***Holes***

***Chapter 7***

***Summary And Analysis:***

***Summary(5-7):***

Stanley is assigned to Tent D and meets one of his group's counselors, Mr. Pendanski, who tells him that Mr. Sir isn't really as bad as he seems. It's just that he's grumpy since he stopped smoking. Mr. Pendanski explains to Stanley that "there's really one rule at Camp Green Lake: Don't upset the Warden." Mr. Pendanski seems good-hearted, always talking about rehabilitating the boys into "useful and hardworking members of society." Mr. Pedanski introduces Stanley to the other boys, Rex and Alan, known as X-Ray and Squid. Both of these boys ask what happened to Barf Bag, the boy who was in their tent before Stanley. Mr. Pendanski informs them that "Lewis" won't be returning since he's still in the hospital.

Stanley is introduced to the rest of the boys in his tent whose names are Jose, Theodore, and Ricky, but who only answer to their nicknames of Magnet, Armpit, and Zigzag. The last person Stanley meets is a boy with no last name or given name. The boy is only known by "Zero." The boys have nicknamed Mr. Pendanski "Mom."

When Stanley makes the mistake of asking "Theodore" where to fill his canteen, Theodore physically throws him to the ground and tells him that his name is Armpit.

Stanley begins to learn the harsh routine of camp - four-minute showers of only cold water, meals that tasted the same day after day, and sleeping in a smelly cot vacated by Barf Bag. When asked what he did to deserve camp, Stanley tells them that he stole tennis shoes belonging to Clyde Livingston, a baseball legend, only no one believes him. Even worse, Stanley's hero had been Clyde "Sweet Feet" Livingston, but after the trial, the baseball player thought Stanley had stolen his shoes that he'd donated to raise money for a homeless shelter, so his lifelong hero thought he was criminal.

Stanley thinks that his misfortune is due to "his no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather." Stanley's troubles included being humiliated by a much smaller kid at school named Derrick Dunne who was always picking on Stanley. When Derrick took Stanley's notebook and dropped it into the toilet in the boy's bathroom, Stanley retrieved his notes but missed the bus causing him to have to walk home. That's when the tennis shoes fell from the sky and hit Stanley in the head as he walked below an underpass. Since he thought that the shoes would be helpful to his inventor father, who is looking for a way to recycle sneakers, he keeps them and starts to run home, only to be arrested for the crime. The shoes had been donated by Clyde Livingston to help raise money for a homeless shelter and were valued at over five thousand dollars. Of course, no one believes his story and the judge finds Stanley guilty of the crime, offering him the option of Camp Green Lake or jail.

Stanley's family is poor and since he's never been to camp, they pretend that camp will be a fun place, but it's anything but fun. Stanley, who is overweight, struggles to dig his first hole. Each boy has a five-foot long shovel, and has to dig a hole exactly five feet long and five feet deep. Work begins at 4:30 in the morning so that they can dig before the heat is unbearable.

The book shifts between Stanley's struggle to dig his first hole and the story of Stanley's great-great-grandfather named Elya Yelnats who was born in Latvia and at the age of 15, fell in love with a beautiful young woman named Myra Menke. Since Elya is poor, he is not able to compete with the well-off, older pig farmer named Igor Barkov, who has offered Myra's father a large fat pig for his daughter's hand in marriage.

Elya goes to a gypsy woman named Madame Zeroni for help. After warning Elya that the woman he seeks is too silly and shallow and not worthy of his efforts, Madame Zeroni helps Elya by giving him a piglet and instructing him to carry the pig up the mountain everyday to drink from the stream and to sing him a special song. Madame Zeroni explains that carrying the pig will make Elya stronger. After he takes the pig to Myra's father, then he must come back and carry Madame Zeroni, who has no left foot and is bound to a wheelchair, up the mountain to drink from the stream. If Elya does not carry out his part of the promise, he and the future generations of his family will be cursed.

Elya does as Madame Zeroni instructs, but stops taking the pig up the mountain the very last day and when he presents the pig to Myra's father, Elya's pig is exactly the same size as Igor's. Myra's father lets Myra decide which of the two men she will marry. Even though Elya professes great love AND a fat pig, and the pig farmer just offers the pig, Myra is indecisive. Seeing the stupidity of the woman, Elya leaves the country, forgetting about his promise to carry Madame Zeroni up the mountainside.

