



TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LITPLAN TEACHER PACK™

for

Holes

based on the book by
Louis Sachar

Written by
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ISBN 978-1-60249-183-0

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A Few Notes About The Author--Louis Sachar

Fortunately for us today, we can acquire much biographical information on an author from the Internet. If your students have easy computer access, you might want them to explore sites that tell about Louis Sachar.

For now, a quick Internet exploration for biographical material on the author of **Holes** reveals much about this interesting author of children's books. Louis Sachar (pronounced Sacker) was born in 1954 in East Meadow, New York, moved to Southern California in his youth, and now lives in Austin, Texas.

Sachar briefly attended Antioch College in Ohio and eventually graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1976. He is a law school graduate who has passed the bar exam, but he chose a writing profession over a legal one. His first book, **Sideways Stories from Wayside School**, was published just as he began law school. But though he has been a lawyer since 1981, he has devoted himself to writing children's literature instead of a legal career.

His interest in children's literature reportedly began when he became a teachers' aide in an elementary school while he was in college. Not only did he earn three credits for helping out at the school, but the work became his favorite and perhaps most important college course.

But Sachar also began to write because he enjoyed reading. The authors he most enjoyed became his heroes, and he wanted to be like them. Today he especially enjoys Kurt Vonnegut, E. L. Doctorow, J. D. Salinger, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky.

Sachar reportedly writes alone and doesn't talk about a book until it is finished. Usually he begins with just a kernel of inspiration and over time develops it into a good story. He admits that he frequently suffers from writer's block. Sachar believes that his initial inspiration for **Holes** probably came from the long, hot summers he has spent in Texas. Writing **Holes**, which Sachar considers his "best" book, took a year and a half. The book has been published in many other countries.

Holes has won numerous awards, among them the prestigious Newberry Award, the National Book Award, the **New York Times Book Review** Notable Children's Book of the Year, the ALA Best Book for Young Adults, a **School Library Journal** Best Book of the Year, and the **Publishers Weekly** Best Book of the Year.

Some of Sachar's other works are **Sideways Stories from Wayside School**, **Johnny's in the Basement**, **Someday Angeline**, **Sixth Grade Secrets**, **There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom**, **The Boy Who Lost His Face**, **Wayside School is Falling Down**, **Dogs Don't Tell Jokes**, the Marvin Redpost series (**Marvin Redpost: Kidnapped at Birth?**, **Marvin Redpost: Is He a Girl?**, and **Marvin Redpost: Why Pick on Me?**), **Alone in His Teacher's House**, and **Wayside School Gets a Little Stranger**.

A Few Notes - **Holes** - page 2

In **Holes**, Sachar has written an ironic, serious, yet often comic novel that appeals to people of all ages. The book features a poor boy with seemingly incredibly bad luck—Stanley Yelnats, whose name “was spelled the same frontward and backward.” He is sent to Camp Green Lake, a juvenile detention facility for bad boys that is neither a camp, nor green, nor the site of a lake. In addition, the book is crammed with such colorful characters as Stanley himself; Miss Katherine Barlow, aka Kissin’ Kate Barlow, the school teacher turned robber; the sunflower seed spitting Mr. Sir, who talks constantly in Girl Scout allusions; Madame Zeroni, the one-legged gypsy, whose story plays such a central role in the novel; X-Ray; Armpit; the Warden with the red fingernails; Charles “Trout” Walker; Sam the Onion Man whose only real sin was caring deeply for another person; the donkey Mary Lou; and Zero/Hector Zeroni.

Holes is a delightful, enlightening, clever, and satisfying book whose environment is one of lively growth as well as dangerous destruction. Indeed, this book is so full of twists and turns and delightful bits of irony that a person might need to read it more than once, or even twice, in order to glean its total meaning.

Introduction - Holes

This unit has been designed to develop students' reading, writing, thinking, and language skills through exercises and activities related to **Holes** by Louis Sachar. It includes twenty-one lessons, quizzes, worksheets, unit tests, and extra resource materials.

The **introductory lesson** introduces students to one of the novel's main themes (aloneness) through a bulletin board activity. During the novel's introduction, students will learn how the board's activities relate to the book they are beginning to read. Depending on how long you can, or want to, keep the bulletin board intact in the classroom, you might want to keep referring to it to deepen students' thoughts about how easy it is to be totally alone, even when in a group of people.

