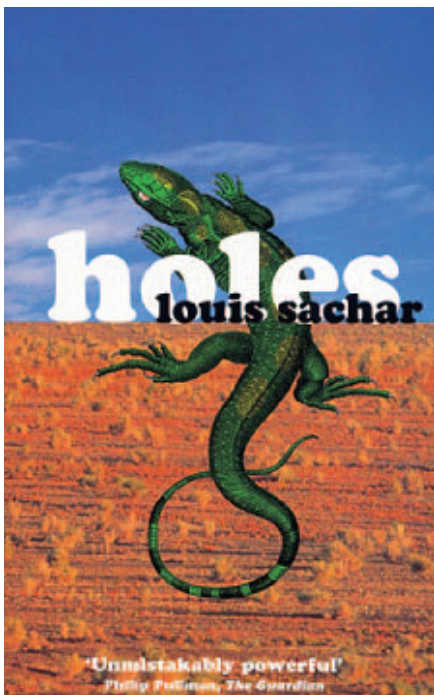


**READ AND RESPOND**  
**ACTIVITIES BASED ON**  
**HOLES**  
**BY LOUIS SACHAR**



*Does it grab you?*

- ❖ What makes us want to read a book?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ❖ Looking at the cover of this book, discuss with your partner, does it make you want to read it?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ❖ Before you buy a book, do you usually read the **blur**? Read the blur of the book. What kind of information does it tell you? What kind of book you think is going to be?

### Chapters 1-2

- ❖ What happened to the lake? And to the town and its people?
  
- ❖ The main character in the book is **Stanley Yelnats**. What do we know about him? Stanley's reactions to events give us insights into his character, but we have to remember that characters develop during the course of the book. What do Stanley's actions tell us about his character? *Use photocopiable sheet Character Studies.*

- ❖ What is unusual about Stanley's name?

**Palindromic** comes from Greek and means "running back again"

- ❖ Are there palindromic names in class?

- ❖ Think of palindromic words:

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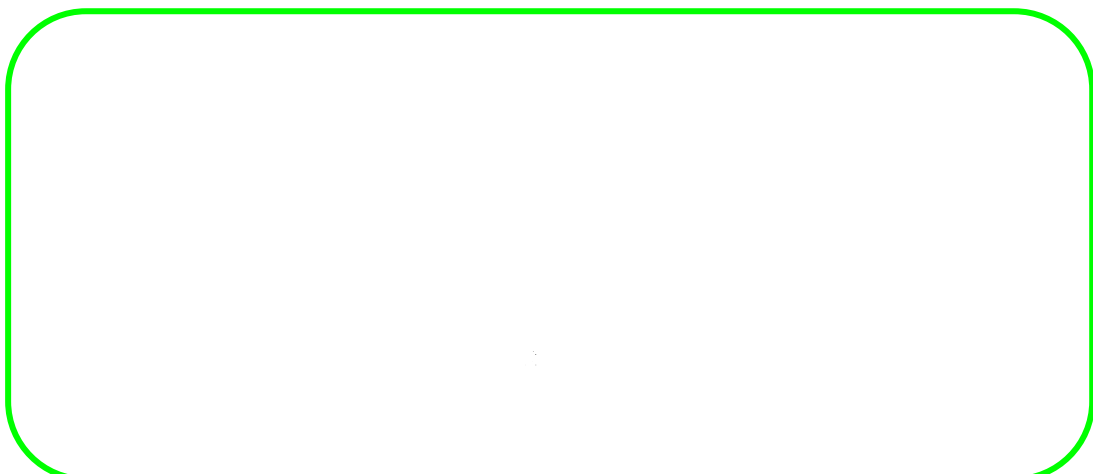
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- ❖ Highlight the two sentences that relate to the Warden. What details of character does this reveal?  
Do you know who has forbidden campers to lie in the hammock?

- ❖ Read from "Here's a good rule..." to "always".  
Can you think of **one-word sentences**? Give examples.



- ❖ Make a list of **synonyms** of “usually”.
  
