***Holes***

***Chapter 41***

***Summary and Analysis:***

***Summary:***

Zero gets better and tells Stanley that he was homeless before he came to Camp Green Lake. He often went to the homeless shelter that Clyde Livingston's shoes were in. Zero took the shoes because he thought it was better to take a pair of old shoes than to steal a pair of new shoes. He couldn't read the sign explaining whose shoes they were. Zero was wearing the shoes when people at the shelter discovered they were stolen. Everyone was so upset about the stolen shoes that Zero ran outside and places the shoes on top of a parked car. The next day Zero was arrested when he stole a new pair of shoes.

***Detailed Summary(39-41):***

Stanley and Zero are alive, but Zero is still very sick. Stanley thinks that maybe if he had the shovel and the glass jars that he left down the mountain when he picked up Zero that they could have more water, maybe even a little cleaner water. However, he doesn't have the strength to start out immediately and is afraid that Zero will die while he's gone. Zero begins to talk to Stanley, telling him that he is the one who took Clyde Livingston's tennis shoes. Stanley thinks Zero is delirious and as he drifts off to sleep, Stanley begins to sing the lullaby that his father always sang to him, "If only, if only, the woodpecker sighs....."

The boys are resting right below the giant tower of rock and as Stanley goes to examine it, he finds flowers. Stanley digs up one of the flowers, finds an onion, and realizes that they are in an onion field.

The story shifts back to the story of Camp Green Lake 110 years ago. The story tells of how Gladys Tennyson ran after Sam, the Onion Man, telling him that his onion tonic saved her daughter. Mrs. Tennyson was normally a very proper woman, but on that particular morning, she still had on her nightgown in her rush to tell Sam about what his medicine had done. Hattie Parker insults Mrs. Tennyson for going out in public dressed this way, but Mrs. Tennyson announces that her daughter had eaten bad meat and become deathly sick. Since Hattie Parker was the butcher's wife, she was embarrassed.

Going back to Stanley and Zero, we find that they are in the meadow of onions, resting and sleeping. The boys are drinking dirty water and eating as many onions as they want. The big rock tower gives them shade and keeps them cool. Zero is better, and since Stanley doesn't think that his friend is going to die, he goes back down to recover the shovel and jars. Stanley can't believe what a long, long way he carried Zero up, much father than he had ever imagined.

As they continue to recover, they show their resourcefulness by washing their socks in the jars so they don't contaminate their drinking water, and Stanley has expanded the water hole. Zero and Stanley begin sharing a lot about their backgrounds. Zero's mother was once a girl scout, but at some point, he was left by himself. Zero lived on his own, only going to homeless shelters when the weather was bad. Zero slept outside and pretended he was a cub scout. Zero and his mother stole from other people, but Zero always just thought that they were taking what they needed, so when he needed a pair of shoes, he took Clyde Livingston's from the shelter, not knowing they were famous. Then he left them on top of a parked car so that he wouldn't get caught. Zero was arrested the next day when he stole a new pair of sneakers from a store.

***Analysis(39-41):***

This section provides insight into Zero's life and we find that he was a kid, living on the streets, abandoned by his mother, and was stealing just enough to get by. Zero didn't want to be a "ward of the state" even though he didn't know what it meant. What he doesn't know is that he is "a ward of the state."

Zero and Stanley's lives interconnect. Stanley is being punished for a crime Zero committed. Zero knows that Stanley didn't steal the shoes - just as Zero knew that Stanley didn't steal the sunflower seeds that he was blamed for, and this knowledge makes Zero befriend Stanley.

The legend of Elya Yelnats, Stanley's great, great grandfather ties into the present-day story. Elya was told to carry the piglet up the mountain every day, letting it drink from the stream, and singing it the "if only," song. This daily task made Elya much stronger since the pig got bigger every day and since it was a long way to the mountaintop. The idea is similar to the philosophy of Camp Green Lake. If you have to dig a hole every day, you will get stronger in both body and character. Stanley, like Elya, does get much stronger and more physically fit.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

[Zero](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/zero-hector-zeroni) continues to improve. [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) digs the water hole to about the size of the holes at Camp Green Lake. The hole is full of murky water. Stanley is surprised that he hasn't gotten sick from something, as he used to get sick all the time. Zero begins to tell Stanley about his life before Camp Green Lake. He says he didn't go to the homeless shelter often but when he did, he had to find someone to pretend to be his mom. Otherwise, they would've made him a ward of the state. Zero says he isn't sure what that means, but he doesn't like it. Stanley wonders if Zero knows that he's now considered a ward of the state.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Zero's declaration that he doesn't want to be a ward of the state suggests that more than anything, Zero wants to be able to control his own life. That is, notably, something that he wouldn't be able to do as a ward of the state, as that would give the government power to likely put him in foster care. However, it's also worth noting that had that happened, Zero may have had a better chance at an education than he did on the streets.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Zero](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/zero-hector-zeroni) says he liked sleeping outside because he wanted to be a Cub Scout. He notes that [his mother](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-s-mother) was once a [Girl Scout](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/symbols/girl-scouts). Zero says that he and his mother always had to steal, but it took him a long time to realize it was wrong. He and his mother took just what they needed, so when he saw [Clyde Livingston](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/clyde-livingston)'s shoes at the shelter, he took them. Zero says he reasoned that it was better to take old shoes than new ones. He says he was wearing the smelly shoes when everyone realized they were missing. Nobody noticed him. He just left them on the top of a car. Zero says he should've kept the shoes; he was arrested the next day for stealing a new pair of sneakers.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Zero's logic when he stole Clyde Livingston's shoes makes perfect sense and reveals that even though Zero has technically lived his life as a criminal, he still has a very finely tuned sense of what's right, what's wrong, and how to commit "wrong" acts that do the least amount of damage to others. This offers another side to Zero and suggests that, instead of a traditional education, he's received an education in morality and justice.