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# Sample

Prestwick House  
**Literature**  
Teaching Unit  
*Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide*



## Holes

by Louis Sachar

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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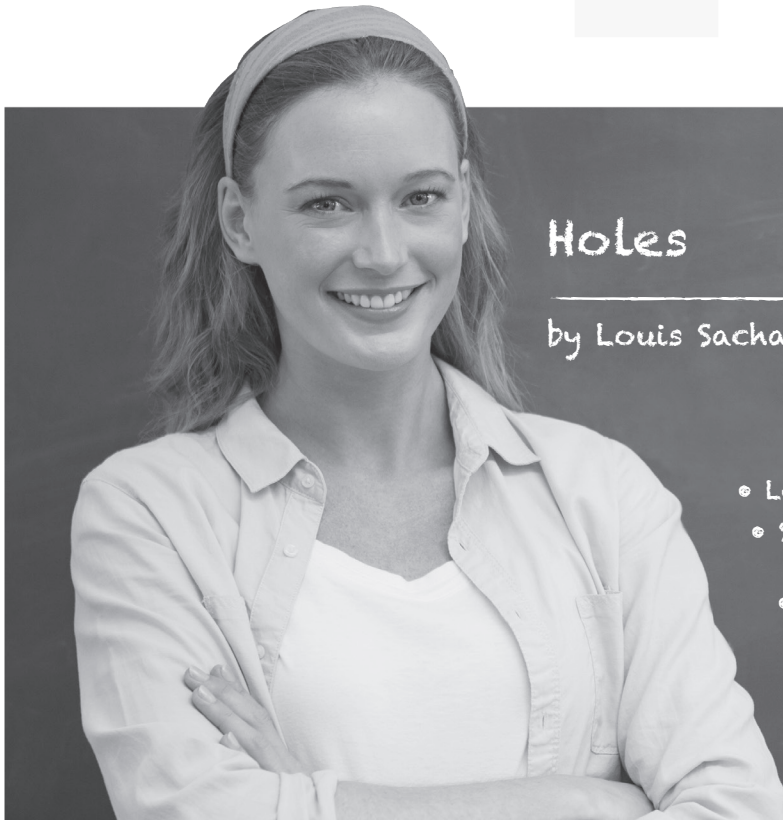
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# Literature Teaching Unit

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# Holes

## Note to the Teacher

*Holes* interweaves the story of Stanley Yelnats, a wrongly convicted juvenile delinquent sentenced to dig holes for eighteen months, with legends of his ancestors to create a coming-of-age story in which Stanley and his new friend Zero overcome injustice and uncover the secrets of Camp Green Lake. A Newbery Award-winning novel, *Holes* addresses universal themes such as friendship, courage, and self-discovery while maintaining a sense of humor appropriate for its young protagonist.

One of the characters, Sam, the onion man, is referred to as “Negro.” While the term is offensive to most people today, “Negro” is used only in flashbacks that take place “one hundred and ten years ago” and was commonly used during that time period.

All references come from the Yearling Newbery edition of *Holes*, copyright 1998.

# Holes

## Objectives

*By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:*

1. infer meanings about characters and events when the meanings are not explicitly stated.
2. cite incidents from the text to illustrate that this is a coming-of-age story for both Stanley and Zero.
3. explain how the subplots intertwine with the main plotline and discuss how this merging of the plotlines contributes to the following motifs in the story:
  - the value of friendship
  - the definition of courage
  - the impact of love, hate, and prejudice
  - the role of destiny
  - the importance of God in Stanley's life
4. discuss the significance of names in this story, including the nicknames the boys use and Stanley's palindromic name.
5. identify the use of the following literary devices:
  - metaphor
  - simile
  - palindrome
  - hyperbole
  - pun
  - flashback
  - foreshadowing
  - allusion
6. cite incidents from the text that support the following themes:
  - Love and hate have the power to affect a person's life.
  - Through perseverance and hard work, people can achieve their goals.
7. identify instances of verbal irony in the story.
8. discuss the significance of the novel's title as it relates to Stanley's life.
9. compare the roles of the female characters in the story and connect them to an underlying prejudice in society.
10. define a legend and discuss whether the story of Kate Barlow is a legend.

# Holes

## Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Find and discuss examples of flashback and digression in this novel.
2. Some critics believe that Stanley's palindromic name is more than just a play on words; they believe it also speaks to the effect of Stanley's past on his present life. Decide whether or not you agree with this idea, and support your conclusion using incidents from the story.
3. Which incident in this story is the most humorous? Scary? Suspenseful? Sad? Heartwarming? Support your opinions with details from the novel.
4. Re-read the letter Stanley writes to his mother and her response. Based on these letters, what is a possible theme for this novel?
5. Discuss two instances of irony in this story.
6. One of the motifs in this novel is the impact of prejudice and hate on a person's life. Cite two incidents from the story to support this motif.
7. Consider the female characters in this novel. What, if anything, is surprising about them?
8. A legend is a story that is only partly true about a real or fictional character. Legends usually include exaggerations and unusual events or circumstances. Discuss how the story of Kate Barlow fits these criteria.
9. Why is Stanley a target for bullies at the beginning of the story? Why does he initially refuse to teach Zero to read and then later change his mind?
10. Compare the song in Chapter 3 to the song at the end of Chapter 50.
11. Discuss the reason Mr. Pendanski seems to dislike Zero.
12. The following two themes are predominant in this novel. Choose one and find an example from the story that illustrates it.
  - Love and hate have the power to affect a person's life.
  - Through perseverance and hard work, people can achieve their goals.

# Holes

## Part One – You Are Entering Camp Green Lake

### Chapter 1

1. Find an example of irony in this chapter.

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2. In what sense does the Warden of Camp Green Lake “own the shade”?

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3. What is the worst thing that can happen to a camper at Camp Green Lake?

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### Chapter 2

1. Why does Stanley Yelnats go to Camp Green Lake?

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15. How does Stanley feel after he finishes his first hole? Why does he refuse to ride back to camp with Mr. Pendanski?

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## **Chapter 8**

### VOCABULARY

**predatory** – living by capturing and feeding upon other animals

1. List three important facts a boy from Camp Green Lake should know about the yellow-spotted lizards.

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2. Why might the author have included this short chapter about lizards?

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5. What is the Warden's real name? What does her name tell the reader about her ancestors?

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### **Chapter 49**

1. What new information about Sam, the onion man, is revealed in this chapter? Based on this information and the fact that the onion field is located under God's Thumb, what might the onions represent in this story?

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2. Some critics believe that various plot elements in this story are unbelievable. List two plot elements in this chapter that seem too convenient to be believable.

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3. What does Green Lake represent in this story?

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