

7. Why does Zero say "Satan" and then later "Sa-tan lee"?

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8. Who are the two people who arrive in the morning?

9. What does Stanley do with his share of the treasure? What does Zero do with his share?

Thinking About the Story:

10. What do we learn about the Warden's childhood? What does this tell us about how the Warden has spent her life?

11. Stanley's attorney refers to the Warden as "Ms. Walker." What is significant about the Warden's name?

12. Why does the suitcase have Stanley's name on it?

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13. Why weren't Zero and Stanley bitten by the lizards?

14. *Poetic justice* is when justice is served in an especially appropriate or ironic manner. For example, in *Hamlet,* Laertes uses a poisoned sword in a duel with Hamlet, but ends up being poisoned by his own sword.

    How is the future of Camp Green Lake an example of poetic justice?

15. What piece of information found at the end of Chapter 49 suggests that justice has been served?

16. What is significant about the day Stanley's father invents his cure for foot fungus? What does this suggest?

Dig Deeper:

17. At the end of Chapter 45, the author writes, "Stanley could hear his heart beat. Each beat told him he was still alive, at least for one more second." Would you call this a positive or negative statement? Why?

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18. Read Psalms 25:1–10, Psalms 33:17–22, Romans 5:1–5, and Romans 12:9–18. Where does our true hope lie? What character traits seem to be connected to hope?

19. How is the version of the lullaby Zero's mother sings at the end of the novel different from the one Stanley's father sang to Stanley?

20. What feelings or emotions are expressed in Zero's mother's version of the lullaby? How do they compare to the emotions expressed in Stanley's version?

Optional Exercise:

Research Paper: Ms. Morengo was a patent attorney who was working with Stanley's father on one of his inventions. Do some research on the topic of patents. What is required if you wish to get a patent on an invention? Gather your findings in a one- to two-page report.

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Crossword Puzzle Review

Use the clues below to fill in the crossword puzzle on the next page. Because this crossword puzzle is circular, words run *Clockwise* and *Inward* instead of the typical *Across* and *Down*.

Clockwise:

1. Condition that plagued Clyde Livingston (and Charles Walker)
7. Name of Sam's boat
8. Type of trees that grew along the shores of Green Lake
10. Woman who put a curse on Stanley's great-great-grandfather
11. Ancestor of the Warden (and a student of Miss Katherine Barlow's)
13. Organization that bought Camp Green Lake
15. Secret ingredient in the Warden's nail polish
16. Mysterious object unearthed by Stanley.

Inward:

2. Type of juice in Sam's lizard repellent
3. Ironic nickname of Clyde Livingston: "_____ Feet"
4. Appropriate nickname of Charles Walker
5. What Stanley's great-great-grandfather carried up the mountain
6. Hector's nickname
7. One of the counselors at Camp Green Lake
9. Stanley's great-great-grandfather
12. The man in the cowboy hat who appears at Camp Green Lake at the end of the novel
14. The inscription on the answer to #16 Clockwise

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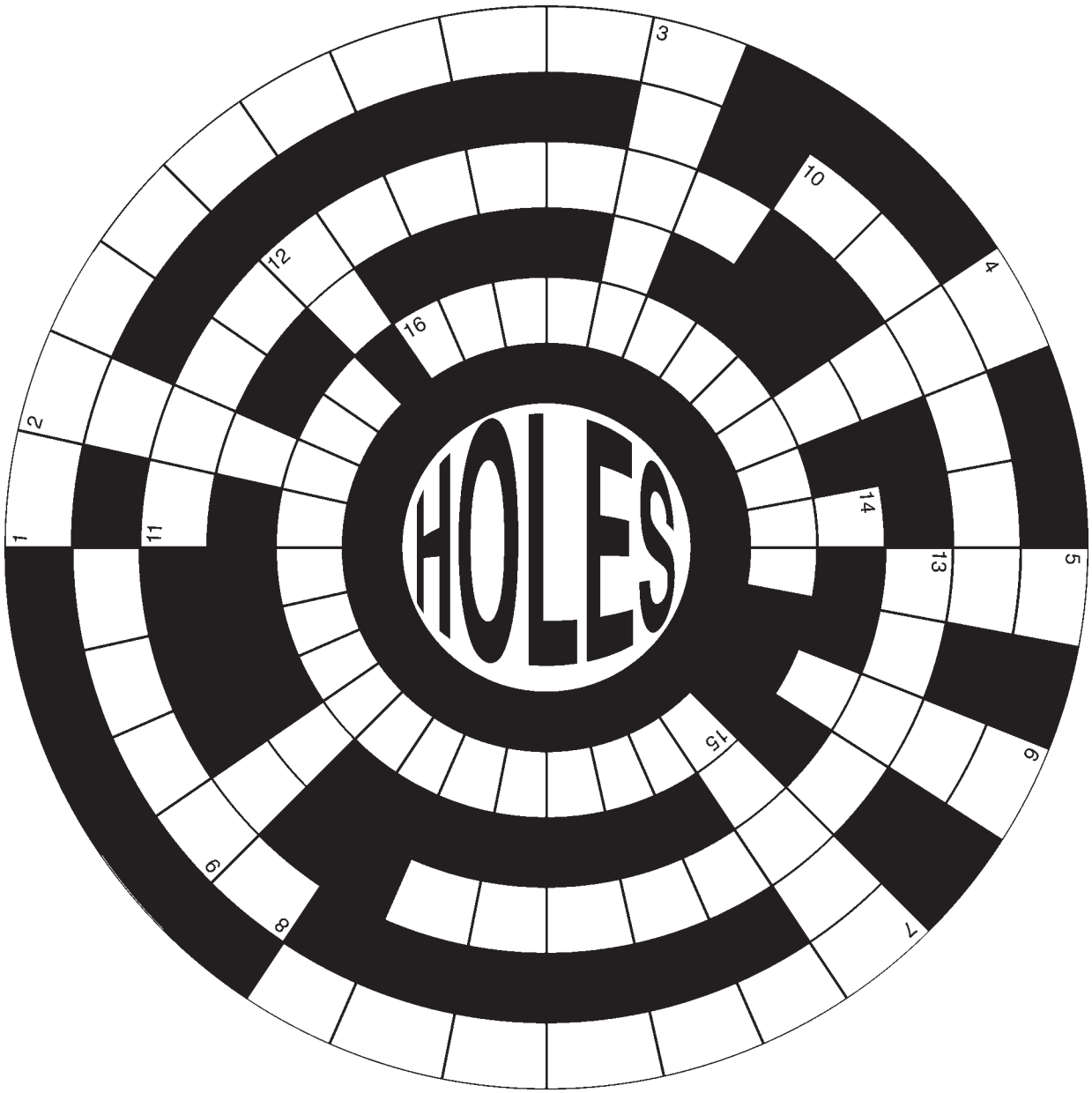
This page must be printed to complete puzzle.