The eleven **reading assignments** are approximately twenty pages each; some are a little shorter, while others are a little longer. Students have approximately fifteen minutes of pre-reading work to do prior to each reading assignment. This pre-reading work involves reviewing the study questions for the assignment and doing some vocabulary work for the vocabulary words they will encounter in their reading.

The **study guide questions** are fact based: students can find the answers to these questions right in the text. The questions come in two formats: short answer or multiple choice. The best use of these materials is probably to use the short answer version of the questions as study guides for students (since answers will be more complete) and to use the multiple choice version for occasional quizzes.

The **vocabulary work** is intended to enrich students' vocabularies as well as to aid in their understanding of the novel. Prior to each reading assignment, students will complete a two-part worksheet for approximately seven or eight vocabulary words in the upcoming reading assignment. Part I focuses on students' use of general knowledge and contextual clues by giving the sentence in which the word appears in the text. Students may then write down what they think the words mean based on their usage. Part II nails down the definitions of the words by giving students dictionary definitions of them and having students match the words to the correct definitions based on the words' contextual usage. Students should then have an understanding of the words when they meet them in the text.

After each reading assignment, students will go back and formulate answers for the study guide questions. Discussion of these questions will serve as a **review** of the most important events and ideas presented in the reading assignments.

A series of **extra discussion questions** is part of Lesson Twelve. These questions will give students an opportunity to use more critical thinking skills and should provide for some lively class discussions. Feel free to use these questions in whatever way seems most appropriate for your students. If you like, the extra discussion questions can become the basis for some **group activities**. They can be used at any time during your teaching of the novel: there is nothing magical about using them in Lesson Twelve.

Introduction - **Holes** - page 2

The extra discussion questions focus on interpretation, critical analysis, and personal response, employing a variety of thinking skills and adding to the students' understanding of the novel. In fact, if your students enjoy classroom discussions, you might have them come up with additional questions for consideration.

The LitPlan for **Holes** was created to give you lots of flexibility. You may use the plan as a self-contained guide to teaching the novel, but you will also find that it gives you the opportunity to define your classroom approach for yourself. Sometimes students can just work alone in and out of class, sometimes they can work in small groups, sometimes they will be giving and listening to reports, and sometimes the group as a whole will be focused on a classroom assignment or discussion that relies heavily on their participation. Lesson Thirteen, which affords an opportunity to do role playing, and Lesson Nineteen, which offers some vocabulary games the students may play, create an environment for students to work with each other.

After students complete extra discussion questions, there is a **vocabulary review** lesson which pulls together all of the fragmented vocabulary lists for the reading assignments and gives students a review of all of the words they have studied. (Note: **Holes** is a remarkably complex book that is written, for the most part, in a very simple, easy-to-understand way. Depending on your students' skills level, the words might prove not to be especially challenging to them. Should that be the case, you might like to use some of the vocabulary time having students come up with synonyms and antonyms for the vocabulary words. Maybe students could even play with using all vocabulary words from one reading assignment in a sentence. These sentences—some of them perhaps written mostly for fun—could be put on the board prior to class.)

There are three **writing assignments** in this unit, each with the purpose of informing/explaining, expressing personal opinion, or persuading. Through the writing assignments, students will become familiar with a variety of rhetorical devices through which to organize their thoughts. The first writing assignment, introduced in Lesson Six, is to inform/explain, but students will also be defining the word “wasteland” as they write. The second assignment, introduced in Lesson Ten, is to express a personal opinion, but as students write about nicknames, they might very well use classification and some narrative techniques. The third and final writing assignment, introduced in Lesson Nineteen, gives students six different topics on which to write persuasively. By the time that they are in Lesson Nineteen, they should be able to write a satisfactory argument and to utilize various rhetorical methods.

There is also a **nonfiction reading assignment**. Students are required to read some nonfiction related in some way to **Holes**. After reading their nonfiction pieces, students will fill out a worksheet on which they answer questions regarding facts, interpretation, criticism, and personal opinions. Students are also given the opportunity to make **oral presentations** about the nonfiction pieces they have read. This method not only exposes all students to a wealth of information, it also gives students a chance to practice **public speaking**.

