***Holes***

***Chapter 12***

***Summary And Analysis:***

***Summary:***

When Stanley finishes digging his second hole he returns to camp to find Mr. Pendanski talking with the boys in his group. Mr. Pendanski asks each boy what he wants to do as a career, after leaving Camp Green Lake. When Mr. Pendanski says that even Zero is not totally worthless and then asks Zero what he would like to do when he leaves Camp Green Lake. Zero is silent at first but then he replies that he likes digging holes.

***Analysis(8-12)***

This section develops the relationship between the narrative and fairy tales. The yellow-spotted lizards embody many of the fears that most people have. Not only are they hideous looking and dangerous, but they hide in holes, where the boys spend most of their time. They are a constant menace and because they like to eat sunflower seeds (which are what Mr. Sir constantly spits into the boys' holes), the reader can guess that they will soon appear as a threat to at least one of the characters. Combined with the ever-present threat of the Warden, the dry heat, and the task of digging holes day after day, the lizards form an environment closer to hell than even Little Red Riding Hood experienced after being eaten by a wolf. The theme of differing ways of perceiving personalities is also developed in this section. The boys in Stanley's tent name him Caveman but Stanley does not even realize that they are referring to him. The name Caveman brings to mind a hulking man who is very powerful, perhaps someone dressed in animal skins and carrying a club. Stanley, on the other hand, thinks of himself as a weak person who is often picked on and who has very bad luck. While he was trying to avoid a fight with the other boy, X-Ray and Armpit believe that he was being brave and perhaps instigating a fight. The irony of Stanley, who only wants to avoid fights, being named Caveman is similar to the irony of Rex, who is practically blind, being named X-Ray. While X-Ray could easily be bullied because of his glasses and lack of sight, he is in fact, the leader of the group. Stanley later realizes that X-Ray is also one of the smallest of the boys in his tent. Despite these two factors that might lead X-Ray to be picked on, he is the one bossing others around. Becoming a bully has nothing to do with size, but rather is a product of mentality. What Stanley has yet to learn is how to change his perception of himself as someone who is frequently bullied and instead see himself as strong and confident.

Stanley understands that X-Ray is the unofficial leader of the boys in tent D, and for this reason he agrees to give X-Ray anything else that he might find while digging his holes. Stanley must constantly remind himself, however, that the other boys in the tent are capable of great meanness. When Squid scowls at Stanley for writing to his mother Stanley notices that it is the boys themselves who have wrecked the things in the wreck room. He realizes that he must continue to be cautious about what he does and says around the other boys because they are unpredictable and potentially dangerous. Even Mr. Pendanski is still a character to be wary of.

While he exudes cheerfulness towards the boys he continually displays small cruelties, like mentioning that Zero is not totally worthless. This comment obviously shows Mr. Pendanski's lack of respect for Zero and also illustrates the fact that Mr. Pendanski is not always caring and helpful.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

[Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) is again the last boy to finish digging. When he arrives at Tent D, he finds [Mr. Pendanski](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/mr-pendanski) and the other boys sitting in a circle. Mr. Pendanski invites Stanley to join their discussion of what they want to do with their lives after Camp Green Lake. Mr. Pendanski carefully calls the boys by their given names as he asks [Magnet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters) what he likes to do. When Magnet offers that he likes animals, the other boys suggest different jobs involving animals. Magnet likes Stanley's suggestion of training animals for movies.

***Analysis Part 1:***

The tenor of this conversation suggests that Mr. Pendanski is forcing the issue somewhat, but Magnet's willingness to participate reinforces the fact that he's just a child who thinks animals are cool. The idea of life after Camp Green Lake also situates the camp as being a part of the formal justice system, as a main tenet of the justice system in the U.S. entails seeing prison or punishment as rehabilitation.

***Summary Part 2:***

When [X-Ray](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/x-ray-rex) laughs at [Magnet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters), [Mr. Pendanski](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/mr-pendanski) insists they "don't laugh at people's dreams" and points out that someone has to train the animals. X-Ray insists that Magnet will never be an animal trainer, to which Mr. Pendanski offers an inspirational speech about not giving up even when life is hard. [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) thinks of what he'll say if Mr. Pendanski asks him what he likes to do, reasoning that his desire to work for the FBI won't go over well with this group.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Again, it's worth noting that Mr. Pendanski is able to give such inspirational speeches only because he actually has some power and agency over his own life; for X-Ray and Magnet, they'll have comparatively little power even after camp given that they've already been convicted of crimes as teens.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Mr. Pendanski](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/mr-pendanski) turns to [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats), comments on his new nickname, and asks Stanley who's responsible for landing him at Camp Green Lake. Everyone, including [Zero](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/zero-hector-zeroni), laughs when Stanley suggests it's the fault of his no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather. Mr. Pendanski tells Stanley that it's his own fault, and he's the only one responsible for fixing it. Zero's smile disappears when Mr. Pendanski says that even Zero isn't totally worthless and has something to offer. When Mr. Pendanski asks Zero what he wants to do with his life, Zero glares back and says he likes digging holes.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Mr. Pendanski's insistence that Stanley is the only one to blame for his actions reinforces the absurdity of the justice system and of Stanley's conviction in particular; per the logic of the novel, it absolutely was Elya Yelnats's fault that Stanley was convicted for a crime he didn't commit. This begins to allow the reader to put pieces together in a way that feels satisfying, since the characters aren't fully aware of this logic.