

Holes by **Louis Sachar**

Year 5 and 6

Reasons for selection and synopsis

Stanley Yelnats' family has a history of bad luck going back generations, so he is not too surprised when a miscarriage of justice sends him to Camp Green Lake Juvenile Detention Centre. Nor is he very surprised when he is told that his daily labour at the camp is to dig a hole, five foot wide by five foot deep, and report anything that he finds in that hole. The warden claims that it is character building, but this is a lie and Stanley must dig up the truth.

Holes is a classic for a good reason. The inventive and captivating comedic mystery by Louis Sachar will have your class on the edge of their seats.

Before reading...

Ask the children to look at the front cover. What do you think the book will be about? What things can you see on the front cover?

What sort of story will it be? Who might enjoy it?

Now read the blurb – were any of your predictions correct?

When do we see holes?

What might be the significance of the lizard on the front cover?

Reading Vipers

Vocabulary
Infer
Predict
Explain
Retrieve
Sequence or Summarise



The following questions are designed as prompts only – allow the children to come up with their own questions and ideas. They will be much more engaged this way!

Chapters 1, 2 and 3

Vocabulary	<p>What is a camp?</p> <p>What is a warden?</p> <p>Find a word on Page 6 that shows the bus was uncomfortable.</p> <p>What does convicted mean?</p> <p>Look at the word supposedly on Page 8. What synonyms could you find for this word?</p> <p>What word on Page 8 means huge?</p>
Infer	<p>What is strange about Camp Green Lake?</p> <p>Why does no one live in the town of Green Lake anymore?</p> <p>What do you think is meant by 'the warden owns the shade'?</p> <p>Why do you think Stanley and his family just pretended he was going to a nice camp?</p> <p>How did Stanley feel when he got to Camp Green Lake?</p>
Predict	<p>Read the first line of Chapter 2. Predict why someone might go to Camp Green Lake.</p> <p>At the end of Chapter 2, predict what Stanley might have done to be sent to Camp Green Lake.</p>
Explain	<p>Explain why Louis Sachar might use short chapters.</p> <p>Why does Sachar use a question at the start of chapter 2?</p>
Retrieve	<p>Where is the story set?</p> <p>What creatures can be found in Camp Green Lake?</p> <p>What is the most dangerous animal out in Camp Green Lake?</p> <p>Who is the main character?</p> <p>Why did Stanley end up in Camp Green Lake?</p> <p>What do you have to do at Camp Green Lake?</p> <p>What part of his appearance does Stanley not like?</p> <p>What is Stanley's father's job?</p> <p>How did Stanley get his name?</p>

Summarise	What impressions do you get of Stanley? Summarise them in 3 words. Summarise your impressions of Camp Green Lake in one sentence.
Writing Opportunity	Write the story of Stanley Yelnats and Kissin' Kate Barlow.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6	
Vocabulary	<p>What do barren and desolate mean?</p> <p>What is a buzzard?</p> <p>Find a word on Page 17 that shows that the boys are tired.</p> <p>What is barf?</p> <p>Identify a word on Page 21 that means 'lack of'.</p>
Infer	<p>Why is Stanley's mouth dry?</p> <p>Why does Stanley feel sorry for the driver?</p> <p>What is strange about the name Mr Sir?</p> <p>What colour might the socks have been at first?</p> <p>Why is Stanley going to be thirsty every day?</p> <p>Why might Stanley not want to sleep in a cot that was occupied by someone called Barf Bag?</p> <p>Why do you think the boys call Mr Pendanski 'mom'?</p>
Predict	<p>After reading that the only rule at Camp Green Lake is not to upset the warden, what do you think the warden might look like?</p> <p>It can be assumed that we might find out why the shoes fell from the sky. Predict why this might have been?</p>
Explain	<p>Why does Sachar continually explain how big Camp Green Lake is?</p> <p>Explain why Sachar spells it 'mom'.</p> <p>Explain why Sachar says 'if you could call it that' three times at the start of Chapter 6.</p> <p>Why doesn't Sachar tell us how the shoes fell out of the sky?</p>

