

KS3 Fiction Book: Holes



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In this unit you will:

- use active reading approaches to read and respond to a novel
- use role play and drama to explore character and theme
- explore the structure of the novel
- write about the novel.

Welcome to Camp Green Lake

The beginning of the story Individual and class work

- Make a spider diagram with the titles of both the novel and Part One in the centre. They are reprinted for you here.

Holes

You are entering Camp Green Lake.

- Write down all your ideas about these two titles. What sort of story do you expect this to be? Share your ideas with the rest of the class.
- Listen to the first chapter being read out loud one paragraph at a time.
- You should pause after every sentence to give yourself time to think about the way this story is being told. Stop after every paragraph to share your response to what you have read. Some of the things you might like to think about include:
 - the type of story it seems to be
 - the characters
 - the way the story is told (for example, first or third person)
 - the length of sentences and paragraphs
 - anything which strikes you as odd or surprising about the story or the way it is told.

Holes

An intriguing opening Pair work

- In pairs, talk about your first impressions of the story and the way it begins.

This is what the author Louis Sachar says about the way he began his story:

I purposely made the first two chapters very short and compelling ... I wanted to intrigue the reader first.

- Look back at the titles and the first chapter. Pull out some of the things which intrigue you about the way this story begins. Write down two questions you would like to find out the answers to, for example, 'How can somebody own the shade?'

Camp Green Lake Class and pair work

- Read Chapter 2, one paragraph at a time.
- Pull out the line which you think is most important in Chapters 1 and 2 and compare your choice with the person sitting next to you. Talk about the reasons for your choice. The example included here shows you the sort of thing you might say or write.

I think 'There is nothing anyone can do to you anymore.' is the most important line in the opening chapters because it makes me wonder why the warden will not let other people lie in the shade. It is also a good example of the way the writer lets the reader make connections and fill in the gaps. The normal thing to say here would be 'There is nothing anyone can do for you anymore.' By changing one little word the writer draws the reader's attention to just how strange Camp Green Lake is.

- Take it in turns to feed back your ideas in class discussion.

Reading Holes Group and class work

- In groups, read up to 'and it hurt to hold the shovel' on page 28 (part way through Chapter 7). Your teacher will ask different groups to concentrate on just one of the areas listed here.
 - What you learn about Stanley's family.
 - What you learn about the sort of person Stanley is and the crime he has committed.
 - What sort of place Camp Green Lake is and what Mr Sir and Mr Pendanski are like.
 - What the boys at Camp Green Lake are like.
 - The style of the story and the way it is written. Does it remind you of any other stories you have read or films you have seen?
- Take it in turns to report back on your reading.

Writing in the style of ... Homework

- Your task is to draft an opening paragraph about your school or the place where you live in the style of *Holes*. Before you begin, pick out two or three things you have noticed about the way Louis Sachar writes. Try and imitate these in your own writing. For example, you might decide to experiment with one of the following techniques:
 - humour
 - understatement
 - speaking directly to the reader
 - very short sentences to create impact
 - one word paragraphs to make a point, or any other technique you have noticed.

Stanley and his great-great-grandfather

Into the diary room Individual and pair work

- Imagine there is a diary room at Camp Green Lake. It is Stanley's first day at Camp Green Lake and he has been called into the diary room to talk about his first impressions.
- On your own, prepare what Stanley might have to say in the diary room. Use the suggestions listed here to start you thinking:
 - first impressions of Camp Green Lake, the counsellors and the boys
 - the reason he is there
 - his family
 - what it will be like at Camp Green Lake and how he will cope
 - what the *Holes* might be for.
- In pairs, take it in turns to play the part of Stanley. The other person should be 'Big Brother'.
- Listen to one or two examples of the Big Brother diaries. The rest of the class should be ready to comment on what Stanley has said or to suggest other questions 'Big Brother' might ask.
- As you read *Holes*, your teacher will ask different people to come into the Big Brother diary room at key points in the story. Make sure you are prepared for your turn!

Stanley and Elya Pair and class work

Stanley is out on the lake just beginning to dig his first hole. Instead of telling the reader how Stanley got on or showing him getting hotter and hotter, Louis Sachar switches the focus altogether. The next paragraph reads:

Stanley's great-great-grandfather was named Elya Yelnats. He was born in Latvia. When he was fifteen years old he fell in love with Myra Menke.

(He didn't know he was Stanley's great-great-grandfather.)

- Why do you think Louis Sachar has decided to tell the story of Elya Yelnats now?
- Read to the end of Chapter 7, stopping at each of the points listed here (where the story moves from the past to the present or back again).

1. He would have done it right then and there, but he wasn't strong enough.
2. He popped some sunflower seeds into his mouth, deftly removed the shells with his teeth, and spat them into Stanley's hole.
3. The two pigs weighed exactly the same.
4. Behind him he heard Magnet say, 'But first make sure nothing's living in it.'
5. He felt bad because he knew Madame Zeroni had wanted to drink from the stream before she died.
6. ... he felt like he was digging his own grave.
7. 'If only, if only.'
8. He sucked up his last bit of saliva and spat.