Stanley continues to dig his hole in spite of blisters, extreme thirst, and intense fatigue. Stanley listens to Mr. Sir tell him, "This isn't the Girl Scouts, is it?" and then watches him spit sunflower shells into his hole. Due to the fact that he'd put his piles of dirt too close to his hole, he had to move them, using double the effort that it would have taken if he had shoveled them farther away in the first place.

The story flips back to Elya Yelnats and his passage to America as a deckhand. Elya meets Sarah Miller, a woman who can work hard and share Elya's life, even though he seems almost "cursed." Sarah only asks that he sing the "pig lullaby" for her. When their son Stanley is born, she translates the song so that it rhymes and sings it every night to Stanley I.

The section ends as Stanley Yelnats IV finally completes his hole. Stanley's hands are bloody and he is trapped in his hole because he doesn't have the strength to pull himself out. Finally, after digging foot holes in the side so that he can climb out, Stanley follows the tradition of the other boys and uses his last bit of saliva to spit in his hole. Stanley declines the offer of a ride from Mr. Pendanski and walks home, feeling proud of his accomplishments.

***Analysis(5-7):***

The story of Elya Yelnats is inserted between the stories of Stanley Yelnats IV and offers a parallel. Madame Zeroni assigned the first Stanley the task of carrying a pig up the mountain every day and of letting him drink from the stream while Elya sang a song to him. Madame Zeroni knew that carrying a growing pig up the mountainside every day would make Elya stronger, both in body and character. The basic idea of Camp Green Lake is the same. Digging a hole everyday would make the boys physically strong and give them good character training in hard work, diligence, and persistence.

The story is not sugarcoated or overly sweet. It's apparent that this is not a nice place to be. Brute strength and violence are part of the boys' lives, as evidenced when Armpit knocks Stanley down for calling him "Theodore." Kids who don't look like other people are also bullied, as when Derrick Dunne picks on Stanley and throws his notebook in the toilet. It's also obvious that what Zigzag does is "weird" and that he does not look like the other kids.

A repeated theme in this novel is that things aren't always what they seem to be. Myra Menke is beautiful, but she is also shallow, dumb, and unable to appreciate love. Derrick Dunne is a bully, even though he appears to be a small, harmless kid.

***Summary in detail:***

Stanley has a hard time digging his first hole. The ground is hard and he quickly develops painful blisters on his hands. Mr. Pendanski tells Stanley that he must dig a hole to build character, but that if he finds anything interesting he must tell a counselor because the Warden likes to know about interesting finds. More of Stanley's family history is revealed in this chapter. Stanley's great-great-grandfather was from Latvia and his name was Elya Yelnats. When he was fifteen he fell in love with a pretty fourteen year old girl named Myra Menke. Elya wanted to marry Myra but so did Igor Barkov, a fifty-seven year old pig farmer. Elya cannot offer Myra's family a pig like Igor can so he visits his friend, Madame Zeroni, an old Egyptian woman with only one foot. Despite the fact that most other boys in the village liked to mud wrestle, Elya prefers to listen to the stories that Madame Zeroni tells him.

Madame Zeroni tries to dissuade Elya from seeking to marry the dimwitted and weak Myra. Madame Zeroni advises Elya to go to America as her son has. Elya continues to be sad so against her better judgement Madame Zeroni gives Elya a small pig to take care of. She teaches him a song and tells him that he must carry the pig up a mountain where there is a stream with water that runs uphill. He must sing the song to the pig and let it drink from the water. If he does this every day then the pig will grow. She also makes Elya promise that after he shows the pig to Myra's father he must carry her, Madame Zeroni, up the mountain and sing to her. If he does not, then she says she will put a curse on his family.

