



Holes Lesson 1

Over the next four days we will be taking a closer look at a couple more extracts from the book *Holes* by Louis Sachar. Hopefully before the end of term we will have the opportunity to read the book.

Today we are going to focus on the opening chapter of the book.

There is no lake at Camp Green Lake. There once was a very large lake here, the largest lake in Texas. That was over a hundred years ago. Now it is just a dry, flat wasteland.

There used to be a town of Green Lake as well. The town shrivelled and dried up along with the lake, and the people who lived there.

During the summer the daytime temperature hovers around ninety-five degrees in the shade— if you can find any shade. There's not much shade in a big dry lake.

The only trees are two old oaks on the eastern edge of the "lake." A hammock is stretched between the two trees, and a log cabin stands behind that.

The campers are forbidden to lie in the hammock. It belongs to the Warden. The Warden owns the shade.

Out on the lake, rattlesnakes and scorpions find shade under rocks and in the holes dug by the campers.

Here's a good rule to remember about rattlesnakes and scorpions: If you don't bother them, they won't bother you.

Usually.

Being bitten by a scorpion or even a rattlesnake is not the worst thing that can happen to you. You won't die.

Usually.

Sometimes a camper will try to be bitten by a scorpion, or even a small rattlesnake. Then he will get to spend a day or two recovering in his tent, instead of having to dig a hole out on the lake.

But you don't want to be bitten by a yellow-spotted lizard. That's the worst thing that can happen to you. You will die a slow and painful death.

Always.

If you get bitten by a yellow-spotted lizard, you might as well go into the shade of the oak trees and lie in the hammock.

There is nothing anyone can do to you anymore.

Tasks –

1. Answer the following comprehension questions in full sentences
 - a) How long has the lake at Camp Green Lake been dry?
 - b) What temperature does it reach in the shade in the summer time?
 - c) How many trees are there and what are they used for?
 - d) Who owns the shade?
 - e) What's the worst thing that can happen to you at Camp Green Lake?
2. In the line 'The town shrivelled and dried up along with the lake, and the people who lived there.' What does the word 'shrivelled' mean and what does it tell us about the town of Green Lake?
3. What does the line, 'The campers are forbidden to lie in the hammock. It belongs to the Warden. The Warden owns the shade.' tell the reader about the Warden?
4. What is the impact of the use of the one-word paragraphs, 'usually', 'usually' and 'always'? Does it have an impact with regards to the narrative voice? What do we think about the way the narrator is speaking to us?
5. Does the opening chapter suggest that Camp Green Lake is a fun place to go? Write a paragraph using evidence from the text to support your answer.

Holes Lesson 2

Today's lesson is going to focus on an extract from Ch. 9, just after Stanley digs his first hole at Camp Green Lake.

Stanley stood in the shower and let the cold water pour over his hot and sore body. It was four minutes of heaven. For the second day in a row he didn't use soap. He was too tired.

There was no roof over the shower building, and the walls were raised up six inches off the ground except in the corners. There was no drain in the floor. The water ran out under the walls and evaporated quickly in the sun.

He put on his clean set of orange clothes. He returned to his tent, put his duty clothes in his crate, got out his pen and box of stationery, and headed to the rec room.

A sign on the door said WRECK ROOM.

Nearly everything in the room was broken; the TV, the pinball machine, the furniture. Even the people looked broken, with their worn-out bodies sprawled over the various chairs and sofas.

X-Ray and Armpit were playing pool. The surface of the table reminded Stanley of the surface of the lake. It was full of bumps and holes because so many people had carved their initials into the felt.

There was a hole in the far wall, and an electric fan had been placed in front of it. Cheap air-conditioning. At least the fan worked.

As Stanley made his way across the room, he tripped over an outstretched leg.

"Hey, watch it!" said an orange lump on a chair.

"You watch it," muttered Stanley, too tired to care.

"What'd you say?" the Lump demanded.

"Nothin'," said Stanley.

The Lump rose. He was almost as big as Stanley and a lot tougher. "You said something." He poked his fat finger in Stanley's neck. "What'd you say?"

A crowd quickly formed around them.

"Be cool," said X-Ray. He put his hand on Stanley's shoulder. "You don't want to mess with the Caveman," he warned.

"The Caveman's cool," said Armpit.

"I'm not looking for trouble," Stanley said. "I'm just tired, that's all."

The Lump grunted.

X-Ray and Armpit led Stanley over to a couch. Squid slid over to make room as Stanley sat down.

"Did you see the Caveman back there?" X-Ray asked.

