***Holes***

***Chapter 26***

***Summary and Analysis:***

***Summary:***

When Green Lake still had water, one hundred and ten years ago, the news spreads that Miss Katherine and Sam have kissed. At this time it is against the law for a black man to kiss a white woman and the angry town comes to the schoolhouse to attack Miss Katherine and her books. She runs to the sheriff for help and finds that he is drunk and preparing to hang Sam. When she asks him to help her he says, "Kiss me…You kissed the onion picker. Why won't you kiss me?" Miss Katherine runs to find Sam and they climb into his boat. Sam is sad to leave Mary Lou behind but Katherine tells him they must hurry. Although Sam is strong, he cannot row faster than Trout Walker's motorized boat. Walker crashes into Sam's boat and Sam is shot and killed. Katherine is brought back to shore where she finds Mary Lou has been shot. After that day, not one drop of rain has ever fallen on Green Lake. The narrator addresses the reader by writing, "You make the decision: Whom did God punish?" Three days after Sam's death Katherine Barlow kills the Sheriff and then applies lipstick before kissing his dead face. Then Katherine Barlow spends twenty years as a dangerous outlaw in the West, known as Kissin' Kate Barlow.

***Detailed summary (23-26):***

The story shifts back briefly to Camp Green Lake 110 years before when Katherine Barlow was the town's only schoolteacher, much loved by her students and praised for her spiced peaches. Trout Walker was the son of a rich family and was named Trout because his feet smelled like dead fish. Trout was after Katherine, but Katherine refused his attentions and made him mad.

The story flips back to modern times and we see Mr. Sir at breakfast the next morning with his face horribly swollen and discolored. Mr. Sir physically abuses the boy from another tent who asks what happened. Stanley doesn't say anything, but when Mr. Sir comes to fill the canteens that day, he pretends as if he's pouring water for Stanley, but he purposely pours it onto the ground. Stanley has no choice other than to thank Mr. Sir and continue working without water.

Once again, the story goes back to Camp Green Lake. We meet Sam, The Onion Man, a big strong man with a donkey named Mary Lou who is supposed to be 50 years old. Sam claims that Mary Lou has never been sick because she only eats onions. The local people go to Sam, as well as the town doctor, Dr. Hawthorne, for "cures" when they're sick, and Sam gives something made of onions. No one knows whether it's the onion medicine or the doctor's treatments that cure people. Katherine asks Sam to help make repairs on the schoolhouse in exchange for her famous spiced peaches and Sam does. The two like each other, but Sam is black and cannot go to school, he can only fix it. Katherine runs out of chores for Sam to do and is brokenhearted because she's afraid they won't see each other any more. They kiss, only to be discovered by Hattie Parker, a woman coming out of the general store, who says, "God will punish you!"

The news that Katherine Barlow kissed Sam, a black man, spreads through town. Trout Walker revs up the crowd who burns down the schoolhouse. Katherine runs to the sheriff's office for help, but the sheriff, who's been drinking whiskey, only wants Katherine to kiss him. When Kate refuses, the sheriff tells her he "always gets drunk before a hanging," and it's against the law for a black man to kiss a white woman. Katherine runs to find Sam. Sam tearfully leaves his faithful Mary Lou behind and gets Katherine into his boat. Trout Walker overtakes them in his new motorboat and Sam is killed in the water. Katherine is taken back to jail, finding that Mary Lou has been shot in the head. No rain has fallen on Camp Green Lake since that dreadful day. Shortly after Katherine is brought back, she kills the drunken sheriff, puts lipstick on, kisses him, and becomes the outlaw "Kissing Kate Barlow" for the next twenty years.

***Detailed Analysis (23-26):***

Ideas about crime and punishment run throughout the novel. Katherine Barlow becomes an outlaw, but it's easy to understand her actions. Can you understand her shift from a good schoolteacher to a famous outlaw? The story about Camp Green Lake of the past parallels Camp Green Lake of the modern time, and is set up as a kind of parallel to make the reader question whether the boys who are serving time, like Katherine, had understandable causes for their problems.

Notice that Hattie Parker points to Katherine and Sam and says, "God will punish you!" The author means for the reader to deal with this question of punishment, because he promptly states, "You make the decision. Whom did God punish?" The whole idea of punishment ties in directly to the idea of justice.

The racial issues that Stanley says aren't present between the boys at Camp Green Lake of modern times are definitely a problem 110 years ago.

Camp Green Lake itself mirrors the bigger correctional system and puts into question how much authority any one person should have, and what happens if the person in charge is found to be corrupt?

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

***Summary Part 1:***

The story spread like wildfire through Green Lake, and no children showed up for school the next day. [Katherine](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/miss-katherine-kissin-kate-barlow) wondered if she'd gotten her days mixed up when, suddenly, a mob led by [Trout Walker](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/charles-trout-walker) burst into the schoolhouse. He called her the "Devil Woman" and yelled that she was poisoning children with books as the mob began piling desks in the middle of the schoolhouse. Katherine managed to escape the schoolhouse and ran to the [sheriff](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/the-sheriff)'s office.

***Analysis Part 1:***

By burning the schoolhouse and insisting that books are poison, Trout Walker shows that he believes education absolutely has a great deal of power to create change in the world—presumably, he believes education would make the children question their parents' racism. In this way, leaning on his power and money is a way to impede kindness and social progress.

***Summary Part 2:***

The [sheriff](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/the-sheriff), drinking whiskey, greeted [Katherine](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/miss-katherine-kissin-kate-barlow) pleasantly and told her to calm down. She began to tell him about [Trout Walker](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/charles-trout-walker)'s mob, but he refused to hear anything bad about Trout. He told her she was pretty and asked her to kiss him, since she kissed [Sam](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/sam). Horrified, Katherine accused the sheriff of drinking. He explained that he always drinks before a hanging—Sam will hang for kissing her, as it's illegal for a black man to kiss a white woman. He asked Katherine for a kiss in exchange for sparing Sam's life, but Katherine ran away. The sheriff called out that God will punish her.

***Analysis Part 2:***

When the sheriff insists that God will punish Katherine for the kiss, he shows clearly that he believes that the divine powers are on his side and share his view of morality. However, remember Trout Walker's terrible boat. The boat alone suggests that these views are in opposition to the divine and to nature, which the novel tends to link to each other. In short, this tells the reader that the sheriff is wrong.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Katherine](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/miss-katherine-kissin-kate-barlow) found [Sam](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/sam) and told him they needed to leave. Sam agreed to leave Mary Lou behind and they started off in Sam's boat, rowing across the lake. However, he couldn't escape [Trout Walker](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/charles-trout-walker)'s motorized boat. The narrator states the facts: Trout shot Sam in the water and rescued Katherine, even though she didn't want to be rescued. When they returned to shore, Katherine saw that Mary Lou had been shot, as well. Since then, rain hasn't fallen on Green Lake, and the narrator asks the reader whom God actually punished. Three days later, Katherine shot the [sheriff](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/the-sheriff), applied fresh lipstick, and kissed him. She became Kissin' Kate Barlow and spent the next twenty years terrorizing the West.

***Analysis Part 3:***

The lack of rain on Green Lake after Sam's unjust death shows that the sheriff and Hattie Parker weren't correct; God and nature are linked and have a very different idea of right and wrong than most of the inhabitants of Green Lake. Katherine's decision to become an outlaw brings up the idea of vigilante justice, as she saw firsthand that the formal justice system wasn't actually that just. When she kills the sheriff, she's able to do a small thing to atone for Sam's death and begin to recalibrate the scales.