Elya promises to fulfill all of Madame Zeroni's requests, but on the day that he brings the pigs to Myra's house he realizes that Myra is very stupid and that she doesn't care who she marries. Disillusioned, Elya gets on a boat bound for America, forgetting his promise to Madame Zeroni. In America he learns English and marries a woman who is strong and smart. He teaches her the song that Madame Zeroni taught him, about a woodpecker and a wolf who wish their life was easier. Elya and his wife have a son who they name Stanley Yelnats because they like that Stanley is Yelnats spelled backwards. Even though they all work very hard, they have a lot of bad luck in their lives and Elya begins to believe that Madame Zeroni has cursed him.

***Analysis in detail:***

Holes explores the different ways in which people are viewed by themselves and by others. While the authorities view the unfortunate Stanley as a criminal, the boys at Camp Green Lake, themselves delinquents, cannot believe that Stanley could or would steal a famous baseball player's shoes. Similarly, while Stanley feels persecuted by Derrick Dunne, the class bully, the teachers at his school believe that Stanley's size would make it impossible for a smaller boy to pick on him. Following this vein of thought, Stanley and his family think of Elya Yelnats as a good-for-nothing pig stealer but when the narrator reveals Elya's full story, it is clear that he is really just a lovelorn man who made an unfortunate, unintended, error. The story of Elya and Madame Zeroni has many elements of a classic fairy-tale, making the novel resemble a fable. A classic fable is a brief story told to illustrate a moral point. Holes is far more lengthy than a fable and there are many morals that result from the narration, but many of the characteristics are similar. Madame Zeroni's instructions of how to take care of the pig have the ring of a magic spell, complete with water that runs uphill. The entire idea of a curse is typical of a fable or fairy tale, and the way that the curse follows Stanley's family for generations is reminiscent of how the witch in Snow White punishes Snow White and her family for hundreds of years simply because they neglected to invite her to a party. The morals in Holes involve keeping promises, evaluating people based on more than one impression, and many other themes that will be revealed in later chapters.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

The next morning, [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) eats his lukewarm cereal, fills his canteen, and chooses a shovel before the sun comes up. He tries to dig the point of the blade into the ground, but it's baked hard. Stanley helplessly watches [Zero](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/zero-hector-zeroni), who already has a large pile of dirt next to his hole. [Mr. Pendanski](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/mr-pendanski) had told Stanley to report anything "interesting or unusual" to him, as interesting finds earn campers a day off—though he insisted that they're not actually looking for anything. Stanley wedges his shovel in a crack and finds that being overweight is helpful, as he can more easily sink his shovel in the ground. He marks the perimeter of his hole, and soon blisters form on his fingers.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Forcing teenagers to dig holes like this is far beyond what any normal or reasonable punishment would be; this again helps to situate Camp Green Lake as a place that functions outside of the formal Texas justice system. Especially given Mr. Pendanski's caginess regarding "interesting finds," it suggests that the camp itself has ulterior motives for making the campers dig holes and is abusing its power to obtain cheap labor.

***Summary Part 2:***

The narrator jumps back in time to tell the story of [Elya Yelnats](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/elya-yelnats). He was born in Latvia and at age fifteen, fell in love with fourteen-year-old [Myra Menke](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/myra-menke). [Myra's father](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/myra-s-father) decided that when Myra turned fifteen, she should be married. Both Elya and 57-year-old pig farmer [Igor Barkov](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/igor-barkov) went to ask for Myra's hand. Myra's father insisted he'd rather have one of Igor's pigs than Elya's "heart full of love," so Elya went to see [Madame Zeroni](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/madame-zeroni), an old Egyptian woman with only one foot.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Igor's age is intended to evoke a sense of disgust in the reader and make it seem as though, to any sensible person, Elya is clearly the more appropriate suitor based on age alone. When Myra's father doesn't see it this way, it again shows how he's able to use his power to promote what appears to be an unjust status quo.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Elya](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/elya-yelnats) told [Madame Zeroni](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/madame-zeroni) about his plight, but she was unsympathetic. She insisted that Elya was too young to marry and that [Myra](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/myra-menke) was silly, foolish, and spoiled. She encouraged Elya to go to America like her own son did, but Elya remained unmoved. Finally, Madame Zeroni led him to her pigsty, where her sow had just given birth to piglets. She handed him the runt and instructed him to carry the piglet up the nearby mountain every day to drink from the stream. She said he also had to sing the piglet a special song.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Madame Zeroni's decision to help Elya is a very kind one; it shows that even if she doesn't necessarily agree with him, she wants him to be happy and is glad to use her implied magical powers to help him achieve happiness. The stream in particular introduces the idea that nature itself can be magical and unnatural(and can be helpful to humans at times).