Retrieve	<p>How long did the bus ride take?</p> <p>What can't you bring into Camp Green Lake?</p> <p>Why does Mr Sir have a gun?</p> <p>What is Stanley expected to do every day?</p> <p>Why shouldn't Stanley run away?</p> <p>Who is Stanley's counsellor?</p> <p>Who are the boys that Stanley meets?</p> <p>What was Stanley's supposed crime?</p>
Summarise	<p>Summarise your impressions of Mr Sir in Chapter 4, using only five words.</p> <p>What is your first impression of Armpit?</p>
Writing Opportunity	<p>After Chapter 6, write a two paragraph diary entry to summarise Stanley's thoughts so far about Camp Green Lake.</p>

Chapters 7, 8 and 9

Vocabulary	<p>What does defective mean?</p> <p>'Myra's head is as empty as a flowerpot' – what does this mean?</p> <p>What does forlorn mean?</p> <p>What word on Page 35 could be replaced with 'linger'?</p> <p>What is a curse?</p>
Infer	<p>Why is it so hard to dig?</p> <p>Why did Stanley find it hard to sleep?</p> <p>How has Stanley's weight helped him?</p> <p>Why does Stanley nearly faint?</p> <p>Why do you think Elya just told Myra to marry Igor?</p> <p>Magnet says 'make sure nothing's living in it'. What might he be referring to?</p> <p>Why was it surprising that Zero finished his hole first?</p> <p>Why did Stanley enjoy the shower so much?</p>
Predict	<p>Read to the end of Page 31. Predict what will happen next.</p>
Explain	<p>Explain why Sachar uses a flashback.</p> <p>Do you like Myra? Why?</p> <p>Explain why you think the children called Stanley 'Caveman'.</p>
Retrieve	<p>What is different about X-Ray's shovel? Why does X-Ray want it?</p> <p>What was Stanley's great-great grandfather called?</p> <p>Why doesn't Elya have a good chance of marrying Myra?</p> <p>Why did the two pigs weigh the same?</p> <p>Who does Elya marry?</p> <p>What does Stanley do when he's finished digging the hole? Why do you think he does this?</p> <p>Draw a yellow-spotted lizard to scale.</p> <p>What does Zero ask Stanley?</p>
Summarise	<p>Write one word to describe each of the children in the camp so far.</p>

Writing Opportunity	Finish Stanley's letter.
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Chapters 10, 11 and 12	
Vocabulary	<p>Stanley calls it an 'awesome' task. What is your understanding of the word awesome? How do you think Sachar has used it here?</p> <p>What does accomplish mean? What synonyms can you think of for it?</p> <p>What words and phrases on Page 58 show that Zero is annoyed?</p>
Infer	<p>Why didn't Stanley have any trouble falling asleep?</p> <p>Why do you think the second hole is harder to dig?</p> <p>Why did Stanley slow down his digging?</p> <p>How does Stanley feel when the fossil doesn't get him the day off?</p> <p>Why is Stanley the last to finish digging?</p>
Predict	<p>Predict what will happen when the counsellors see the fish fossil.</p> <p>The Warden isn't interested in fossils. Predict what they might be interested in.</p>
Explain	<p>Explain how and why Sachar uses italics in Chapter 11.</p>
Retrieve	<p>What did Stanley find in his hole?</p> <p>Why does X-Ray think Stanley should give him anything he finds?</p> <p>Who used to pick on Stanley?</p> <p>What job does Stanley suggest for Magnet?</p> <p>What does Zero like to do?</p>
Summarise	<p>Use three words to describe Zero.</p>