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Overview

1. Characters in literature can be classified as either *dynamic* or *static* characters. A *dynamic* character is a character who we see change during the course of the novel. A *static* character is a character who remains essentially the same throughout the novel. Is Stanley a dynamic or static character? If dynamic, how would you say Stanley has changed since the beginning of the novel? If static, what indications at the end of the novel suggest that he has not changed?

2. A story has *linear* narrative if the events recounted in the story follow a chronological sequence. In a story with *non-linear* narrative, the events are told out of chronological sequence. *Holes* is an example of non-linear narrative. The author makes extensive use of flashbacks to fill in details about the story.

   The events below are listed in the order in which they are recounted in the story. Number these events in their proper chronological order. (That is, the order in which they happened, not the order in which they're found in the story.)

   a. ____ Stanley's great-grandfather was robbed by Kissin' Kate Barlow (Chapter 3)
   b. ____ Stanley arrives at Camp Green Lake. (Chapter 4)
   c. ____ Elya Yelnats fails to keep his promise to Madame Zeroni. (Chapter 7)
   d. ____ Elya Yelnats arrives in America. (Chapter 7)
   e. ____ Stanley digs up a gold tube. (Chapter 13)
   f. ____ Stanley's great-grandfather survived after finding refuge on "God's Thumb."
   g. ____ Katherine Barlow was a schoolteacher in Green Lake. (Chapter 23)

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h. _____ Hattie Parker sees Katherine Barlow kissing Sam the onion man. (Chapter 25)
i. _____ Katherine Barlow is killed by a yellow-spotted lizard. (Chapter 28)
j. _____ Zero runs away from Camp Green Lake. (Chapter 30)
k. _____ Stanley finds Zero under the wreck of the *Mary Lou*. (Chapter 35)
l. _____ Stanley and Zero climb to Big Thumb. (Chapter 38)
m. _____ Mrs. Tennyson thanks Sam for the onion tonic that cured her daughter. (Chapter 40)
n. _____ Stanley and Zero return to Camp Green Lake. (Chapter 43)
o. _____ Stanley and Zero dig up the suitcase. (Chapter 44)
p. _____ Stanley and Zero are released from Camp Green Lake. (Chapter 48)
q. _____ Sam gives onion juice to the rattlesnake hunters. (Chapter 49)
r. _____ Camp Green Lake becomes a Girl Scout camp. (Chapter 50)

3. Stanley's full name, "Stanley Yelnats," is a *palindrome*—It reads the same forward as it does backward. How does Stanley's name reflect the narrative structure of the novel?

4. A *motif* is a recurring phrase, image, action, or idea in a novel. For example, the author often expresses the idea of being "in the wrong place at the wrong time." Another motif may be the yellow-spotted lizards, who appear throughout the story. What other recurring motifs do you find throughout the novel? What effect do these recurring motifs have on the story?

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5. In *Holes* we saw how the choices that people made over 100 years in the past continued to have an effect on the people who lived in the present. Below is a list of choices made by characters in *Holes*. How did these choices affect Stanley?
   a. Elya Yelnats chooses to ignore Madame Zeroni's curse.

   b. Katherine Barlow gives Sam some jars of spiced peaches.

   c. Sam's boat is sunk by Trout Walker.

   d. Kissin' Kate Barlow robs Stanley's great-grandfather—the first Stanley Yelnats—and buries his suitcase in the dry lake bed.

   e. Stanley's great-grandfather finds refuge on "God's Thumb."