Introduction - **Holes** - page 3

There is an optional **class project** (Project Juvenile Detention Centers) through which students gain some additional knowledge of the problems and proffered solutions to juvenile crime in this country. Feel free to use the entire project, to modify it, or to eliminate it altogether. You might even want to use parts of it to create extra credit projects.

Review lessons throughout the plan pull together all of the aspects of the unit. Not only will the reviews help students to connect all the threads of the novel, but they also will give you a clear picture of whether or not students have understood what they have read.

The **unit test** comes in three types: short answer, advanced short answer (more critical thinking), and multiple choice. Altogether there are five unit tests.

There are additional **support materials** throughout the LitPlan—**games, puzzles, bulletin board ideas**. There are **answer keys** and forms through which to evaluate students' progress. As always, please feel free to use whatever appeals to you and will be supportive of your students' learning.

You are also being provided with two forms—an **Oral Reading Evaluation Form** and a **Writing Evaluation Form**—to use in any way you wish. Both forms may be used by you and/or by the students.

A final note: You know your students, yourself, and your school environment better than anyone else does. This LitPlan is designed to be supportive of you, not to restrict you in your own personal teaching style. The materials in this LitPlan are offered to complement your teaching style and to contribute to your students' optimal learning experience.

Unit Objectives - Holes

1. Through reading and discussing **Holes**, students will preliminarily gain a better understanding of the theme of aloneness and the importance of the individual. Students are also encouraged to consider such themes as bravery, revenge, courage, family values, friendship, greed, and loyalty. And of course **Holes** offers ample material to generate discussions of good vs evil.
2. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the text on four levels: factual, interpretive, critical, and personal.
3. Students will define and, it is hoped, express their own viewpoints on the aforementioned themes.
4. Students will be exposed to several different points of view and will learn something about standing up for one's principles and being true to oneself and to others.
5. Students will learn something about juvenile detention in their town and perhaps in their nation.
6. Students will be given the opportunity to practice reading aloud and silently to improve their skills in each area. They will from time to time receive feedback on their reading ability.
7. Students will answer questions to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the main events and characters in **Holes** as they relate to the author's theme development.
8. Students will enrich their vocabularies and improve their understanding of the novel through the vocabulary lessons prepared for use in conjunction with the novel.
9. The writing assignments in this unit are geared to several purposes:
 - A. To have students demonstrate their ability to inform/explain, to express personal opinions, and to persuade.
Note: Students will demonstrate ability to write effectively **to inform/explain** by developing and organizing facts to convey information. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively **to express personal opinions** by selecting a form and its appropriate elements. And they will demonstrate the ability to write effectively **to persuade** by selecting and organizing relevant information, establishing an argumentative purpose, and designing an appropriate strategy for a specific audience.
 - B. To check the students' reading comprehension
 - C. To make students think about the ideas presented by the novel.
 - D. To encourage logical thinking

Reading Assignment Sheet - Holes

Date Assigned	Reading Assignment	Completion Date
	pp 3-20	
	pp 21-40	
	pp 41-58	
	pp 59-79	
	pp 80-100	
	pp 101-123	
	pp 127-144	
	pp 145-159	
	pp 160-181	
	pp 182-197	
	pp 198-233	

Unit Outline - Holes

1 Introduction to unit Distribution of materials for unit Bulletin board activity	2 Study ?? 3-20 Vocab 3-20	3 Begin theme discussion Read aloud 3-20 Evaluate reading Study ?? 21-40 Vocab 21-40	4 Review 3-20 Read 21-40 In-class activity (good counselor)	5 Review 21-40 Study ?? 41-58 Vocab 41-58 RA 41-58
6 WA #1	7 Review 41-58 Paragraph writing Study ?? 59-79 Vocab 59-79	8 Read 59-79 Class discussion (Stanley's growth) Study ?? 80-100 Vocab 80-100 RA 80-100	9 Review 80-100 Class discussion (Zero's character development) Prep for NFRA.	10 Begin NFRA Assign WA #2 Study ?? 101-123 Vocab 101-123 RA 101-123
11 Review 101-123 Set up class project Study ??127-144 Vocab 127-144	12 Read 127-144 Review 3-144 Use extra discussion questions	13 Assign study ?? and vocab. 145-159 RA 145-159 Read 160-181 Oral reports NFRA	14 Review 145-159 Study ?? 160-181 RA 160-181 Oral reports NFRA	15 Oral reports NFRA Review 160-181
16 Study ?? 181-197 Vocab 181-197 Catch up on loose ends	17 Read 181-197 Study ?? 198-233 Vocab 198-233 RA 198-233 Begin project reports	18 Continue project reports Make sure everyone understands book	19 Continue project reports Vocabulary review for whole book	20 WA #3
21 Unit Tests				

