***Holes***

***Chapter 16***

***Summary And Analysis:***

***Summary:***

Stanley enters the Wreck room and sees that all the boys are exhausted except for X-Ray, who is gloating about his day off. Zigzag complains that it is too loud to watch television and Stanley notices that Zigzag is staring at the broken television screen. The next day the Warden follows the boys to their holes. As Stanley sifts through dirt he tries to think of what the gold tube might have been. The Warden grows tired and orders Mr. Sir to make the boys work faster. After digging the boys retire to the Wreck room where Mr. Pendanski gives Stanley a letter. Armpit and Squid taunt Stanley about having a letter from his mother but X-Ray tells them to leave him alone. After the boys leave for dinner Stanley reads the letter from his mother. She tells him that she is proud of him and that their landlord is threatening to evict them because his father's experiments with shoes make the whole apartment smell awful. Stanley's mother writes that she feels sorry for the old lady who lived in a shoe because the smell must have been awful. Stanley laughs at this and Zero asks him why he is laughing. Stanley is surprised because he thought everyone had left. He tells Zero what his mother had written but Zero has never heard of the old lady who lived in a shoe. Stanley asks Zero if he has ever watched *Sesame Street* but Zero simply stares at him. Stanley leaves Zero and heads to dinner.

***Analysis (13-16):***

This section shows the ways that groups of people establish and maintain power. X-Ray becomes the group's leader because he has a system of rewards for those who support him. Once Stanley has done X-Ray a favor, X-Ray rewards him by moving him ahead in the water line and coming to his defense when Squid taunts him about receiving a letter from his mother. The Warden also has a system to keep herself in control of the whole group. Like X-Ray's system, she uses punishments and rewards to keep order but unlike X-Ray, she is the officially recognized head of the camp. She increases her power by increasing her vision; like a wich who can see everything through a crystal ball, the Warden's hidden cameras and microphones allow her complete control over the boys. She rewards X- Ray when he claims to have found the gold tube and the other boys, who must continue working without a reward, understand the full effect of being in the Warden's good graces.

The Warden is nicer to all of the boys when she believes that they are working for her and getting her what she wants. As soon as she begins to feel her goals will not be reached, she stops treating the boys well, and it is clear to them that they are no longer in her favor. Just as X-Ray has the power to move Stanley in front of Zero on the water line, so the Warden has power over not just the boys, but also Mr. Pendanski. When Mr. Pendanski threatens her system of absolute control even in a minute way, the Warden retaliates with a threat to lower his rank. She has the power to place him on the level of the campers if she wants, and it seems that this threat keeps him absolutely loyal to her. This even demonstrates that even though Mr. Pendanski seems to be in charge, he is always under the absolute control of the Warden. In addition to finding out more information about the power structure of Camp Green Lake, these chapters provide the reader with more clues to the puzzle of the book. The gold tube that Stanley has found obviously interests the Warden and has some bearing on why all the boys are digging holes in the first place. The gold tube is one more clue and the initials will doubtless provide more information about why the Warden wants the boys digging holes under the hot Texas sun.

***Detailed Summary (14-16):***

The next morning, Stanley tries to talk to X-Ray about the gold tube, but X-Ray ignores him and tells him to leave him alone. Once they're digging, though, X-Ray calls Mr. Pendanski over to his hole at a water break and shows him the tube sticking out of the dirt on his shovel. Mr. Pendanski comes back with the Warden to look at X-Ray's gold tube. Much to Stanley's surprise, the Warden is a tall, redheaded woman who lets X-Ray ride back to camp, take a double shower, and get clean clothes.

The Warden tells Mr. Pendanski to refill the boys' canteens, but he explains he just did that. The Warden calls upon Stanley to see if he had taken a drink, and while he tries not to make trouble for Mr. Pendanski by saying that he had plenty left, she asks him again if he had taken a drink. The Warden demonstrates that she wants her orders followed without question or comment and tells Pendanski that if he doesn't want to fill canteens, Caveman can do it while Mr. Pendanski digs the hole for Caveman.

The Warden pairs up the boys, with Caveman working with Zero, so that the dirt in the holes near where X-Ray was digging could be double sifted. The Warden knows the name of each boy and she appears to know that Zero is the fastest digger. When Stanley wonders about this, Zigzag informs him that the Warden watches them all the time with hidden microphones and cameras. Stanley figures that's why X-Ray wouldn't talk to him in the morning and he was afraid they'd be overheard. Since everyone has been pulled to the area where X-Ray was digging, Stanley memorizes exactly which of the hundreds of holes he was in when he found the gold tube.

