



Text:

Holes

By Louis Sachar



Plot:

Stanley Yelnats, a boy who has bad luck due to a curse placed on his great- great-grandfather, is sent to Camp Green Lake, a juvenile detention camp, for a crime he did not commit. Stanley and the other boys at the camp are forced to dig large holes in the dirt every day. Stanley eventually realizes that they are digging these holes because the Warden is searching for something. As Stanley continues to dig holes and meet the other boys at the camp, the narrator intertwines three separate stories to reveal why Stanley's family has a curse and what the Warden is looking for.

When he was a boy, Stanley's great-great-grandfather, Elya Yelnats, received a pig from Madame Zeroni, a gypsy, in exchange for a promise. Elya's promise was that after the pig grew strong he would carry Madame Zeroni, who only had one leg, up a mountain and sing her a song that she had taught him. After becoming disillusioned with the girl he thought he loved, however, Elya hops on a boat to America, forgetting his promise. Elya marries and has a child in America and always thinks about Madame Zeroni, who he believes has cursed him because of his failure to fulfill his promise. He knows that her son lives in America, but Elya never finds him.

One hundred and ten years earlier, the town of Green Lake is a beautiful place where peach trees bloom throughout spring. In this Texas town, the schoolteacher, Katherine Barlow, falls in love with Sam, the onion seller. However, racism is institutionalized in the United States and it is against the law for a black man to kiss a white woman. The townsfolk become enraged when they find that Katherine and Sam have kissed. Charles, or Trout, Walker, the richest man in town who wanted to marry Katherine himself but had been rejected, gathers the townspeople to burn the schoolhouse and attack Sam. Katherine seeks help from the local sheriff who instead makes lewd advances towards her. Whilst attempting to escape, their boat is destroyed on the lake and Sam is killed. Katherine, driven mad by her grief, becomes the outlaw 'Kissin' Kate Barlow'. In her twenty years of robbing people in the west, she happens to rob Stanley's great- grandfather whilst on his way from New York to California. She buries his money and even though Charles Walker and his wife try to torture her into revealing its location, she dies before anyone can find it. After the day Sam is killed, rain stops falling on Green Lake.

Because Green Lake dries up, the citizens of the town all move away and by the time that the land is serving as Camp Green Lake, the only people there are juvenile delinquents. Stanley has a hard time digging holes there due to the incredible heat and the hard, dry land. At one point Stanley digs up half of a lipstick tube that has the initials KB on it. Stanley knows that the Warden, who happens to be a descendent of Charles and Linda Walker, is interested in this find and he speculates that perhaps Kate Barlow used to live in the area. The other boys at the camp are tough and all have nicknames. Stanley tries to stay in the good graces of X-Ray, the obvious leader of the group but this becomes harder as Stanley becomes better friends with a boy named Zero. Although Stanley and Zero, also known as Hector Zeroni, do not know it, Hector is the great- great-great-grandson of Madame Zeroni. Zero eventually runs away from camp and Stanley, in an effort to save him, follows after a few days. The two help each other to reach the top of a big mountain, which turns out to be Sam's old onion field. Because Zero is very weak, Stanley carries him up this mountain. They survive on onions for more than a week and then return to camp, planning to search for Kate Barlow's treasure in the hole where Stanley found the lipstick tube.

Stanley and Zero find a suitcase that has the name Stanley Yelnats on it. Although the Warden attempts to take the suitcase from them, Stanley's lawyer, Ms. Morengo, arrives to say that Stanley has been proven innocent and Stanley and Hector are able to leave the camp. It turns out that the suitcase contains many valuable items that had once belonged to Stanley's great-grandfather so many years ago.

At the end of the book, it seems that the Yelnats family curse is lifted. Hector is reunited with his mother, from whom he was separated many years ago and Stanley's father finally succeeds with an invention. While at Camp Green Lake, Stanley has improved his physical strength and his self-confidence in addition to making a true friend. While fate has so often seemed against Stanley, in the end it serves to help him, his family, and Hector.

