

Holes (novel)

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For the film based on the novel, see [Holes \(film\)](#).

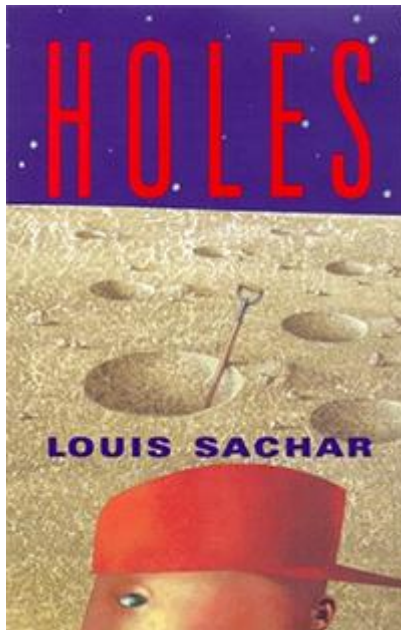
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Holes



First edition cover

Author(s)	Louis Sachar
Cover artist	Vladimir Radunsky
Country	United States
Language	English
Genre(s)	Adventure , Satire
Publisher	Farrar, Straus and Giroux
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Followed by [*Stanley Yelnats' Survival*](#)
[*Guide to Camp Green Lake*](#)
[*Small Steps*](#)

Holes (1998) is a [novel](#) for [children](#) or [young adults](#) written by [Louis Sachar](#) and first published by [Farrar, Straus and Giroux](#). It won the 1998 [National Book Award for Young People's Literature](#) (U.S.)^[1] and the 1999 [Newbery Medal](#) for "the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children."^[2]

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[\[edit\]](#) Plot

At the beginning of the story, Stanley Yelnats, a 13-year-old boy supposedly affected by a family "curse", has been wrongly accused of stealing the shoes of the baseball player Clyde Livingston from a charity auction. As punishment for this crime, he is sent to Camp Green Lake, a juvenile detention and correctional facility where convicts of similar age are forced to dig holes to "build their character." Warden Walker, real granddaughter of Trout Walker, is actually looking for a buried treasure that outlaw Katherine "Kissin' Kate" Barlow stole from Stanley's great-grandfather. Years ago, Stanley's family got cursed by Madame Zeroni, a fortune-teller and ancestor, due to a promise not fulfilled by Elya Yelnats, Stanley's great-great-grandfather, more popularly known in the novel as a "no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing great-great-grandfather."

Later in the story, the Warden's decision that the boys dig more extensively for treasure leads to several dramatic events, later causing inmate Hector "Zero" Zeroni, a descendant of Madame Zeroni and one of Stanley's better friends, to flee into the desert. Stanley, in search of Zero, finds him in a tunnel dug underneath an abandoned rowboat bearing the name "Mary Lou", the donkey of "Sam the onion man" over a century before. Zero had been living on jars of very old spiced peaches that he had found in the boat, which he called "Sploosh". Upon seeing a mountain resembling a human fist giving the [thumbs up](#) sign, Stanley recalls the story of his ancestor Stanley Yelnats I, who finds "refuge on God's thumb", which Zero and Stanley climb in search of water.

Atop the river, Stanley discovers a field of onions, which the boys eat, and a pool of groundwater, which they drink, and during their contentment Stanley sings to Zero that they

should return to Camp Green Lake to find the buried treasure. Upon returning, Zero steals some water and food from the kitchens while Stanley looks for the buried treasure. At this they succeed, but are apprehended by the Warden and the camp staff, and become surrounded by a group of lethal yellow-spotted lizards. Because the boys have consumed onions, the lizards do not bite them. Unable to leave the hole they occupy, they remain in place until the next morning, during which an attorney arrives requesting Stanley's release. When the warden demands the suitcase, Zero indicates the name 'Stanley Yelnats' written on it, its contents being the jewels, deeds, stocks and promissory notes stolen from Stanley Yelnats the first.

Protagonist Stanley IV then uses the bonds to buy a new house for his family, and Zero hires a team of investigators to find his missing mother; meanwhile, the drought at Green Lake is replaced by rainfall, as if in response to Stanley's fulfillment of his ancestor's promise (a suggestion left purposely ambiguous by the narration). In a final scene, Clyde Livingston, along with the Yelnats and Zeroni families, celebrates the success of Stanley's father's antidote to foot odor, composed of preserved and fermented spiced peaches and named "Sploosh" by Zero. The warden is forced to sell Camp Green Lake to the state government, who turns it into a Girl Scout camp, a coincidence since Mr. Sir, a head of the camp, told the campers that "this isn't a Girl Scout camp", referring to the backbreaking digging. Then they began to like Mr. Sir.

