

2002

Sachar, Louis. *Holes*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998.

SUMMARY:

Stanley Yelnats' family has a history of bad luck, so he isn't too surprised when a miscarriage of justice sends him to a boys' juvenile detention center, Camp Green Lake. There is no lake - it has been dry for over a hundred years, and it's hardly a camp. As punishment, the boys, X-ray, Squid, Armpit, Zigzag, Magnet, Zero and Caveman, must each dig a hole a day, five feet across and five feet deep. The warden claims that the purpose of this pointless task is to build character. It takes Stanley to prove this is a lie. Woven into the story at Camp Green Lake are flashbacks of Stanley's ancestors and the origin of the supposed family curse.

QUESTIONS:

Of what crime is Stanley Yelnats found guilty? Describe Stanley's side of the story. What do you learn about Zero and this event at the end of the story?

What are the real names of the boys Stanley meets at the camp? What are their nicknames? From where do these names originate?

What is the story about the origin of the Yelnats' family curse? How does Stanley succeed in fulfilling the conditions necessary to break the curse?

Describe the warden. What is the real reason she makes the boys dig the holes?

What is the deal made between Stanley and Zero?

What turns out to be the meaning of "I found refuge on God's thumb."?

What is SPLOOSH? How does it turn out to be a life-saver for Stanley and Zero **TWO** times?

Can a physical task like digging holes build character? What IS character?

At home Stanley had no friends. How is he able to make friends when he gets to camp?

JOURNAL STARTER:

I was nicknamed _____, because

ACTIVITIES

Create a family tree for Stanley and for Zero.

The name STANLEY YELNATS is a *palindrome*. Find more examples of palindromes.

Research desert life. Pay special attention to information on lizards, scorpions, and snakes.

Create a mural of the desert.

Hide a "treasure chest" somewhere in your school and then create a treasure map to find it.

View the Disney film *Holes*. Compare and contrast it with the novel.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-8

BOOK TALK:

Stanley Yelnats has to go to a boys' juvenile detention camp because a pair of shoes fell on his head. Of course, he was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. And now he has to dig holes in a dry desert lake bed to "build his character." Except there is far more to the hole digging than that. An engraved gold casing, an old gypsy curse and the drive to find the meaning of his life lead Stanley to a fantastic and dangerous adventure! Featuring a cast of unforgettable characters and a plot full of twists and turns, *Holes* will hold you to the very last sentence!

READ-ALIKES:

Sachar, Louis. *Small Steps*. Random House, 2006.
Sachar, Louis. *Stanley Yelnats' Survival Guide to Camp Green Lake*. Random House, 2003.
Curtis, Christopher Paul. *Bud, Not Buddy*. Random House, 2004.
DiCamillo, Kate. *Because of Winn-Dixie*. Candlewick, 2001.
Hiaasen, Carl. *Hoot*. Random House, 2005.

RELATED WEB SITES:

Louis Sachar: <http://www.louissachar.com>
The Hole Truth: A Unit of Study Based on Holes: <http://library.thinkquest.org/J0113061>
Literature Learning Ladders: Holes: <http://eduscapes.com/newbery/99a.htm>
Mountain City Elementary School, Reading Guides:
www.mce.k12tn.net/reading39/holes.htm
E-Mints: Holes: www.emints.org/ethemes/resources/S00000542.shtml
Spark Notes: <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/holes>

OTHER RECOGNITION:

Newbery Medal, 1999; National Book Award, 1998
Winner of a Children's Choice Award in each of the following states and region:
Arizona, 2001; Colorado, 2000; Florida, 2003; Hawaii, 2001; Kansas, 2001;
Maine, 2000; Maryland, 2001; Massachusetts, 2001; Missouri, 2001; New Jersey, 2001;
New Mexico, 2001; North Dakota, 2000; Ohio, 2001; Oklahoma, 2001;
Pacific Northwest, 2001; Pennsylvania, 2000; South Dakota, 2001; Tennessee, 2001;
Vermont, 2000; Washington, 2001; Wisconsin, 2001; Wyoming, 2001.

MOVIE TIE-IN: *Holes*. Walt Disney Pictures, 2003.
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0311289>