Genre:	Non-Liner Narrative – Adventure, Mystery, Magical Realism	Tense:	
Structure:	Holes blends several genres, including adventure, detective, and fairy tale. It features an adventure narrative with humour, a detective-like plot structure with puzzles to solve, and fairy tale elements like a gypsy curse and ancestral	Theme/s:	<p><u>Fate and Destiny; Generational Curses</u> - Although Stanley always believes that he is unlucky and in the wrong place at the wrong time, the events in the book seem to be the result of fate working to reunite the Yelnats and Zeroni families. Each coincidence, including the shoes that Hector stole falling onto Stanley's head, is so unpredictable and unlikely that it appears fate is the determining factor in these characters' lives.</p> <p><u>Friendship</u> - Stanley and Zero's true friendship leads to their mutual survival and wealth. Even though he is facing adversity, once Stanley is secure in Zero's friendship he feels happier than he has ever felt. False friends who are only friendly when they are getting something they want, like X-Ray, are shown to be dangerous. Once X-Ray stops getting benefits out of friendship, he becomes hostile.</p>

	connections. When fantastic and magical things are a part of an otherwise normal world, it's also entered the genre of magical realism. In the book, Stanley's family believe and accept as normal a gypsy's curse on their family as a punishment given many years ago.		<p><u>Destructive Nature of Cruelty; Racism; Corruption</u> - The cruelty that Sam and Kate face in the town pushed Kate to become cruel herself. When the Warden is cruel to Mr. Sir, he reacts by punishing Stanley. When Zero, normally a calm boy, is pushed past his limit, he reacts with violence. Cruelty is something that one person can cause on another and a cycle of violence and cruelty is shown to pass through many decades and several generations at Green Lake.</p> <p><u>Importance of History & Family Legacy</u> - Three stories from separate times in history are combined. The narrator is given information from all stories but Stanley and Zero only know the history that has been passed down to them. They discover that they know that same song, but not where it came from so are unable to discover that their ancestors originated from the same town in Latvia. The history of Stanley's great- grandfather and his survival on "God's thumb" has been passed down to Stanley which allows him to formulate a plan for survival when he and Zero run away from the camp. Stanley and Zero would have been further aided by knowing the exact history of Kate and Sam (and the repulsion of onions).</p> <p><u>Justice and Injustice</u> - The woodpecker and wolf in the pig lullaby represent the food chain, with the wolf symbolizing the stronger one. The lullaby highlights wishful thinking and the struggle for an easier life which parallels the innocent boys at the camp and the unjust authorities overseeing them. No rain fell on Green Lake after the racist murder of Sam, creating a sense of a larger world in which justice is ordained and operates through magic and curses.</p> <p><u>Symbolism; holes, onions, nicknames</u> - Each of the boys has a nickname that is more important than their birth name, at least whilst at camp. These names blend a summing up of the boy's actual inner character with an identity imposed by the other boys at camp. Similarly, Kissing Kate and Miss Katherine Barlow represent the same character in a different light. These names help to convey broader ideas or morals in the story.</p> <p><u>Identity struggles; Self-discovery; Environmental impact: Perseverance</u></p>
Familiarity of content:	Set at Camp Green Lake, Texas. Most of the action happens now or in the recent past; the novel is set recently enough for camp records to be computerized. Camp Green Lake's name falls somewhere between a joke and a curse. Nothing is green and there is no lake. It is a desert with an average temperature in the shade of 95 degrees which combined with its isolated location make it a perfect prison. Camp is the only known source of water for many miles in a landscape full of rattlesnakes, scorpions, poisonous lizards, and tarantulas.	Perspective:	Third person The narrator intertwines scenes from 1800s Latvia, late 1800s Texas, and current day to create a larger story of fate and legacy. While writing about the current day, the narrator primarily describes the thoughts, actions and activities of Stanley, the protagonist.
Other language choices:	<p>Sentences tend to be short and direct, giving us just the information we need and no more. Descriptions are limited (except for the town of Green Lake and its apparent perfection in contrast to the events that follow), and there is very little use of adverbs or figurative language:</p> <p><i>He dug his shovel into the dirt. It couldn't always be this hot, he thought. Surely it got cooler in December. Maybe then they froze. He dug his shovel into the dirt. His skin had gotten tougher. It didn't hurt so much to hold the shovel.</i> (13.4-7)</p>	Explanations:	<p>Curse: (noun) a supernatural power or punishment placed on someone/something.</p> <p>Stifling: (adj.) feeling restrained; suffocating The bus wasn't air-conditioned, and the hot, heavy air was almost as stifling as the handcuffs. (Ch. 3)</p> <p>Desolate: (adj.) barren; empty The land was barren and desolate. (Ch. 4)</p>
Vocabulary:	Juvenile, detention, warden, poisonous, venom, curse, gypsy, correctional facility, boot camp, generations, outlaw, wearily, fate, testified, despicable, presumably, racial, condemned, legacy, justice	Diversity:	Stanley Yelnats is a young male American with Latvian roots Sam is a black man living in Texas at a time when racism is institutionalized in the United States.
Other links:	<p>Holes By: Louis Sachar Book Trailer - YouTube</p> <p>Holes by Louis Sachar Book Summary - YouTube (sound off)</p> <p>Holes Trailer - YouTube</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4qM4JqRaY1Q</p>		