[\[edit\]](#) Setting

Holes takes place at Camp Green Lake in Texas. The town used to be by the largest lake in the state, but became a dry lake-bed after Sam was killed on the lake 110 years earlier. However, after Stanley, the great-great-grandson of Elya, carried Zero, a descendant of Madame Zeroni up to the mountaintop, he unknowingly broke the curse that had haunted the Yelnats for generations by singing the lullaby to Zero.

[\[edit\]](#) Characters

Stanley Yelnats

Stanley is the main character in 'Holes'. Stanley is white and overweight. He is from a poor family and lives with his mother and father. He doesn't have any siblings. Before being sent to Camp Green Lake, Stanley lived a normal life, except he was bullied at school by Derrick Dunne, and had no friends. He gets sent to Camp Green Lake because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time: the police thought he had stolen a pair of shoes belonging to a baseball player from a charity auction for the people at the shelter. At Camp Green Lake he lives in D Tent with X-Ray, Armpit, Squid, Zig-zag, Zero, and Magnet. His closest friend at Camp is Zero. Stanley teaches Zero to read and write. In his free time at Camp he writes letters to his Mom and he receives letters from her. Stanley is a nice, young, and friendly person. He does not fight like the other boys at camp do and he does as he is told most of the time. He is extremely cautious about the sides in Tent D and never got on either sides' wrong sides.

Hector "Zero" Zeroni

Hector Zeroni is one of the boys from D Tent. His nickname is Zero, because those at the camp believe that "nothing is going on in his little brain" (as quoted from Mr. Pendanski). The silent boy Zero does not speak to anyone but Stanley. People always look down on him and think he is dumb, but he is a really brilliant, prudential boy. Zero always finishes digging his hole first before anyone else because he is such a fast digger. He is younger than Stanley, has dark skin and was homeless before he was sent to camp. He is illiterate at the start of Stanley's time at Camp Green Lake; later, Stanley offers to teach Zero how to read in exchange for Zero digging part of Stanley's hole each day. This trade is met with criticism from the other boys at Camp Green Lake. Near the end of the story, Zero reveals that it was he who stole Clyde Livingston's sneakers from a Charity Auction and put them on top of a parked car. Later the car passed a bridge and the shoes fell off, where they then landed on Stanley's head as he was walking home from school.

Elya Yelnats

Stanley's great great grandfather. While a fifteen-year old boy growing up in [Latvia](#), he had fallen in love with and wanted to marry Myra Menke, the daughter of a wealthy landlord. However, he was unable to compete with a fellow suitor, Igor Barkov, who had offered his largest pig. To get help, he had gone to his friend, Madame Zeroni who, despite warning him that the girl he hoped to marry was spoiled and empty-headed, gave him one of her pigs and, and a way to make it grow larger - he had to carry it up a nearby mountain every day and sing a song to it as it drank from the stream there. However, he missed the last day, and the pig ended up only as big as the pig Igor offered, and when Elya suggested that Myra choose, he is shocked and disgusted that she is as empty-headed as Madame Zeroni had warned, when she had to resort to number games in order to choose between Elya and Igor, despite the fact that Igor was old enough to be her father and quite crude. As a result, he had gotten on a boat to America - in the process, forgetting to fulfil his promise to Madame Zeroni. As a result, his family and all their descendants were cursed to have bad luck. However, he was able to translate the song that Madame Zeroni had given him, and it was retained by the family for many years. Stanley's family always blames him for things that go wrong and they say it was because of their "no-good-dirty-rotting-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather.

Madame Zeroni

Madame Zeroni was a gypsy and close friend of Elya Yelnats in Latvia, the homeland of the Yelnats and the Zeronis. She was believed to be a fortune teller, but also offered help to Elya when he hoped to marry a local girl. In return for her help, he was to carry Madame Zeroni up the mountain and sing to her as he had done with his pig. However the promise was broken, and she put a curse on the generations of Yelnats.

