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Language Arts

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Holes by Louis Sachar

**Protagonist**

Stanley Yelnats is the protagonist in Holes. He is an overweight middle school student from a poor family. Stanley frequently laments about his bad luck that he inherited from his no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather. When Stanley is falsely accused of stealing a pair of cleats from a homeless shelter, he is sentenced to serve 18 months at a work camp, Camp Green Lake, for boys.

**Antagonist**

The Warden is the antagonist in the novel. She is a tall, thin, red haired woman in her middle ages. She frequently applies a dark red nail polish, and she is extremely intimidating. The Warden has spent her whole life searching for the treasure of Kate Barlow at Camp Green Lake.

**Conflict**

The main conflict in this story is a man vs. man conflict. The Warden wants to find Kissin Kate Barlow’s treasure, so she forces the boys, including Stanley, to dig holes in the hot sun all day. She makes the staff at the camp treat the boys poorly due to her obsession with finding the treasure. The Warden want to force Stanley and Zero to give up the location of the treasure, but Stanley and Zero don’t want to give it to her; therefore, there is conflict.

**Setting**

The setting of the novel is in southern Texas at Camp Green Lake during modern times. The setting is very important in this story because it relates directly to the story line of the curse and the dried up lake bed. This setting, particularly the location, influences the plot by creating a place for the boys to dig their holes in search of the treasure.

**Plot**

Stanley Yelnats is an unlucky, shy, and awkward middle school student growing up in Texas. His family is very poor, and he feels like he doesn’t fit in at school. One day, while walking home from school, a pair of cleats falls from an overpass and hits him on the head. Stanley thinks it is a sign from God, but they end up getting him arrested and falsely accused of stealing the cleats. In court, he is assigned to spend 18 months at a work camp for boys to “build character.”

When Stanley arrives at Camp Green Lake, things get pretty rough. He struggles to dig holes each day in the unrelentingly hot sun. The staff at the camp, Mr. Sir, Mr. Pendanski, and The Warden, don’t make things easy on him and the other boys. Even though he makes some new friends with the other boys, Stanley is pretty miserable at Camp Green Lake.

The best friend that Stanley makes at camp is Zero. Zero does not say much to other kids, and he earned his nickname because people say that he has zero brains. Zero can’t read, but is excellent at digging holes. He and Stanley make an agreement: if Stanley teaches Zero to read, Zero will help Stanley dig his holes. The other boys don’t like this agreement, and they give Stanley a hard time about his new “slave.”

One day, while being ridiculed by Mr. Pendanski, Zero hits him in the face with a shovel and runs into the hot desert. A few days later, Stanley runs away to try and help Zero survive the harsh conditions. When he finds Zero, the two boys seek refuge on a mountain. On the mountaintop, they find onions, which help them to survive. They make a plan to go back and search for the hidden treasure at camp, as Stanley believes he knows where it is hidden.

When they get back to camp, they dig through the night and uncover the buried treasure. When they are about to pull it out of the hole, the Warden and other staff members stop them. They are caught! What is worse is that they are covered in deadly lizards. Later on, Stanley’s lawyer comes to the camp, sees the corruption happening at the camp, and demands to take the boys home. Stanley and Zero get right out of the hole with the treasure. The lizards dislike the onions!

In the end, the camp is shut down, its staff taken to prison, and the campers sent home. Zero moves in with Stanley and his family, and with the treasure, they are all rich!

**Climax**

The climax of the story is when Stanley and Zero return to camp to dig for the treasure. They are in the hole when they get caught by the Warden and her staff. They are covered in deadly lizards, but they end up surviving when Stanley’s attorney comes to get them released from the camp. The Warden will never bother them again.

**Resolution**

At the end of the story, Zero, an orphan, moves in with Stanley and finds his mother. Stanley’s family breaks a curse of bad luck that has plagued them for generations, and they get to keep the treasure which belonged to Stanley’s great grandfather. The boys end up happy, away from camp, and rich!

**Theme**

One of the main themes from Holes is the importance of friendship. Stanley and Zero are both loners when they come to camp, and both of the boys make friends for life in one another. Their friendship is so powerful, that it even has the ability to break century long curses. As a result of this friendship, both boys end up happy and wealthy!