Chapters 13,14 and 15

Vocabulary	<p>What does glisten mean?</p> <p>What does engraved mean?</p> <p>Find an example of onomatopoeia on Page 67.</p>
Infer	<p>Why did Stanley lose count of the number of holes he had dug?</p> <p>Why doesn't Stanley want to give it to X-Ray?</p> <p>Why is Stanley allowed to move up in the line?</p> <p>Why do you think X-Ray snaps at Stanley?</p> <p>Why does the warden get everyone to start digging around X-Ray's hole?</p> <p>Why might this be fruitless?</p> <p>Why had X-Ray snapped at Stanley?</p>
Predict	<p>Read up to 'something hard and metallic' on Page 60. Predict what it is.</p> <p>Predict the significance of the gold tube.</p>
Explain	<p>Explain how you know that all the boys respect X-Ray.</p> <p>How did you feel when you found out the warden was a woman?</p>
Retrieve	<p>Why was it unusual to see a cloud in the sky?</p> <p>What is written on the tube?</p> <p>What does the warden look like?</p> <p>How does the warden reward X-Ray?</p>
Summarise	<p>Summarise your first impressions of the warden in a single sentence.</p>
Writing Opportunity	<p>Write a diary entry from the perspective of X-Ray, detailing this day. Think about how he would have felt about having the day off, and how he tricked the warden into thinking he found the tube. Use everything you know about his character.</p>

Chapters 16, 17 and 18

Vocabulary	<p>What does intently mean?</p> <p>What does sprawled mean? Can you demonstrate sprawling?</p> <p>Why does Sachar use the word 'supposedly' on Page 77?</p> <p>Find a word on Page 80 that means 'very'.</p>
Infer	<p>Why does X-Ray ask the other boys if they're tired?</p> <p>Why does the warden grow impatient?</p> <p>How does the warden's mood change over these chapters?</p>
Predict	<p>Predict what will happen if/when the warden finds out the tube didn't come from X-Ray's hole.</p>
Explain	<p>Explain how you felt when the warden jabbed Armpit with the pitchfork.</p> <p>How did you feel when Zero asked Stanley to teach him how to write? Did this change your impressions of Zero's character?</p>
Retrieve	<p>Why does Stanley work the wheelbarrow instead of digging?</p> <p>Who does Stanley get a letter from?</p> <p>Why does Stanley laugh at the letter?</p> <p>How does Stanley get hurt?</p> <p>What does Zero want Stanley to do?</p>
Summarise	<p>Summarise the events of these three chapters in thirty words or less.</p>
Writing Opportunity	<p>Précis and rewrite these three chapters from the perspective of the warden.</p>

Chapters 19, 20 and 21

Vocabulary	What word on Page 86 shows you that Stanley is embarrassed? What does condemned mean? What does recede mean?
Infer	Why did Squid want Stanley to keep his mouth shut? Where does Magnet's nickname come from? Why do you think Stanley took the rap for stealing the sunflower seeds? Why do you think the warden slaps Mr Sir? Why do you think Zero dug Stanley's hole?
Predict	Predict why Squid was crying. Predict what the warden will do when she finds out Stanley stole the seeds.
Explain	How does Louis Sachar create tension in Chapter 20? How do you know that Zero dug Stanley's hole? Do you like Zero? Explain your answer.
Retrieve	What woke Stanley up? What does Magnet take from the truck? Why did Stanley quite like being in the truck? What is in the warden's nail varnish? What does the warden do to Mr Sir?
Summarise	Summarise the events of Chapter 20 in ten words or less.
Writing Opportunity	Create an advert for the red venom nail varnish.

