***Holes***

***Chapter 30***

***Summary and Analysis:***

***Summary:***

While Stanley spends another day digging holes, he thinks about God's thumb and wonders if Kate Barlow lived in this area and if it was actually her gold lipstick tube that he found. When Mr. Pendanski delivers their bag lunches the other boys taunt Stanley about having Zero dig Stanley's hole for him. Zigzag pushes Stanley, who doesn't want to fight. Mr. Pendanski comes over and tells Stanley to fight back. Stanley softly hits Zigzag who in return pummels Stanley and jumps on top of him. Zero attacks Zigzag and almost kills him until Armpit breaks them up. Mr. Pendanski fires his pistol into the air and the Warden arrives. The boys tell the Warden that Zero has been digging some of Stanley's hole. Stanley explains that he's teaching Zero to read and Mr. Pendanski says, " You might as well try to teach this shovel to read! It's got more brains than Zero." The Warden spells some words for Zero and when he pronounces h-a-t as chat everyone laughs at him. The Warden forbids Stanley to teach Zero to read and Mr. Pendanski taunts Zero about how stupid he is. Zero says that he will not dig any more holes and when Mr. Pendanski tells him that digging holes is all he'll ever be good for, Zero smashes his shovel across Mr. Pendanski's face and runs away. The Warden tells the other counselors not to bother about Zero because he'll have to return for water. Then she says that the remaining six boys must still dig seven holes.

***Detailed Summary(29-30):***

As the boys work, a storm blows up far away, and when the lightening strikes against the dark sky, Stanley catches a glimpse of a rock on top of the mountain that looks like a fist with a big thumb sticking out. Stanley then remembers his grandfather saying that "he took refuge on God's thumb" after being robbed by Kate Barlow and left in the desert.

Zigzag celebrates a birthday and Zero again proves his mathematical ability by figuring out the number of days Stanley has been at the camp, 46. Stanley is stronger and the holes aren't as hard to dig as he once felt they were, especially since Zero is digging an hour a day for him. Zigzag comes over and accuses Stanley of using Zero as a slave and taunts Stanley, asking him if Caveman will "let" Zigzag dig for him. When Mr. Pendanski delivers water, Zigzag mockingly offers Stanley his place in line since Stanley is supposedly so much better than all the rest of them. X-Ray, too, joins in the taunts and makes Stanley move up in line. Zigzag and Squid come to Stanley's hole and start a fight by pleading with Stanley to eat their cookies. When Stanley pushes the cookie away, Zigzag accuses him of pushing him. Mr. Pendanski has seen the whole thing and knows that Zigzag is causing trouble. Mr. Pendanski tells Stanley to hit Zigzag back. Stanley's not very good at fighting and Zigzag easily gets the best of Stanley, until Zero gets his arm around Zigzag's neck and all three roll around fighting.

Mr. Pendanski breaks up the fight by firing his pistol and causing the other counselors to come running. Mr. Pendanski calls it a "riot," and blames it on Zero who was choking Zigzag. When the Warden comes out to find out what happened, X-Ray tries to smooth things over saying that everyone just got a little hot. Zigzag takes the opportunity to say he just got hot because Caveman is sitting around doing nothing. When the Warden discovers that Zero is digging part of Caveman's holes in exchange for lessons in reading and writing, the Warden and Mr. Pendanski question Zero about letters and how to spell words. Zero hesitantly answers, but when asked about sounds he hasn't learned, he answers incorrectly, and Mr. Pendanski makes fun of him saying, "You might as well teach this shovel to read." The Warden and Mr. Pendanski tell Stanley that not only does he have to dig his own holes from now on, but that any kind of lessons are forbidden. Mr. Pendanski says that it causes Zero too much stress and that the only thing he'll ever be able to do is dig holes.

At the last insult, Zero swings his shovel and strikes Mr. Pendanski in the face before he backs away. Even though Zero had previously said that he liked digging holes, he now admits he hates digging holes. The Warden says not to shoot him since they don't need an investigation, the counselors figure that Zero will return since there's nowhere to run, and he'll run out of water and food. The boys are punished by having to dig seven holes a day instead of just their own.