6. In the Bible there are many examples of how the choices people make have lasting consequences. Read each of the following passages. In each case, how did the short-term choices of the characters listed have long-lasting consequences?
   a. Genesis 4:1–16. (Cain)

   b. Genesis 15:1–17:21 (Abraham and Sarah)

   c. Genesis 25:19–34, 27:1–40. (Jacob and Esau)

   d. 2 Samuel 11:2–12:25. (David)

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7. What choices made by your parents, grandparents or earlier generations had an effect on you? Consider things such as where you live, the kind of business your family has done, the places you've traveled, etc.

8. What choices are you likely to face that will have an effect on future generations? Consider things such as education, marriage, and career.

9. Read Job 4:8; Galatians 6:7–10; and James 3:18. How do these verses relate to the choices we make and their consequences?

10. Stanley's mother doubted that there ever was a curse on the family. She tended to view things optimistically rather than pessimistically. For example, instead of focusing on the fact that Stanley's great-grandfather lost his fortune, she recognizes that he miraculously survived 17 days in the desert.

    What do you think? Was there ever a curse on the family, or was it just that Stanley and his father tended to see the negative side of everything that happened? Did Stanley really break the curse, or because of a change in attitude did he finally begin to take action and responsibility? Explain your viewpoint with examples from the story.

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Suggestions for Post-reading Activities

1. *Creative Writing:* Choose one of the other boys at the camp and write a one- to two-page fictional account about why he was sent to Camp Green Lake and/or what he did after he was released.

2. *Physical Education:* Find a place where you can dig—with permission—and see how large a hole you can dig in 30 minutes. How large is your hole after one hour of digging? How many cubic feet did you dig? At this rate, how long would it take you to dig a hole the same size as Stanley was required to dig?

3. *Science:* Visit a pet store that sells lizards as pets. After researching the type of environment required by the lizard, create a suitable habitat in an aquarium, and purchase a lizard to care for.

4. *Art Project:* Use your imagination, and make a map of Camp Green Lake and the surrounding area based on events in the story. Use colored pencils or markers. Label the following things on the map:

    - The warden's cabin
    - The tents
    - The Wreck Room
    - The holes
    - The wreck of the *Mary Lou*
    - Sam's onion patch
    - God's Thumb

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5. *Creative Writing:* Write a new chapter for the novel to fill in some of the "holes" in the story. Write about one of the following events, or come up with your own idea.

   - Write about how Stanley's father invented his cure for foot fungus.
   - Write about how rattlesnake hunters rescued Stanley's great-grandfather.
   - Write a story about Stanley's grandfather (who doesn't appear in the story) and try to use some of the same motifs as found in *Holes.*
   - Write about how Zero found his mother.
   - Write about how Stanley met Clyde Livingston.
   - Write about the meeting between Stanley's great-grandfather and Kissin' Kate Barlow.

6. *Inventions:* After many failed attempts, Stanley's father finally had a successful invention. The most successful inventions are those that meet people's needs. Imagine that you are an inventor, and think about what needs people have. In a one- to two-page paper, describe an invention that would fill a perceived need. Explain how this invention would work, what it would look like, and how people would obtain it. Include sketches of your invention.

   Alternatively, choose an invention and research its origins. Who invented it? How was it invented? What needs did it meet? Did it change people's lives? If so, how? Gather this information in a one- to two-page research report.

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Additional Resources

Other Books by Louis Sachar:

There's a Boy in the Girl's Bathroom
The Boy Who Lost His Face
Dogs Don't Tell Jokes
Johnny's in the Basement
Sixth Grade Secrets
Someday Angeline

***Wayside School** (series)*
- *Sideways Stories from Wayside School*
- *Wayside School is Falling Down*
- *Sideways Arithmetic from Wayside School*
- *More Sideways Arithmetic from Wayside School*
- *Wayside School Gets a Little Stranger*

***Marvin Redpost** (series)*
- *Kidnapped at Birth*
- *Why Pick On Me?*
- *Is He a Girl?*
- *Alone in His Teacher's House*
- *Class President*
- *Super Fast, Out of Control*
- *Flying Birthday Cake*
- *Magic Crystal*

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Books of Related Interest:

My Side of the Mountain	by Jean Craighead George, grades 4–6
*Maniac Magee**	by Jerry Spinelli, grades 5–7
Bud, Not Buddy	by Christopher Paul Curtis, grades 5–7
The Cay	by Theodore Taylor, grades 5–7
*Tuck Everlasting**	by Natalie Babbitt, grades 5–7
Walk Two Moons	by Sharon Creech, grades 6–8
A Long Way from Chicago	by Richard Peck, grades 6–8
A Year Down Yonder	by Richard Peck, grades 6–8
Hatchet	by Gary Paulsen, grades 6–8
*The Giver**	by Lois Lowry, grades 6–9

* A study guide for this title is available from Progeny Press.

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