Chapters 22, 23 and 24

Vocabulary	What phrase on Page 96 implies that Zero might not actually want to learn? What phrase on Page 100 shows that Stanley is shocked? What is a bushel? What is a cantaloupe?
Infer	What is strange about what Zero says to Stanley? Why does Stanley offer to teach Zero to read? Why does Stanley think he might need to get Zero to dig a bit of X-Ray's hole? Why were Katherine's classes always full of men? Why doesn't Mr Sir fill Stanley's canteen?
Predict	Predict whether Stanley will tell the warden about Mr Sir. Predict how Katherine's story will finish.
Explain	Why does Sachar use Chapter 23 to tell us some of the history of Camp Green Lake? Why do you think he chooses not to finish Katherine Barlow's story?
Retrieve	Why does Zero smile? What deal does Zero offer to Stanley? What was the gold tube? What does Stanley think KB might stand for? Where does the nickname Trout come from?
Summarise	Summarise the character of Mr Sir in three words, and explain why you chose each of these three words.
Writing Opportunity	Write the next part of the Katherine Barlow story.

Chapters 25, 26 and 27

Vocabulary	<p>What word on Page 108 means 'treatment'?</p> <p>Find a phrase on Page 100 that could be substituted with 'regularly'.</p> <p>Why do you think the smoke is described as 'ugly'?</p> <p>What does 'pried' mean?</p>
Infer	<p>Why weren't people convinced that Mary Lou was 50?</p> <p>Why is Katherine sad when there's nothing left to be fixed?</p> <p>Why did Doc Hawthorne's head smell of onions?</p> <p>Why do you think the woman thinks god will punish Katherine and Sam?</p> <p>Why do the townspeople go to set fire to the schoolhouse?</p> <p>How did Kissin Kate Barlow get her nickname?</p> <p>Why is Mr Sir still punishing Stanley?</p>
Predict	<p>Read up to 'then she saw the ugly black smoke' on Page 115. Predict what will happen next.</p>
Explain	<p>How does Sachar show you that Chapter 25 is set some time ago?</p> <p>Do you like Mr Sir? Why?</p>
Retrieve	<p>Who was the doctor in Green Lake?</p> <p>What did Sam sell?</p> <p>Why wasn't Sam allowed to classes?</p> <p>Why is Sam sentenced to hanging?</p> <p>What happens to Mary Lou?</p> <p>What happens to Green Lake after Sam's death?</p> <p>What is Hector's real name?</p>
Summarise	<p>Summarise how Kissin' Kate Barlow got her name in one paragraph.</p>
Writing Opportunity	<p>Write a newspaper report about Kate and Sam's incident. Do it from the perspective of the townsfolk, as it would have been written at the time, and make it sound like it was a deserved punishment.</p>

Chapters 28, 29 and 30

Vocabulary	<p>What do you think 'a ghost town on a ghost lake' means?</p> <p>What is a loot?</p> <p>What does humid mean?</p> <p>What word on Page 135 means 'shock'?</p> <p>The boys say their 'blood is boiling' from the heat. What else does this mean?</p>
Infer	<p>Why do you think Kate went back?</p> <p>When Kate yawns, what does this tell you about her character?</p> <p>Why has Kate been wishing she was dead for 20 years?</p> <p>How did Kate die? Why did she laugh?</p> <p>Why does Armpit want the rain to come their way?</p> <p>Why is everyone surprised that Mr Sir gives Zigzag more juice?</p> <p>Why do the other boys start to resent Stanley?</p> <p>Why does Zero hit Mr Pendanski?</p>
Predict	<p>Read to the page where it says 'The Last Hole'. Predict what is going to happen.</p> <p>Predict what will happen to Zero, at the end of Chapter 30.</p>
Explain	<p>Explain why the holes are being dug. Explain how you know this, despite Sachar never explicitly telling us.</p> <p>Why does Sachar have a part two to the book, in your opinion?</p> <p>How did you feel when Zero hit Mr Pendanski?</p>
Retrieve	<p>Why has Linda's surname changed?</p> <p>Why does Kate think Linda married Trout?</p> <p>Where is the loot?</p> <p>How many days has Stanley been at Camp Green Lake?</p>
Summarise	<p>Summarise what happens between Zero and Mr Pendanski in thirty words or less.</p>