X-Ray is energetic and triumphant that night when the other boys come back and he makes a place for the Caveman sitting next to him. The next day, everyone returns to the site and the boys again pair up, some digging, and some carting dirt away in wheelbarrows. The Warden watches them and tries to get them to dig faster, but nothing else is found.

That night, Stanley gets a letter from home and X-Ray tells everyone to leave him alone and let him have privacy, since it might be from his girlfriend. Zero watches Stanley read his letter, though, and when Stanley tries to explain to Zero that his mom said their apartment smelled almost as bad as the "old woman in the shoe," Zero has no idea what he's talking about. Zero has never heard any nursery rhymes.

***Analysis (14-16):***

Stanley's status in the group is increasing. X-Ray talks to him and makes him look better in the eyes of the others by saying he might have a girlfriend.

Stanley is apparently the only one getting letters from home and appreciates his mother telling him that she's proud of him for making the best of a bad situation. The reader begins to get insights into the lives of the other boys. Zero has never heard nursery rhymes. Squid can't believe that Stanley's mother writes to him.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

When [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) slouches into the Wreck Room later, [X-Ray](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/x-ray-rex) is animated and talking loudly. Stanley joins [Squid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters) on the couch and as X-Ray shouts, [Zigzag](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/zigzag-ricky) grouses for X-Ray to be quiet so he can watch TV. Stanley is perplexed and a little worried; Zigzag is staring intently at the broken television.

***Analysis Part 1:***

When compared to the other boys' exhaustion, X-Ray's behavior shows just how mentally, emotionally, and physically difficult digging is. It reinforces how cruel the camp is, as it clearly deprives the boys of their humanity.

***Summary Part 2:***

The next morning, the [Warden](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/the-warden) walks Group D to the holes again. [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) spends most of the day dumping wheelbarrows and thinks a lot about the tube. He thinks it looks familiar and wonders if it's the lid of a fancy gold pen. The Warden starts getting impatient by lunchtime and even tells [Mr. Sir](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/mr-sir) that if the boys don't dig faster, he'll have to dig with them. After this, the boys work extremely fast and Stanley almost runs with his wheelbarrow, especially when Mr. Sir is around. He reminds them they're not [Girl Scouts](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/symbols/girl-scouts). They're the last group in that afternoon.

***Analysis Part 2:***

When Group D is the last group in, it shows again that the Warden makes the rules at Camp Green Lake and can break them just as easily: making them keep digging shows her breaking the contract of sorts between the adults and the inmates and reinforces her power. Her threat to Mr. Sir shows too that she can and will weaponize absolutely anything to get what she wants.

***Summary Part 3:***

Later, [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) wonders if there's a way he could tell the [Warden](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/the-warden) where the tube actually came from. As he's turning it over, [Mr. Pendanski](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/mr-pendanski) comes into the Wreck Room with a letter for [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats). [Squid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters) gives Stanley a hard time about receiving a letter from [Stanley's mother](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-s-mother), but [X-Ray](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/x-ray-rex) suggests the letter is probably from Stanley's girlfriend. Stanley waits to read it until later. His mother writes that Stanley's letter made her feel like a parent who can afford to send her kid to summer camp. She also explains that while [Stanley's father](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-s-father) is close to a breakthrough with his sneaker project, the landlord is threatening to evict them because of the smell. She makes a joke about feeling sorry for the little old lady who lived in a shoe.

***Analysis Part 3:***

X-Ray's suggestion that the letter came from a girlfriend suggests that the inmates at camp may actually be more willing to look out for each other than the novel has thus far let on. Note, however, that X-Ray's suggestion does indicate that he's been listening to Mr. Sir's refrain about the Girl Scouts. It's likely that Mr. Sir would deem a letter from one's mother girly, while a letter from one's girlfriend connotes masculinity and power.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Zero](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/zero-hector-zeroni) startles [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) asking him what's funny. Stanley initially refuses to tell Zero what [Stanley's mother](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-s-mother) wrote, but eventually gives a basic explanation of [Stanley's father](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-s-father)'s project and his mom's joke. Zero seems to not recognize the reference to the nursery rhyme about the little old lady who lived in a shoe, which amazes Stanley. Zero asks Stanley to recite it, but Stanley just goes to dinner.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Stanley's reaction here shows that, at this point, he's pretty unwilling to think about people's experiences that are very different from his own, which Zero's lack of familiarity with the nursery rhyme suggests. When Stanley simply leaves, it also implies that he's becoming less interested in others.