Key:

NFRA = Nonfiction Reading Assignment

RA = Reading Assignment

WA = Writing Assignment

Lesson One

Objectives

1. To introduce the unit on **Holes**
2. To distribute books and other related materials (study guides, reading assignments, etc.)
3. To prepare students to discover the concept of aloneness via a bulletin board activity
4. To prepare a bulletin board activity demonstrating aloneness

Activity #1

Explain briefly to the students why you have chosen **Holes** as a book for them to read. Try to make them understand why you think they will enjoy and learn from the book and the characters and experiences in it.

Activity #2

Distribute the materials students will use in this unit. Explain in detail how students are to use the materials.

Study Guides Students should read the study guide questions for each reading assignment before beginning the assignment to get a feel for what events and ideas are important in the section they are about to read. After reading the section, students will (as a class or individually) answer the questions to review the important events and ideas from that section of the book. Students should keep the study guides as study materials for the unit test.

Vocabulary As they are reading a section of the text, students will do vocabulary work related to the section they are reading. If they hunt for the vocabulary words as they read, students should be able to figure out the contextual meaning of the words. Following the completion of the reading of the book, there will be a vocabulary review of all the words used in the vocabulary assignments. Students should keep their vocabulary work as study materials for the unit test.

Reading Assignment Sheet You need to fill in the reading assignment sheet to let students know when their reading has to be completed. You can either write the assignment on a side chalk board or bulletin board and leave it there for students to see each day, or you can make copies for each student to have. In any case, advise students to become very familiar with the reading assignments so they know what is expected of them.

Extra Activities Center The Unit Resource portion of this unit contains suggestions for a library of related books and articles in your classroom as well as crossword and word search puzzles. Make a center in your room where you will keep these materials for students to use. (Bring the books and articles in from the library and keep several copies of the puzzles on hand.) Explain to students that these materials are available for their use when they finish reading assignments or other class work early.

Writing Assignment #1 - Holes (Writing to Inform/Explain)

PROMPT

In just twenty pages of **Holes**, Louis Sachar has made it clear that Stanley Yelnats is existing in a wasteland. So far, we might examine this wasteland in terms of the physical environment of Camp Green Lake, the people at the camp, and Stanley's life situation/culture (everything that made up his life prior to his going to the camp).

Your assignment is to write a composition to explain to the reader that Stanley is, in fact, existing in a wasteland. Although you should talk about each of the aspects of the wasteland (physical environment, people at the camp, and Stanley's life situation), you may introduce them in any order. Just be sure to give examples supporting each aspect and showing that Stanley is existing in a wasteland. It might help to pretend that your reader has not read the first twenty pages. Your job is to demonstrate to the reader that Stanley's world—in pp 3-20—is a wasteland.

PREWRITING

Begin by quickly re-reading the first twenty pages of the book. Make some notes as you re-read. Think about what it would be like to **be** Stanley, about how he feels about his parents, his home life, the events that have taken him to the camp, and about the people he encounters at the camp. And think about the camp itself (what it looks and feels like).

DRAFTING

Write an introductory paragraph designed to catch the reader's attention and to state your composition's main point: that Stanley Yelnats is existing in a wasteland. Write at least one paragraph discussing each aspect of the wasteland: one for physical environment, one for people at camp, and one for Stanley's life situation. Make sure that you give sufficient examples and that you are not simply quoting from the book. Write a concluding summary paragraph.

PROMPT

When you finish the rough draft of your paper, ask a student who sits near you to read it and to see if your main point is clearly expressed and supported by good examples. Then the student should tell you what he or she liked best about your work, which parts were difficult to understand, and ways in which your work could be improved. Re-read your paper considering your critic's comments and make the corrections you think are necessary.

PROOFREADING

Do a final proofreading of your paper, double-checking your grammar, spelling, organization, and the clarity of your ideas.