Chapters 31, 32 and 33

Vocabulary	What is a 'ward of the state'? The truck wasn't going 'anywhere soon'. Why? What does this mean?
Infer	Why did only Stanley dig Zero's hole? Why does the warden want to destroy all of Zero's files? Why does Stanley try to steal the car? Why does Stanley run at the end of Chapter 32? Why does Stanley run when he sees the lizards?
Predict	At the end of Chapter 31, predict if Zero will come back. At the end of Chapter 32, predict what will happen to Stanley.
Explain	How do you feel at the end of Chapter 31 when the warden wants to destroy all of Zero's files. How does Sachar use questioning for effect in Chapter 32?
Retrieve	What solutions for keeping Zero out of harm does Stanley think of? Where does Stanley hope Zero has gone? How does Twitch get his nickname? What does Stanley have for lunch?
Summarise	Summarise your impressions of Zero, at this point in the story, using five words, and explaining each choice.
Writing Opportunity	Write a diary entry, as Twitch, describing your first day in Camp Green Lake.

Chapters 34, 35 and 36

Vocabulary	<p>What is a mirage?</p> <p>What words show you that Zero is not in good health?</p> <p>What is a rut?</p> <p>What word on Page 164 means 'weak'?</p> <p>What are interwoven fingers? Can you interweave your fingers?</p>
Infer	<p>What does the name of the boat tell us?</p> <p>What is sploosh?</p> <p>Why doesn't Zero want to go back?</p> <p>Why does Zero feel so sick?</p> <p>Why is it more likely that they will come looking for Stanley, than it was that they'd come looking for Zero?</p>
Predict	<p>Read to the end of Chapter 34. Predict what's in the boat.</p> <p>Read to the end of Chapter 36 and predict what's next for Stanley and Zero.</p>
Explain	<p>Explain why it's funny that Zero thinks Mary Lou would have been a pretty lady.</p>
Retrieve	<p>What does Stanley find?</p> <p>How does Stanley know he's lost weight?</p> <p>How did Barf Bag leave Camp Green Lake?</p> <p>Where do Zero and Stanley head for?</p>
Summarise	<p>Summarise why Zero and Stanley left camp, using less than thirty words.</p>

Chapters 37, 38 and 39

Vocabulary	What is altitude? What are increments? What is despair? What is a gully? Find a phrase on Page 174 that shows you that Zero is unwell. What is a precipice?
Infer	Why does Zero throw up? What does Stanley mean when he says he's ordered Zero's hot fudge sundae? How do you think Stanley felt when he found water? Why does Stanley tell Zero that the onion is a hot fudge sundae?
Predict	Read to the end of Chapter 37 and predict what will happen to Zero. Predict how Stanley will react now he can prove his innocence, because he knows that Zero took the shoes.
Explain	Explain why Sachar uses italics on Page 167. How does Sachar make it seem like there's no hope in Chapter 38? How did you feel when you found out Zero took the shoes?
Retrieve	Why doesn't Stanley want to rest? Why does Stanley find it hard to see where he's going? Why does Stanley carry Zero? What food does Stanley find by the water? What does Zero admit to Stanley?
Summarise	What three words sum up your feelings when you found out Zero took the shoes?
Writing Opportunity	Write the story of Zero stealing the shoes.

Chapters 40, 41 and 42

Vocabulary	What does being a 'proper' woman mean? What are 'snickers'? What does the verb 'feebly' tell you about Zero's health? Why is stealing in italics on Page 184? What word on Page 186 means crazy?
Infer	Why do you think Stanley started to think about the onion? Why does Stanley need the shovel? Why did Zero not know the shoes were important? Why do you think Stanley felt glad that Zero stole the shoes?
Predict	Predict what the final hole Stanley wants to dig is.
Explain	What is the effect of Sachar's flashback in Chapter 40? Why does Sachar end Chapter 42 with a question? What effect does this have on the reader?
Retrieve	What does the doctor say that the leeches will do? Why does Hattie blush? How does Stanley like to eat his onions? Why doesn't Stanley let Zero dig?
Summarise	Summarise these three chapters in twenty words or less.