Stanley is angry at everyone, but mostly at himself because he thinks he should have been teaching Zero for free, without requiring him to dig a part of his hole everyday. No one helps Stanley dig Zero's hole, so he has to dig two holes that day. Stanley thinks about how to approach the Warden to help Zero, but he can't figure anything out. Stanley waits another day when the Warden, Mr. Sir, and Mr. Pendanski ask him questions about Zero. When Stanley admits that Zero has no family, the Warden instructs the two counselors to destroy all of Zero's records and get into the state computers to erase any evidence that he was ever there.

Detailed Analysis(20-30)

The unrest and violence of a juvenile detention center become real in this chapter as Zigzag acts on his bitterness and jealousy to cause trouble. Mr. Pendanski, the authority and counselor of the group, seems to be fair and compassionate most of the time, but for some reason he has a definite dislike and "attitude" toward Zero, making us wonder what it is that causes such feelings.

Is Mr. Pendanski prejudiced against Zero because of his name or because of his reluctance to answer his questions? What causes people to be cruel to another person?

Again, the themes of crime and punishment, justice and injustice are evident. Zero commits the crime of striking out against Mr. Pendanski, but only after being insulted and berated. Are such actions justifiable?

Another idea that's repeated is that things aren't always as they appear. Zero, who is good at digging holes, may not really like doing it. Mr. Pendanski, who appears kind and courteous, does not act that way to everyone. The authorities at the camp are not what they should be since they are not focusing on helping or rehabilitating the boys and are willing to let Zero die as long as they aren't found out.

The repetition of "taking refuge on God's thumb," is an element of foreshadowing important to future events.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

The next day, [Zigzag](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/zigzag-ricky) declares that it's July 8, his birthday. He sleeps in and cuts in front of [Squid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters) in the breakfast line. [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) doesn't even know what day of the week it is, but he attempts to figure out how long he's been at Camp Green Lake. [Zero](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/zero-hector-zeroni) does the math for him; if it's indeed July 8, Stanley has been there 46 days and has dug 44 holes. Surprisingly, [Mr. Sir](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/mr-sir) gives Zigzag an extra carton of juice when Zigzag says it's his birthday.

***Analysis Part 1:***

It's worth noting that Mr. Sir's kindness to Zigzag may appear at first glance to be real kindness. However, this is likely incorrect, especially given that Stanley seems surprised at this turn of events. This illustrates how such a cruel environment makes even these small favors seem monumental.

***Summary Part 2:***

As [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) digs his shovel into the dirt, he thinks that the 45th hold is the hardest. However, he knows it's not true: he's stronger now and better adapted to the heat, [Mr. Sir](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/mr-sir) isn't depriving him of water anymore, and [Zero](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/zero-hector-zeroni) digging part of his hole helps. He still feels awkward about it, though. As the sun rises, Stanley looks for [God's Thumb](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/symbols/god-s-thumb) in the distance. He realizes that he's probably close to where [Kate Barlow](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/miss-katherine-kissin-kate-barlow) robbed the [first Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/the-first-stanley-yelnats).

***Analysis Part 2:***

Stanley's realization suggests that the cabin where the Warden lives now is possibly the same cabin where Kate Barlow lived when Trout Walker found her. Again, this allows the reader to make these connections that are satisfying and seem to make sense, which helps Sachar develop the way that destiny helps move the plot forward.

***Summary Part 3:***

When [Zero](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/zero-hector-zeroni) takes his turn in [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats)'s hole, [Zigzag](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/zigzag-ricky), [X-Ray](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/x-ray-rex), and [Armpit](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters) again suggest that Stanley get a whip to hit his slave with. They ask Stanley if he's better than them and discuss that, since he is, they should all be digging Stanley's hole for him. Stanley does his best to deflect and play along. When [Mr. Pendanski](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/mr-pendanski) arrives for lunch, X-Ray makes Stanley get in line first, insisting that Stanley is better than them. Stanley hurries away to eat in peace and wonders if he should stop letting Zero dig for him.