***Summary Part 4:***

[Madame Zeroni](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/madame-zeroni) said that [Elya](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/elya-yelnats) should carry the pig up the mountain for the last time on [Myra](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/myra-menke)'s fifteenth birthday, at which point it would be fatter than [Igor](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/igor-barkov)'s pig. She assured Elya that as the pig grew, he'd grow strong enough to carry it. Finally, she asked that he carry her up the mountain and sing to her on the last day. She explained that she'd curse his descendants forever if he didn't do this. Elya thought nothing of it, though he did think he'd be happy to carry Madame Zeroni up the mountain right then if only he were strong enough.

***Analysis Part 4:***

At its heart, Madame Zeroni and Elya's agreement is designed to instill in Elya the belief that it's important to follow through on one's promises—it's one of the easiest and most effective ways to show another person kindness and care. Thus, this sets up he idea that Stanley will learn the importance of follow-through in his journey as he deals with the aftermath of Madame Zeroni's curse.

***Summary Part 5:***

[Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats)'s hole grows to about three feet deep as the sun peeks over the horizon. His hands are covered in blisters, and Stanley can tell that everyone else's holes are far bigger. When he notices a moving cloud of dust following a red pickup truck, he lines up with the other boys to get water. [X-Ray](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/x-ray-rex) is first, while Stanley is last in line behind [Zero](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/zero-hector-zeroni). [Mr. Sir](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/mr-sir) fills their canteens and then follows Stanley to check his progress. As he encourages Stanley to hurry up, he spits sunflower shells into Stanley's hole.

***Analysis Part 5:***

It's worth noting that in the case of the holes, Stanley has no choice but to follow through and finish, no matter how badly it hurts. Again, this shows how power can be corrupted to taint things that even the novel suggests are fundamentally positive actions. Mr. Sir's spitting is a way for him to tell Stanley he doesn't actually care about him, even as he offers encouragement.

***Summary Part 6:***

[Elya](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/elya-yelnats) did as he was told and as the pig grew big and strong, so did he. The pig was massive by [Myra](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/myra-menke)'s birthday, so instead of carrying it up the mountain one last time as [Madame Zeroni](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/madame-zeroni) had told him to, Elya took a bath. Then, he presented his pig to [Myra's father](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/myra-s-father). Elya boldly asked to marry [Myra](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/myra-menke), but her father insisted on weighing Elya and [Igor](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/igor-barkov)'s pigs. They weighed exactly the same.

***Analysis Part 6:***

The fact that the pigs weigh exactly the same provides some weight to the realness of Madame Zeroni's curse; it suggests that had Elya followed through, his pig would weigh more and he'd win outright.

***Summary Part 7:***

As [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) digs, his blisters rip open and new ones form. He tries to use his cap to cushion his hands, but the sun is hot on his neck. Stanley realizes he'll need to move his dirt piles—he's going to run out of room.

***Analysis Part 7:***

Because of what Stanley is being asked to do, nature is his enemy right now. This shows how even good characters can be placed in situations in opposition to nature; it's not the realm of villains alone.

***Summary Part 8:***

[Myra's father](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/myra-s-father) examined the pigs, declared them fine pigs, and couldn't decide whose pig to accept. When [Elya](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/elya-yelnats) suggested that [Myra](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/myra-menke) choose, both [Igor](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/igor-barkov) and Myra's father were shocked, but Myra's father agreed on the grounds that he didn't care whom she married. He called Myra, explained the situation, and asked her to decide. She was extremely confused and couldn't decide, so she secretly chose a number and asked her suitors to choose a number between one and ten. Disgusted, Elya told Myra to keep his pig as a wedding present and marry Igor.

***Analysis Part 8:***

Myra's character shows the consequences of being given absolutely no power over one's own life, seeing as she's wholly unable to make a very important decision for herself. Further, the fact that she doesn't even seem aware that this isn't a good thing indicates that living without power can be normalized and in doing so, those such as Myra's father gain even more power.