Chapters 43, 44 and 45

Vocabulary	<p>What does evicted mean?</p> <p>What does inexplicable mean?</p> <p>Find phrases on Page 193 that show you that the boys are thirsty.</p> <p>Define 'adjacent'.</p> <p>What phrase on Page 198 shows you that Stanley is nervous?</p> <p>What is a 'commotion'?</p>
Infer	<p>Why do Zero and Stanley spend the day picking and packing onions?</p> <p>Why did Zero and Stanley dunk their caps into water?</p> <p>Why doesn't Stanley want to be the first to drink?</p> <p>What happened to Jaffy?</p> <p>Why did Zero do all the sneaking around and breaking in?</p> <p>How can you tell Mr Pendanski went and woke the other adults up?</p> <p>Why does Stanley stay really still?</p>
Predict	<p>Predict what the boys will do when you've finished reading Chapter 43.</p> <p>Read to the end of Chapter 44 and predict what will happen next.</p>
Explain	<p>What is the effect of Sachar including Zero's memories of Jaffy? What does it tell you about his character?</p> <p>How do you feel when the warden turns up at the end of Chapter 44?</p>
Retrieve	<p>What can Zero remember about his old home?</p> <p>How did Stanley fall?</p> <p>Who is Jaffy?</p> <p>What food does Zero steal?</p> <p>What do the boys find in the hole?</p> <p>What is in the hole?</p>
Summarise	<p>Explain what Stanley and Zero's plan is in twenty words or less.</p>
Writing Opportunity	<p>Write what happens next with the lizards.</p>

Chapters 46, 47 and 48

Vocabulary	<p>What does the verb 'etched' mean?</p> <p>Define rigid.</p> <p>What does strenuous mean?</p> <p>What is tarnation?</p> <p>Find a synonym for 'understand' on Page 217.</p>
Infer	<p>How many minutes had passed before the start of Chapter 46?</p> <p>Why would it have been strange for Stanley to disappear on this day?</p> <p>Why does the warden tell Mr Sir to keep the children busy?</p> <p>Why does she tell him to tell the children to imagine how long the punishment will be?</p> <p>Why did the warden say it was her suitcase?</p> <p>Why did the warden sound disappointed that Stanley was still alive?</p> <p>How does Zero get out of the camp?</p>
Predict	<p>Read up to 'it aint girl scouts selling cookies'. Predict who is arriving.</p> <p>Read to the end of Chapter 47. Predict what is in the suitcase.</p> <p>At the end of Chapter 48, predict what's next for Zero.</p>
Explain	<p>Explain how Sachar shows the warden is not a nice person in these chapters.</p>
Retrieve	<p>What does Mr Sir do that he had previously quit? Why?</p> <p>How many lizards were in the hole with Stanley?</p> <p>What did the lizard do to the tarantula?</p> <p>What was written on the suitcase?</p> <p>What was Stanley's lawyer's name?</p>
Summarise	<p>Summarise why Zero is allowed to leave in ten words or less.</p> <p>Summarise the warden's feelings in these chapters in three words and explain each choice.</p>
Writing Opportunity	<p>Write the finding of the briefcase incident, from the warden's perspective.</p>

Chapters 49 and 50

Vocabulary	What does insist mean?
Infer	Why is it funny that Sam says the men can come and get their money back if it doesn't work? Why doesn't the lawyer want Zero to say he stole the shoes?
Explain	Explain why the lizards didn't bite Stanley and Zero. Explain why Sachar might make it rain at the end.
Retrieve	How did they find out Stanley was innocent? Where does the name Sploosh come from? What is Sploosh? How much money do Stanley and Zero get? What do they use it for?
Summarise	Summarise the whole story in less than 200 words.