X-Ray

X-Ray was in Camp Green Lake before the other boys and is the unspoken leader of Tent D. X-ray's real name is Rex Washburn as said in the sequel ([Small Steps](#)) and is at Camp Green Lake for selling oregano to people, telling them it was marijuana. He convinced Stanley to give him whatever he finds in the holes, so X-Ray can get a day off as a reward. He made Stanley his ally and went along leading Tent D by a reward-and-ally-routine. He wears thick glasses and can hardly see without the glasses. He names Stanley, Caveman and also arranges the line for lining up for water.

Armpit

Armpit is one of the boys at Camp Green Lake whose real name is Theodore Johnson. He is described as big, muscular and dark-skinned. He is called Armpit because he got stung in the armpit by a scorpion. Many people think it is because his armpits stink. He was sent to the camp after getting into an altercation with two older boys in the Holes movie. When Stanley was sent to Camp Green Lake, he thought that he was the biggest due to being overweight the beginning of the book.

Zig Zag

Zig Zag is one of the tent D boys at Camp Green Lake. His real name is Ricky. Stanley believes he is a more unstable character. Zigzag is extremely violent and abrupt, and did not show any signs of remorse when assaulting Stanley physically. He has been described to have wild blonde hair, paranoia and an abnormally thick neck.

The Warden

The Warden is in charge of Camp Green Lake. She has red hair, and is covered with freckles. She was tall already, but was even more intimidating when she looks down at the boys, who were in their holes. She is extremely violent and abusive, and constantly attacks the staff and the boys by using poison. According to the novel, she has harmed Armpit by jabbing him with a pitchfork. She is extremely selfish, and only rewards those who do her bidding. She does not care for redemption of the boys, but only finding Kissin' Kate Barlow's treasure.

Mr. Sir

He is one of the staff in Camp Green Lake. He just quit smoking and is often seen with a big bag of sunflower seeds, as a replacement to cigarettes. He is demanding, and his motto would be "This isn't a Girl Scouts' camp." He always makes sure everyone is working to the limits of their strength.

Mr. Pendanski

Mr Pendanski is a worker in Camp Green Lake and he gives out water to the people who live in Camp Green Lake. Mr Pendanski was Stanley's counselor. The boys in "Group D" call him "Mom" as he is motherly to them. He seemed friendly, but is actually very mean, as he mocks Zero and threatens Stanley at gunpoint. He was the camp's doctor though at the ending of the novel it turns out he has no qualifications to be one. According to the book, everyone remembers 3 words that will help them remember his name. The 3 words are pen-dance-key. (Sounds like Pendanski)

Stanley's family

The members of Stanley's family mentioned are his mom, dad, his great grandfather and his great great grandfather. The father, Stanley Yelnats III, was an inventor, but never had the luck to succeed in inventing anything. Thus the family is poor and lives in an apartment that smelt of old sneakers, as the father was trying to figure out a new way to recycle sneakers. The father and son sometimes believed that things were never right for them because they were under a curse.

The mother was optimistic, and always reminded the father and son that there was no curse at all, and that not all Yelnats were failures. She is also extremely worried about her son, but also trusts him, as it is obvious that she believes all the lies Stanley had told her in the letters to her.

See also [Elya Yelnats](#), the great-great-grandfather of Stanley Yelnats IV.

[[edit](#)] Film adaptation

Main article: [Holes \(film\)](#)

In 2003, [Walt Disney Pictures](#) released a film version of *Holes*, which was directed by [Andrew Davis](#) and written by [Louis Sachar](#).^[3] The film was a modest success in the box office and a critical success.

[[edit](#)] Sequels

Two companion novels have followed *Holes*: *[Stanley Yelnats' Survival Guide to Camp Green Lake](#)* (2003) and *[Small Steps](#)* (2006).^[4]

[[edit](#)] References

- ↑ "National Book Awards – 1998". [National Book Foundation](#). Retrieved 2012-01-26.
- ↑ "Welcome to the Newbery Medal Home Page". [Association for Library Service to Children](#). ALA. Retrieved 2012-01-26.
- ↑ *Holes* at the [Internet Movie Database](#)
- ↑ http://www.bookbrowse.com/reviews/index.cfm?book_number=1742

[[edit](#)] External links

- [Louis Sachar's website](#) for *Holes*

Awards

Preceded by
[Out of the Dust](#)

[Newbery Medal recipient](#)
[1999](#)

Succeeded by
[Bud, Not Buddy](#)

Preceded by
New category

Winner of the
[William Allen White Children's](#)
[Book Award](#)
Grades 6–8
[2001](#)

Succeeded by
[Bud, Not Buddy](#)