***Analysis Part 3:***

The reader is aware that, as far as Zero and Stanley are concerned, they're both behaving kindly towards each other, but to the other boys their arrangement reads as a rejection of a carefully curated social structure. This shows that true kindness is simply not something that can happen in a place like Camp Green Lake, which thrives on selfishness and cruelty.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) looks up as [Zigzag](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/zigzag-ricky) and [Squid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters) approach. Zigzag tries to make Stanley take his cookie and then begins pushing Stanley while telling Stanley not to push him. Stanley insists he doesn't want trouble as he carefully steps backwards around the holes. He's relieved when [Mr. Pendanski](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/mr-pendanski) walks over, but is shocked when Mr. Pendanski tells him to hit Zigzag to "teach the bully a lesson." Stanley makes a halfhearted attempt to hit Zigzag and suddenly, Zigzag grabs Stanley and begins actually punching him. Stanley falls and Zigzag continues punching, even after Mr. Pendanski yells for him to stop.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Again, the events surrounding the beginning of this fight suggest that, while there's some belief in justice or deserving justice, the fact that Mr. Pendanski facilitates this kind of violence and strife suggests that it's not in his best interest to have the boys treat each other kindly. Essentially, he and the other adults can maintain their power as long as the boys don't band together to stage an uprising.

***Summary Part 5:***

Suddenly, [Zigzag](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/zigzag-ricky) is lifted off [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats). Stanley looks up to see [Zero](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/zero-hector-zeroni) with an arm around Zigzag's neck, choking him. Zero refuses to stop, even when [Mr. Pendanski](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/mr-pendanski) shouts. [Armpit](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters) runs into the fray as Mr. Pendanski fires his pistol, and the boys fall apart. The counselors and the [Warden](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/the-warden) hurry over and Mr. Pendanski explains that there was a riot. Armpit and [X-Ray](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/x-ray-rex) attempt to play down the seriousness of the situation, but Zigzag lets slip that the fight began because Stanley wasn't digging his hole.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Though Zero's behavior is undeniably violent, it's also extremely important to note that he's standing up for Stanley—something that seems unheard of given the way Camp Green Lake functions. Armpit and X-Ray's desire to downplay the situation is more evidence that this sort of thing may not be an everyday occurrence, but it's still relatively normal for them.

***Summary Part 6:***

[Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) calmly explains his deal with [Zero](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/zero-hector-zeroni) to the [Warden](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/the-warden) and suggests that Zero learning to read is building his character, just like digging holes. The Warden turns on Zero and asks him to share what he learned yesterday. [Mr. Pendanski](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/mr-pendanski) laughs and suggests that it'd be easier to teach a shovel to read, though Zero answers that he learned the "at" sound. The Warden spells several words for Zero and he's able to sound them out, but Zero pronounces "hat" "chat." The counselors laugh, though Stanley reasons that Zero's answer was perfectly logical, given the way the letter "H" sounds.

***Analysis Part 6:***

Stanley's ability to see how Zero got to "chat" from "hat" suggests that, even though he began to become more callous and cold, his friendship with Zero is helping him remember to be empathetic and understanding of others. Mr. Pendanski's horrible words about Zero again reinforce how cruel Camp Green Lake is, as this kind of abuse from an authority figure would be unthinkable in most other circumstances.

***Summary Part 7:***

The [Warden](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/the-warden) says that nobody will dig anyone else's hole and that [Zero](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/zero-hector-zeroni)'s reading lessons must stop. Zero answers that he's not digging another hole, which the [Warden](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/the-warden) ignores. [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) asks why he can't teach Zero to read anyway, and the Warden and [Mr. Pendanski](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/mr-pendanski) insist that the reading leads to trouble and that Zero is too stupid to learn to read. Mr. Pendanski hands Zero a shovel but instead of returning to his hole, Zero swings it at Mr. Pendanski's head. Mr. Pendanski is unconscious before he hits the ground. Zero says he hates digging holes and begins backing away. Stanley notices Zero's abandoned canteen. The Warden assigns counselors to act as guards for when Zero inevitably returns for water, and tells Group D she still expects seven holes.

***Analysis Part 7:***

Mr. Pendanski and the Warden's reasoning closely mirrors what Trout Walker said about Miss Katherine poisoning kids with books; it admits that there's power to be had through education, power that would be dangerous for them if Zero had it. Similarly, though whacking Mr. Pendanski with a shovel is objectively horrible, within the system of Camp Green Lake, it's not that far-fetched: Zero lashed out the only way he knows how and the only way he's been shown how in this system.