- ❖ What happens if you remove the word “usually”?
  
- ❖ Write a short piece describing an **ordinary, everyday event**: for example, getting up in the morning, coming to school, lunchtime routines and so on. Of course, you use the **present simple**.

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- ❖ Now insert “usually” and see what happens.
- ❖ Read it aloud **in a suitably menacing tone, with dramatic pauses to heighten effect**.
- ❖ Do you think Stanley will decide to go to Jail or Camp Green Lake?

### Chapter 3


- ❖ There are two interweaving stories: Staley’s story and his no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather. Create a family tree and add notes about what each one did.

**Focus on Grammar**

**If only.....**

We can use **WISH / IF ONLY + SUBJECT + PAST SIMPLE** to express regret about the present

**EXAMPLE**  
 I'm so weak. – I wish I **wasn't/weren't** so weak or I wish I **was/were** stronger.  
 (Remember always to express the opposite idea)



- ❖ Complete the photocopy

**Chapter 4**

- ❖ **Dig it!**

*“You are to dig a hole every day, including Saturdays and Sundays. Each hole must be five feet deep, and five feet across in every direction. Your shovel is your measuring stick”*



How large is this actually? Cut the shovel on a paper in real size. Estimate how long it might take to dig one in baked earth?

- ❖ How would you feel if you were Stanley in this situation?

**Chapter 5**

- ❖ Build a portrait of Zero on the photocopiable sheet. Look at the four sentences from Zero's first appearance in Chapter 5. What can we infer about Mr Pendanski as well as Zero, and their relationship with each other from these sentences? Do you think Mr Pendanski is a good camp counselor?
  
- ❖ Why does Mr. Pendanski insist on using everyone's proper names, and the boys insist on their nicknames?
- ❖ Complete the photocopiable sheet "**Meet group D**". Complete the nickname column as you read. We don't find out what Zero's real name is at this point. What effect does it have?

### Chapter 6

- ❖ Imagine you are Stanley's, telling the story of the events leading up to his conviction to an impartial listener. What do we know about Stanley so far? What are the facts of the story? What assumptions have been made?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ❖ Use the photocopiable sheet *But I'm innocent!* To develop storytelling prompt cards. In pairs, take turns to tell your story using the prompt cards. *Remember the importance of eye contact, intonation, gesture and body language! Consider the use of dramatic pause and the need to engage the listener!*

### Chapter 7

- ❖ What adjectives can you use to describe Myra and her father?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ❖ "*Elya said nothing*" Why did he do this? Why didn't Elya pick a number? How does Elya feel? What will Elya do next?

- ❖ Almost at the end of Chapter 7 there is a passage about Zero. Does it develop our understanding of Zero?

## Chapter 8

### Yellow-spotted lizards

- ❖ Complete the card with its characteristics and then **sketch** your version in actual size.

**Yellow-spotted lizards**

**Name:**

**Features:**

**Where do they live?**

**What do they eat?**

- ❖ Compare your sketch with your partner and then with the front cover of the book. Does the lizard necessarily have to be green?
- ❖ Do yellow-spotted lizards, such as the ones in this book, exist?
- ❖ In pairs, invent a creature that might pose a hazard to you in school. Invent its characteristics and diet and it should relate to the school environment.
- ❖ Who else eats sunflower seeds?

### Chapter 9

- ❖ The “Rec(reation) Room” was really a “**Wreck Room**”. Why might the boys break everything in a room that is designed for their recreation?

### Chapter 10

- ❖ Stanley’s fossil does not qualify as “interesting”. How does he feel about this?

### Chapter 12

- ❖ Is Mr Pendanski’s approach right, to encourage the boys?
- ❖ Are the boys taking the counseling session seriously? What is the evidence for this?

### Chapter 13

- ❖ How does Stanley’s acceptance into the gang continue?

### Chapter 14-18

- ❖ Were you surprised to discover the Warden was female? Continue the character study on the photocopiable sheet.
- ❖ How does she treat Mr Pendanski?

