

Holes

Louis Sachar

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Stanley Yelnats IV, an overweight boy, is unlucky due to a family "curse". He is wrongly convicted for stealing baseball player Clyde Livingston's shoes from a charity auction and is sentenced to 18 months at Camp Green Lake, a juvenile detention facility. At Camp Green Lake all of the inmates are forced to dig holes to "build their character". After some time, Stanley finds a lipstick tube inscribed with the initials "KB". During a flashback, the origin of the Yelnats' family curse is discovered: Over 110 years ago, Stanley's ancestor Elya Yelnats fell in love with Myra Menke, a beautiful local girl whose father will only let her marry the man owning the largest pig in the village. Elya's friend and gypsy, Madame Zeroni agrees to help him raise the largest pig in the village if he agrees to carry her up a mountain, and sing a song to her and the pig. Madame Zeroni promises he will win Myra's hand by doing this and, if he does not, he and his family will be cursed for millennia. Elya later decides to not marry Myra and takes a boat to America, forgetting his promise to Madame Zeroni. From then on every son in the family is called Stanley ("Yelnats" spelled backward), is taught Madame Zeroni's song, and is cursed with bad luck.

Back in the present, the warden's harsh decision to have the boys dig more causes Zero, a shy friend of Stanley's who's real name is Hector Zeroni, to run away. Stanley runs away to find Zero, eventually finding him in an abandoned rowboat whilst also seeing a mountain resembling a thumb. Stanley recalls his great-grandfather story of getting robbed by Kissin' Kate Barlow and how he survived by "finding refuge off God's thumb." Zero and Stanley climb up the mountain where Zero has passed out from food poisoning. Stanley discovers groundwater and a field of onions, which the boys eat. Stanley sings the lullaby he was taught and, since Zero is a descendant of Madame Zeroni, breaks the Yelnats' family "curse." Stanley says that they should go back to Camp Green Lake so they can try to find Kissin' Kate's buried treasure. The boys find an old suitcase, but, before they are able to leave, are caught by the warden and the camp staff, discovering that the hole they were in has a nest of yellow-spotted lizards. The warden waits for the boys to die from the lizards' bite but the boys are not bitten as they had eaten troves of onions, which the lizards do not like. The lizards buy them enough time for a visit from Stanley's attorney, requesting Stanley's release. When the warden demands the suitcase, Zero points out it has Stanley Yelnats' name on it, the stolen property of Stanley Yelnats I (jewels, deeds, stocks, etc.). Stanley uses the newfound wealth to buy a new house for his family and Zero hires a team of investigators to find his missing mother. The warden is forced to sell Camp Green Lake to the Girl Scouts of America.

Holes was thoroughly entertaining as it moved at a quick pace and really kept the reader confused till the climax. Sachar found a way to weave three separate stories into the same book: one with the Yelnats and their curse, another with Zero and his history, as well as the most begging question, "Why are we really digging these holes?" A quick read for any age, young boys will especially enjoy this book due to its kid friendly nature as well as the strong moral compass guiding it.

Recommended Titles:

Small Steps- Louis Sachar

Stanley Yelnats' Survival Guide to Camp Green Lake-Louis Sachar