"The Caveman's one tough dude," said Squid, and he lightly punched Stanley's arm.

Stanley leaned back against the torn vinyl upholstery. Despite his shower, his body still radiated heat. "I wasn't trying to start anything," he said.

The last thing he wanted to do after killing himself all day on the lake was to get in a fight with a boy called the Caveman. He was glad X-Ray and Armpit had come to his rescue.

Tasks

1. Answer the following questions in full sentences:
 - a) How long does Stanley get in the shower and how does he describe it?
 - b) How can the reader tell that it's still very hot despite being the end of the day?
 - c) What does the sign on the door of the rec room say? Why is it spelt this way?
 - d) What is the only thing that does work in the rec room?
 - e) How is the person that Stanley tripped over described?
2. When Stanley walks into the rec room it says 'Even the people looked broken, with their worn-out bodies sprawled over the various chairs and sofas.' Given that Camp Green Lake is a 'juvenile correctional facility' what is the writer saying about the boys who go there? Is there more than one meaning?
3. Can you find two clues in the text that Stanley doesn't really belong with these boys? Write out the quotations and explain in your own words why they show he isn't a bad kid.
4. Stanley doesn't realise it at the time but X-ray has given him the name Caveman. Why do you think it's important for Stanley to get given a nickname like all the other boys? What does the nickname Caveman suggest about Stanley and what the other campers think about him?

Holes Lesson 3

In today's lesson we are going to skip forward to an extract from Chapter 14.

When digging his second hole Stanley found a fossil. This wasn't of much interest to the Warden, and Stanley was made to promise to give whatever he found to X-Ray as he was the leader of their group and had been there the longest, and if anyone deserved a day off it was him! A few holes later Stanley did find something, a gold tube with the letters 'KB' engraved on them. He gave the tube to X-Ray and, deciding to save the find to the next day, X-Ray finally shows Mr Pendanski the tube. The warden is called to the scene...

It didn't take long for the pickup to return. Mr. Pendanski stepped out of the cab. A tall woman with red hair stepped out of the passenger side. She looked even taller than she was, since Stanley was down in his hole. She wore a black cowboy hat and black cowboy boots which were studded with turquoise stones. The sleeves on her shirt were rolled up, and her arms were covered with freckles, as was her face. She walked right up to X-Ray.

"This where you found it?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Your good work will be rewarded." She turned to Mr. Pendanski. "Drive X-Ray back to camp. Let him take a double shower, and give him some clean clothes. But first I want you to fill everyone's canteen."

"I just filled them a little while ago," said Mr. Pendanski.

The Warden stared hard at him. "Excuse me," she said. Her voice was soft.

"I had just filled them when Rex— "

"Excuse me," the Warden said again. "Did I ask you when you last filled them?"

"No, but it's just— "

"Excuse me."

Mr. Pendanski stopped talking. The Warden wiggled her finger for him to come to her. "It's hot and it's only going to get hotter," she said. "Now, these fine boys have been working hard. Don't you think it might be possible that they might have taken a drink since you last filled their canteens?"

Mr. Pendanski said nothing.

The Warden turned to Stanley. "Caveman, will you come here, please?"

Stanley was surprised she knew his name. He had never seen her. Until she stepped out of the truck, he didn't even know the Warden was a woman.

He nervously went toward her.

"Mr. Pendanski and I have been having a discussion. Have you taken a drink since Mr. Pendanski last filled your canteen?"

Stanley didn't want to cause any trouble for Mr. Pendanski. "I still got plenty left," he said.

"Excuse me."

He stopped. "Yeah, I drank some."

"Thank you. May I see your canteen please."

Stanley handed it to her. Her fingernails were painted dark red.

She gently shook the canteen, letting the water swish inside the plastic container. "Do you hear the empty spaces?" she asked.

"Yes," said Mr. Pendanski.

"Then fill it," she said. "And the next time I tell you to do something, I expect you to do it without questioning my authority. If it's too much trouble for you to fill a canteen, I'll give you a shovel. You can dig the hole, and the Caveman can fill your canteen." She turned back to Stanley. "I don't think that would be too much trouble for you, would it?"

"No," said Stanley.

"So what will it be?" she asked Mr. Pendanski. "Do you want to fill the canteens or do you want to dig?"

"I'll fill the canteens," said Mr. Pendanski.

"Thank you."

