***Holes***

***Chapter 38***

***Summary and Analysis:***

***Summary:***

Zero has passed out and Stanley leaves the shovel and jars on the ground so that he can carry Zero up the mountain. There is a bitter smell in the air and mud on the ground when Stanley reaches the top of the mountain. Stanley realizes that mud means there is water nearby and this renews his strength. He digs an onion out of the mud and he and Zero both eat half of it.

***Detailed Summary(35-38):***

Zero has been hiding underneath the boat when Stanley comes by. Stanley tries to get Zero to go back to camp to get food and water, but Zero refuses, offering Stanley some "sploosh" instead. Zero has found sixteen jars buried under the boat. The "sploosh" has been there probably a hundred years or more, and it's mushy and sweet, tasting a little like fruit. Stanley discovers that Zero has shared his last jar of "sploosh" with him and tells him they have to go back to get help. When he says that they'll let Zero go to the hospital like Barf Bag, Zero tells Stanley that Barf Bag intentionally stepped on a rattlesnake taking his shoes and socks off first.

Zero is very sick to his stomach from drinking all the sploosh. Stanley is worried and again tries to convince Zero to come back to camp, but Zero says he'd rather die first. When nothing else works, Stanley asks Zero if he sees anything on the mountain. Zero gives him the "thumbs-up" sign. The boys decide to head for the top of the mountain and pack up some empty jars and Zero's shovel before they start walking. Stanley warns Zero that he is not a lucky guy, but Zero thinks that heading for the mountain is the best plan. Zero says, "When you spend your whole life living in a hole, the only way you can go is up."

The sploosh is making Zero really sick, but he continues on, never complaining. No matter how many times he falls down and no matter how many times he groans from the pain, he continues to get up and keep walking. As they're walking, to keep Zero's mind off the pain, Stanley gives him words to spell. Stanley knows that however much pain he's having, Zero is much worse, and as long as he can keep going, so can Stanley. Stanley's main fear about dying is how hard it would be for his parents. Stanley knows that the Warden will not be able to get rid of him as easily as she did Zero since Stanley has a family who cares about what happens to him.

To help keep Zero going, Stanley gives him encouragement by saying there's probably an Italian restaurant on top of the mountain and they joke about what kind of food is waiting for them. The climbing gets harder and harder. Stanley pushes Zero up to rock ledges, and then Zero holds the shovel for Stanley to use as a handle to get up. Stanley is surprised at how much stronger he is than he used to be, but even with his increased strength, Zero has gashes in his hands from having to hold the shovel blade while Stanley got up to the rock ledge.

Zero is violently ill, throwing up all the sploosh, and then continues on concentrating on spelling words. Zero finally gives out. Stanley picks him up and keeps going, barely able to continue. There is a bad smell up there and even though he knows there's not much hope, he continues carrying Zero towards the thumb of the rock. However, he falls before he gets there and lands in a muddy gully. Stanley is able to dig a hole in the muddy ground and find dirty water to drink. Stanley gives Zero water and then finds an onion buried in the mud. Stanley eats half and gives Zero the other half, telling him that it's a hot fudge sundae.

***Detailed Analysis (35-38):***

In this section, we see the strength and friendship of both of these boys, an insight into the true worth of people. While Stanley may have been picked on at school, and while people thought Zero was dumb, neither perception is true. (Remember the continuing theme that "things aren't always what they're perceived to be.) Both boys demonstrate courage, loyalty, and strength in their willingness to help each other. Neither will give up nor complain. The boys both demonstrate intelligence and resourcefulness in planning to take the shovel and the glass jars to use as tools in case they need them.

There's a bond between the two boys who joke with each other about the possibility of restaurant food being on top of the mountain, and in doing so, they demonstrate that humor is a good survival strategy.

Climbing to the "thumbs-up" rock and finding water and food - even though it is an onion- provides a real-life example of "taking refuge on God's thumb," as Stanley's great-grandfather had once said.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

[Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) pulls a limp [Zero](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/zero-hector-zeroni) upright and then onto his shoulder, with Zero's legs dangling in front. He leaves the shovel and the jars behind and picks his way up the incline. Stanley feels as though [God's Thumb](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/symbols/god-s-thumb) is giving him strength and pulling him towards it. He begins to smell something foul in the air as the ground levels off. Stanley looks in front of him; the thumb no longer looks like a thumb and it's far too big to climb. He feels as though the smell in the air is the smell of despair. As Stanley heads towards the thumb, he slips, drops Zero, and lands facedown in a muddy gully.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Stanley's decision to carry Zero instead of abandoning him or staying put is a testament to Stanley's newfound appreciation for the boys' friendship, as he now sees leaving Zero as something wholly wrong. His conception of the smell as foul shows that this is a moment of doubt for Stanley; he hasn't yet learned to truly trust the natural world to guide him.

***Summary Part 2:***

As [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) laments his fate, he suddenly realizes that one needs water to make mud. He begins to dig in the wettest part of the gully and in the darkness is able to fill a small hole with dirty water. When Stanley has a reasonably sized hole, he scoops water and splashes it on [Zero](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/zero-hector-zeroni)'s face. Zero begins to stir, so Stanley pulls Zero closer and pours more into Zero's mouth. He discovers an onion as he digs for water and eats half without even peeling it. He gives the other half to Zero and tells him it's a hot fudge sundae.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Splitting the onion in particular shows that Stanley truly values Zero's life and their friendship; the presence of water and food suggests that Stanley's kindness, combined with nature's benevolence, will have the power to bring Zero back to life and wellness.