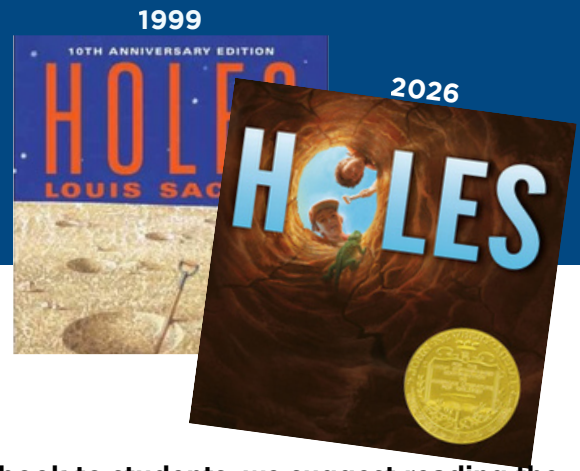




Holes

Discussion Guide

GRADES 4 - 8

Before using this book with your class or recommending the book to students, we suggest reading the book closely to determine if it is a good fit. Consider saying to your students:

“This book contains topics that may be sensitive. Not all books fit all readers. If you are uncomfortable with this book, you have the right to stop reading it, but please pick another.”

Before Reading: to activate schema, build background knowledge, and set a purpose.

- Have students complete the [Anticipation Guide](#) to prepare for understanding and connecting with the deeper themes and messages of the story.
- Frontload vocabulary with the [Vocabulary Guide](#).

During Reading: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.

Chapters 1 - 7

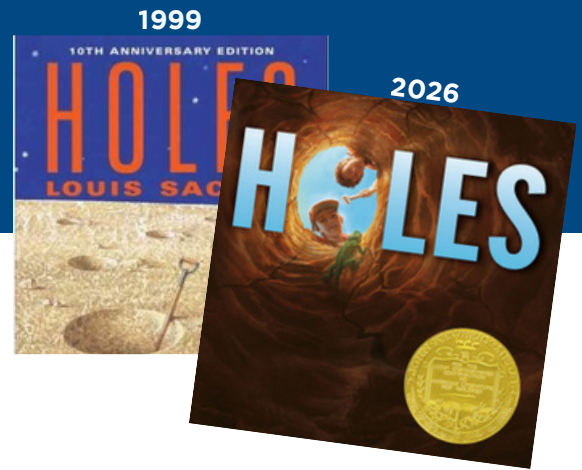
- The narrator insists there is no lake at Camp Green Lake and that the Warden “owns the shade.” What kind of place is Sachar setting up, and what mood do these opening details create?
- Stanley is “given a choice” between jail and camp. Using the text, explain why this is barely a choice.
- Whenever anything goes wrong, the Yelnats family blames the “no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather.” What clues show the family half-believes the curse and half-jokes about it?
- The boys are told digging holes “builds character.” What evidence in these chapters makes you doubt that explanation?

Chapters 8 - 18

- When Stanley finds the gold tube marked “K B,” he hands it to X-Ray instead of the Warden. What does that choice reveal about power and survival at the camp?
- By Chapter 18 Stanley’s hands are callused and he digs faster. How is the camp changing him — and does it seem to be changing more than his body?
- The story keeps cutting back to Elya Yelnats and Madame Zeroni. What promise does Elya break, and why should readers keep it in mind?

Chapters 19 - 28

- Using the text, explain what happens to Sam the onion man and why. (Note the racial injustice at the center of it.)
- How does the town’s treatment of Sam connect to Green Lake drying up? What link is Sachar drawing between cruelty and the land itself?
- Zero and Stanley trade digging for reading lessons. What does each boy gain, and what does the trade reveal about how the camp normally treats them?
- When Zero walks off into the desert, why do the Warden and Mr. Sir seem unbothered? What does their reaction say about how the camp values the boys’ lives?



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During Reading Cont: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.

Chapters 29 - 49

- Point to the moment Stanley decides to go after Zero. What does it cost him, and why does he go anyway?
- The boys survive on "God's Thumb," the same refuge Stanley's great-grandfather once described. How does this tie the past and present storylines together?
- Stanley carries Zero up the mountain while Zero teaches him a song. Explain how this scene fulfills the promise broken generations earlier.
- The yellow-spotted lizards don't bite the boys. Using details from the text, explain why they're safe.
- What do we learn about who Zero really is, and how does his identity change the meaning of the whole story?

Chapter 50

- The curse is described as broken. Using the text, trace the chain of events that finally lifts the Yelnats family's bad luck.
- How does Sachar resolve the Yelnats and Zeroni family stories at the same time?

After Reading: to summarize, question, and reflect.

- Sachar braids three stories into one. Explain how they were secretly connected, pointing to at least two links you can find in the text.
- The book plays fate against choice. Does Stanley break the curse because of destiny, or because of the choices he makes? Support your answer.
- What does each boy, Stanley and Zero, give the other that no one at the camp ever gave them?
- The camp claims digging holes builds character. By the end, what actually built Stanley's character?
- Who is punished unfairly in this book, and who finally gets what they deserve?

If your students enjoyed this book...

- Encourage them to continue to discuss it and refer to it in other lessons and conversations.
- Let them explore more about the topic by reading other books with similar themes, structure, characters, or content.