***Summary Part 9:***

At lunchtime, [Mr. Pendanski](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/mr-pendanski) drives the water truck out with sack lunches. While the boys eat, [Magnet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters) assures [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) that the first hole is the hardest. Stanley wonders what they'd do to him if he just quit.

***Analysis Part 9:***

Magnet's assurance suggests that there could be a sense of camaraderie among the boys; his encouragement shows that they may be able to care for each other.

***Summary Part 10:***

[Elya](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/elya-yelnats) wandered aimlessly until he ended up on a pier. He was heartbroken; he thought that [Myra](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/myra-menke) loved him. [Madame Zeroni](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/madame-zeroni) was right. Elya read a sign asking for deck hands on a ship to America, and the captain signed Elya up even though he didn't have any sailing experience. Elya didn't realize until the ship was in the open water that he'd broken his promise to carry Madame Zeroni up the mountain. He wasn't afraid of the curse, but he did feel bad for breaking a promise to a friend.

***Analysis Part 10:***

Madame Zeroni's curse may be even worse simply because Elya doesn't show it (and by extension, Madame Zeroni) an appropriate degree of respect. This reinforces that part of the curse has to do with punishing Elya for not following through on his promises and not being a good friend to Madame Zeroni.

***Summary Part 11:***

Even though [Zero](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/zero-hector-zeroni) is the smallest boy in Group D, he finishes digging first. In awe, [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) watches Zero measure his hole, spit in it, and head back to camp. [Zigzag](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/zigzag-ricky) declares Zero a "weird dude," but Stanley thinks that Zigzag is objectively weirder: his neck is long and skinny, and he has wild, frizzy blond hair. One by one, the other boys of Group D finish and head back to camp. After a while, Stanley realizes he'll need to move his dirt piles again. He feels as though he's digging his grave.

***Analysis Part 11:***

When Stanley feels like he's digging his own grave, he's developing the mindset that the natural world is his enemy, is out to get him, and is dangerous. Notably, this does begin to instill a sense of respect for the natural world in Stanley, as he begins to learn how to work with the earth to dig holes more efficiently in the future.

***Summary Part 12:***

In America, [Elya](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/elya-yelnats) fell in love with a woman named [Sarah Miller](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/sarah-miller). She was smart and strong, and she and Elya loved each other very much. However, bad luck seemed to follow Elya. He remembered that [Madame Zeroni](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/madame-zeroni) mentioned having a son in America, so he began approaching people asking if they knew anyone named Zeroni. Finally, after Elya's barn was struck by lightning for the third time, he told Sarah about the curse. She was unconcerned but asked Elya to sing her the "pig lullaby." She loved it and a year later, when [the first Stanley Yelnats](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/the-first-stanley-yelnats) was born, Sarah made the song rhyme in English and sang it to her baby.

***Analysis Part 12:***

Overwhelmingly, Holes suggests that it doesn't really matter whether Sarah believes in the curse or not; the fact of the matter persists that Elya appears to be extremely unlucky. This again suggests that, within the world of the novel, fate and destiny absolutely hold sway. When Sarah translates the lullaby and sings it to the first Stanley, she ensures that the song will remain family knowledge and be passed down to the present.

***Summary Part 13:***

[Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) discovers that his hole is very close to big enough. He digs out a few more shovelfuls and finally, he can lay his shovel flat on the bottom. He feels a strange sense of pride and can't wait to show whomever is in the approaching water truck his hole. Stanley has to dig himself steps to climb out and discovers [Mr. Pendanski](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/mr-pendanski), out to check on him. Mr. Pendanski asks for a high-five, but Stanley doesn't have the energy. Mr. Pendanski praises Stanley and offers him a ride back, though Stanley insists he'll walk. He spits in his hole before he starts for camp.

***Analysis Part 13:***

When Mr. Pendanski offers Stanley acknowledgement, it suggests that he does recognize how difficult survival is at Camp Green Lake and may take his role of counselor somewhat seriously. This suggests that not all of Camp Green Lake is overtly evil; kindness can still exist and when placed next to Mr. Sir's cruelty, for example, Mr. Pendanski seems even less offensive.