

# Holes

Louis Sachar is an American author who has written many books for children. *Holes* is one of his most popular novels. It tells the story of Stanley, a boy cursed with bad luck. Due to a series of unfortunate events, Stanley finds himself at Camp Green Lake Juvenile Detention Centre...

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.

5 There used to be a town of Green Lake as well. The town shriveled 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.

10 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.

15 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.

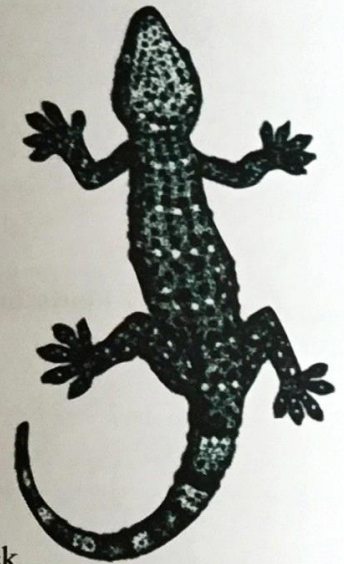
20 Sometimes a camper will try to be bitten by a scorpion, or even a small rattlesnake. Then he will get to spend a day or two recovering in his tent, instead of having to dig a hole out on the lake.

25 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.

30 There is nothing anyone can do to you anymore.



An extract from *Holes* by Louis Sachar.

1

Over a century ago, Camp Green Lake was very different to the way it is now. In what ways has the area changed over time?

.....  
.....

1 mark

2

What is the narrator's attitude towards Camp Green Lake's location? Explain your answer.

.....  
.....  
.....

2 marks

3

What type of person do you think the Warden is? Explain your answer.

.....  
.....

2 marks

4

Do you think campers enjoy the activities at Camp Green Lake? Explain your answer.

.....  
.....  
.....

2 marks

5

Identify one technique that Louis Sachar uses to make the reader want to read more.

.....  
.....

1 mark

6

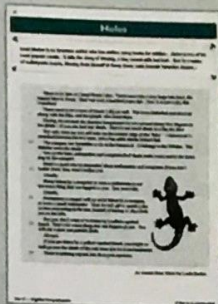
The boys at Camp Green Lake have been sent there as a punishment for bad behaviour. Do you think digging holes on the lake is a suitable punishment? Explain your answer.

.....  
.....  
.....

2 marks

Total  
out of 10

# Holes

**Question Book:**

Year 6, pages 4-5

**Author / Source:**

Louis Sachar

**Genre:**

Fiction — novel extract

**Cross-curricular links:**

- Drama (role-play)
- PSHE (juvenile prison)
- Geography (deserts)

## Introduction

Louis Sachar's *Holes* tells the unfortunate tale of Stanley Yelnats and his time at Camp Green Lake, a juvenile correctional facility in Texas. Before reading the extract, ask pupils about the novel's title. What might the novel be about? What do they think will happen? As pupils read the text, encourage them to pay special attention to the deliberate use of short sentences, and the impact this has on the reader.

## Answers

1. E.g. The lake has dried up, the town has disappeared, and the people who lived in the town have gone.
2. E.g. The narrator is very negative about it. He describes the location as a "wasteland" and makes it sound like an uncomfortable place by emphasising the high temperatures and lack of shade.
3. E.g. A selfish person because she has the only hammock on the site, which is shaded by the only trees, and she won't let the campers use it. She also seems cruel because she makes the campers dig holes all day.
4. E.g. No, because the hot conditions they work in are unbearable, and many are even prepared to risk being bitten by a scorpion or a rattlesnake in order to get a break from digging holes on the lake.
5. Any appropriate answer. E.g. He doesn't really explain why the campers are at Camp Green Lake, so the reader wants to read more to find out how they ended up there.
6. Any appropriate answer. E.g. No, because the conditions the boys have to work in are dangerous and unfair, even if they have done something wrong. OR E.g. Yes, because it might make them change their behaviour in the future so that they wouldn't have to receive the same punishment again.

## Extra Activities

- Question 5 asks pupils to consider the techniques Sachar uses to make the reader keep reading. As a class, discuss pupils' answers to this question and explore in more detail the way Sachar engages the reader.
- Ask pupils to write a postcard home as if they were Stanley, writing from Camp Green Lake.
- Divide pupils into pairs and ask them to imagine the first meeting between Stanley and the Warden. They should write a short role-play, which they can then perform for the class.
- The children in *Holes* have been sent away to a correctional facility, or a juvenile prison. With the whole class, discuss various opinions about sending children to prison. How old should a child be before he or she is considered old enough to go to prison? Where should they go if they don't go to prison?
- Camp Green Lake is set in desert-like conditions. Get pupils to look up the word 'desert' in a dictionary, and then assign groups different deserts to investigate (e.g. Antarctica, the Gobi Desert, the Sahara Desert and the Kalahari Desert). Ask pupils to present their findings to the class so that everyone can see the diversity between the different types of desert.