- ❖ What else do we find out about Zero?

### **Dilemma (Chapter 19)**

*Stanley is yet again in the wrong place at the wrong time*

- ❖ What would be the consequences of lying or telling the truth about this incident? Use the photocopiable sheet **Dilemma** to explore each action.

#### **Discuss:**

- Stealing is wrong, being loyal to friends is right- but when that friend has stolen? Should Stanley tell the truth or accept the blame?
- Being in the wrong place at the wrong time is a theme of the book. What might be going through Stanley's head as he rides in the truck to the Warden's hut? Note ideas on the photocopiable sheet and use this to write the internal dialogue Stanley is having with himself.
- Imagine the Warden is absent when Stanley arrives and he is told to write the facts down. Produce two versions. One admitting to stealing , one telling the truth.

### **Chapters 19-22**

- ❖ Consider the encounter with the Warden. Is her reaction what you would expect?
- ❖ Why is she punishing Mr Sir and not Stanley?
- ❖ Who has dug Stanley's hole in his absence? How do you know?



- ❖ What do we learn about Zero's aptitude when Stanley starts teaching him?

### Chapter 23-26

- ❖ This section comprises a **flashback** to the kissin' Kate Barlow story. In pairs, can you **summarise** the story?

**Flashback:**

- ❖ Do you notice a change in the style of writing?
- ❖ What were the problems associated with a white woman and a black man falling in love 100 years ago?
- ❖ End of chapter 26, Sachar directs a question at the reader: "Whom did God punish? **Class discussion.**
- ❖ Is now the question surrounding the absence of the lake at Green Lake answered?

### Chapter 27-28

- ❖ What's Zero's real name?
- ❖ In chapter 28, Kissin' Kate Barlow dies and with her dies the secret of where she has buried the treasure. She prophesies that Trout Walker and his

descendants will be digging for the next hundred years. Can you make a connection with the present day story?

## **PART TWO: The last hole**

### **Chapters 29-36**

- ❖ The change in the weather emphasizes both the characters' emotions and plot details. God's thumb is revealed because of the unusual meteorological conditions. The change in the weather also presages the change in Zero's behavior. What does he do?
  
- ❖ In **chapter 29**, what is the significance of the line written in *italics*?
  
- ❖ **CONSCIENCE ALLEY**  
Read from **Chapter 31**. Consider the options open to the Warden: Going out to look for Zero vs erasing him from the records.
  - Using the photocopiable sheet, list the main arguments. Form six groups, each responsible for one of the characters on the sheet. Using the arguments as the basis for your discussion, devise a representation to the judge at the Warden's trial.
  
- ❖ In **Chapter 34** a **mirage** is mentioned. Research this.
  
- ❖ How realistic is the finding of the boat the *Mary Lou*?

- ❖ Zero and Stanley speculate about how Mary Lou was- but the reader already knows. Why does Sachar do this?

### **Chapters 37-42**

- ❖ Can you identify how these chapters on the mountain combine some of the story's puzzle pieces and link the three plot strands through character actions and themes?

- ❖ We also learn a great deal about Zero's childhood. What do you find out about his upbringing? Does this explain why Zero keeps himself to himself?

- ❖ **Chapter 42** concludes with an authorial device. Stanley asks a question which is not answered. Can you supply an answer?

### **Chapters 43-47**

- ❖ Sachar uses **cliffhangers** to finish Chapters 44, 45 and 47 to .....?

- ❖ What is the **irony** in chapter 46?

### **Chapters 48-49**

- ❖ Complete the other part of the puzzle- the link between the Warden and the Kissin' Kate Barlow.

- ❖ What is the purpose of **Chapter 49**?

### **PART THREE: Filling in the holes**

**Chapter 50** fills in some detail, but again leaves the reader to “fill in the holes”.

- ❖ Why is the ending so satisfying?

## ANSWER KEY

### Does it grab you?

- ❖ Know the author, interesting title, intriguing front cover, recommendation, seen the film...