Tasks:

1. Answer the following questions in full sentences:
 - a) What colour hair does the Warden have?
 - b) What does the Warden say will be X-Ray's reward?
 - c) Why is Stanley surprised the Warden knows his name?
 - d) What two-word phrase does the Warden keep repeating in the extract?
 - e) What does the Warden tell Mr Pendanski he can do if he doesn't want to fill the boys' canteens?
2. Use the description of the Warden from the first paragraph to draw a picture of her. Label your drawing with quotations from the text.
3. How would you describe the way the Warden treats Mr Pendanski? Use evidence from the text to support your point of view.
4. What kind of person do you think the Warden is? Use evidence from the text to support your point.
5. What clue from the text do you get that Stanley is worried for Mr Pendanski?
6. If the Warden is actually looking for something and the gold tube might be part of what she is looking for, what is the potential problem with waiting a day before showing it to her?

Holes Lesson 4

Today we are going to skip forward to Chapter 20. The boys are still digging their holes, and today one of the boys (Magnet) has stolen a bag of sunflower seeds from Mr Sir. Stanley has taken the blame for the theft, and Mr Sir has taken him to the Warden's cabin to explain the situation. But the Warden is not impressed. Here's Stanley in the Warden's cabin with Mr Sir...

"In that room, Caveman, there's a small flowered case. Will you get it for me, please?" She pointed to a door. Stanley looked at the door, then at the Warden, then back at the door. He slowly walked toward it.

It was a kind of dressing room, with a sink and a mirror. Next to the sink he saw the case, white with pink roses. He brought it back out to the Warden, and she set it on the glass coffee table in front of her. She unclasped the latch and opened the case.

It was a makeup case. Stanley's mother had one similar to it. He saw several bottles of nail polish, polish remover, a couple of lipstick tubes, and other jars and powders.

The Warden held up a small jar of dark-red nail polish. "You see this, Caveman?"

He nodded.

"This is my special nail polish. Do you see the dark rich colour? You can't buy that in a store. I have to make it myself."

Stanley had no idea why she was showing it to him. He wondered why the Warden would ever have the need to wear nail polish or makeup.

"Do you want to know my secret ingredient?"

He raised and lowered one shoulder.

The Warden opened the bottle. "Rattlesnake venom."

With a small paintbrush she began applying it to the nails on her left hand. "It's perfectly harmless . . . when it's dry."

She finished her left hand. She waved it in the air for a few seconds, then began painting the nails on her right hand. "It's only toxic while it's wet."

She finished painting her nails, then stood up. She reached over and touched Stanley's face with her fingers. She ran her sharp wet nails very gently down his cheek. He felt his skin tingle.

The nail on her pinkie just barely touched the wound behind his ear. A sharp sting of pain caused him to jump back.

The Warden turned to face Mr. Sir, who was sitting on the fireplace hearth.

"So you think he stole your sunflower seeds?"

"No, he says he stole them, but I think it was— "

She stepped toward him and struck him across the face.

Mr. Sir stared at her. He had three long red marks slanting across the left side of his face. Stanley didn't know if the redness was caused by her nail polish or his blood.

It took a moment for the venom to sink in. Suddenly, Mr. Sir screamed and clutched his face with both hands. He let himself fall over, rolling off the hearth and onto the rug.

The Warden spoke softly. "I don't especially care about your sunflower seeds."

Mr. Sir moaned.

"If you must know," said the Warden, "I liked it better when you smoked."

For a second, Mr. Sir's pain seemed to recede. He took several long, deep breaths. Then his head jerked violently, and he let out a shrill scream, worse than the one before.

The Warden turned to Stanley. "I suggest you go back to your hole now."

Stanley started to go, but Mr. Sir lay in the way. Stanley could see the muscles on his face jump and twitch. His body writhed in agony.

Stanley stepped carefully over him. "Is he— ?"

"Excuse me?" said the Warden.

Stanley was too frightened to speak.

"He's not going to die," the Warden said. "Unfortunately for you."

Tasks:

1. Answer the following questions in full sentences:
 - a) What does the Warden tell Stanley to get from the other room?
 - b) What colour is the nail polish?
 - c) What is the Warden's secret ingredient for her nail polish?
 - d) Why did the Warden hit Mr Sir?
 - e) Where does the Warden tell Stanley to go after she hits Mr Sir?
2. Even before the Warden hit Mr Sir how does the reader know the nail polish is dangerous? Use quotations from the text to support your point?
3. What words does the writer use to show how much pain Mr Sir is in? Can you pick five words and explain their meaning?
4. Why does the Warden say it is unfortunate for Stanley that Mr Sir wont die? How do you think this will make Stanley feel?
5. Why do you think Stanley might have taken the blame for taking the sunflower seeds in the first place?