### Chapters 1-2

- ❖ **One-word sentences:** Great! Fantastic! (adjectives)  
What? How? Why? (question words)  
Shit! Bugger! (expletives)  
Yes. No (Answers)  
Ouch! Ups (exclamations)  
Certainly! Probably! (adverbs)
- ❖ Synonyms of “usually”: normally, habitually, largely, overall, principally, mainly
- ❖ If you remove the word “**usually**”, it removes **tension** and becomes rather reassuring.

### Chapter 5

- ❖ Nicknames are important in terms of belonging/fellowship. Nicknames give status but also anonymity. Indication of solidarity in adversity- and that you are accepted. Stanley feels accepted when he is dubbed “Caveman”

### Chapter 6

- ❖ He is bullied, naïve, cursed
- ❖ Late leaving school because of Derrick Dunne; stolen sneakers fell from freeway overpass and landed on his head
- ❖ An unlikely story so he must be guilty

### Chapter 7

- ❖ Elya doesn't pick a number because he realizes that Madame Zeroni is right about Myra. Next he will go to America.

### Chapter 8

- ❖ These lizards don't exist. They are Sachar's invention.
- ❖ Mr Sir also eats sunflower seeds.

### Chapter 9

- ❖ They were angry for the punishment

### Chapter 10

- ❖ He feels disappointed because he had been told that if he found something interesting he would have the day off and didn't have to dig a hole. That didn't happen, though.

### Chapter 12

- ❖ Good to have ambition versus being realistic
- ❖ X-Ray's response to the idea that Magnet might be a monkey trainer

### Chapter 13

- ❖ He found the metal tub and gave it to X-Ray
- ❖ **Discuss stereotyping.**

### Chapter 14

- ❖ He didn't watch *Sesame Street*; he can't read or write; he had no one to write to.

### Chapters 19-22

- ❖ Zero "I'm not stupid"

### Chapter 23-26

- ❖ Read out the précis. Discuss the **summaries**, do they manage to retail all the important information, while at the same time summarizing it?
- ❖ The style is more descriptive, featuring more adjectives; longer sentences.

### Chapters 27-28

- ❖ Hector Zeroni. The threads between the two families are being tied together. Madame Zeroni and Elya Yelnats.

### Part two: The last hole

### Chapter 29-36

- ❖ The line in italics comes from Stanley's great-grandfather's story; it emphasizes the link between God's thumb and the mountain Stanley has just seen.
- ❖ **Chapter 31: CONSCIENCE ALLEY**  
The class is divided in two lines facing each other. One line thinks of reasons why the Warden should instigate a search, and the other line considers reasons why the Warden should delete him from the system. Then one student from each line

alternatively contributes their idea. The teacher assumes the role of the Warden and listen to opposing ideas, walking down conscience alley. Summarise and make your decision in role.

- Rearrange the groups so there is one of each character in a group. Acting as judge, listen to representations before sentencing the Warden.

❖ The reader already knows it. It gives the reader a sense of superiority.

### **Chapters 37-42**

❖ The finding of water and carrying of Zero mirrors the Elya story; onions link them to the story of Sam and Kate; Zero and Stanley are linked via the sneakers.

### **Chapters 43-47**

❖ The cliffhangers are to keep the reader engrossed.

❖ In chapter 46, the irony is that while the camp staff wait for Zero and Stanley to die, they tell Stanley that he was to be released the previous day- his lawyer had been to visit.

### **Chapters 48-49**

❖ Her surname is Walker; Kate died prophesying Trout's descendants would be digging for treasure for many years to come.

❖ Chapter 49: The anecdote about Sam and the onion juice that staved off lizards, allows the reader to make connections between this and the fact that the two boys were not bitten. Rain starts to fall. *What is the symbolism of this?*

### **Chapter 50**

❖ Threads tied together; story came full circle when Stanley carried Zero up the hill and broke the gypsy curse; themes nearly integrated; but not all questions answered- some left to the reader to infer.