

# *Vocabulary From Literature*

## *Holes*

*by Louis Sachar*

*Written by Christa Miles*

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## *Holes*

### Information for Instructors

The activities in this Unit are designed to help students increase their vocabulary by studying the meanings of words selected from Louis Sachar's novel *Holes*. All definitions provided in these activities are based on the contexts in which the vocabulary words appear, which may not always convey the words' conventional usage.

It is the goal of this Unit to familiarize students with vocabulary words that they will re-encounter in life and other readings. The words are carefully selected to meet this goal. Many unfamiliar words not covered by the Unit are defined in a Glossary following the Activities section; the Glossary also contains slang expressions and proper nouns.

Rather than matching *Holes* chapter-for-chapter, we have divided the book into segments depending on the number of vocabulary words from each chapter. While all of the activities may be completed by students individually, we have had the best results when students worked on them in pairs or small groups. The following activities are provided for each segment.

While the words in this reproducible do represent those necessary for a better understanding of the text, our primary concern is that we select words not only pertinent to the literature, but also useful in other aspects of the students' lives.

All page references come from the Yearling Newberry edition of *Holes*, copyright 1998.

#### Activity I

Objective: Finding and interpreting definitions

#### Activity II

Objective: Deciphering the meaning of vocabulary words using context clues  
Replacing the vocabulary word with appropriate synonym(s) and definition(s)

#### Activity III

Objective: Writing definitions, synonyms, and sentences based on context clues

#### Activity IV

Objective: Demonstrating an understanding of a word's meaning by completing sentences  
Students will be able to explain their sentence completions by referring to passages in which the word is used.

#### Activity V

Objective: Recognizing commonly used prefixes and roots  
Understanding how prefixes and roots offer vocabulary clues

#### Activity VI

Objective: Using vocabulary words to complete a crossword puzzle

Test A twenty question multiple choice test with answer key is provided.



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**Activity I**  
**Matching Definitions**  
**Chapters 1-7**

**Directions:** Match each of the words below with its definition based on the context in which the word appears in the book. Use the page numbers in parentheses to locate the word. Then, look up the word in the dictionary and change any answers that are not correct.

stifling (6)	vast (8)	descendants (8)
gruff (8)	perseverance (8)	barren (11)
desolate (11)	penal code (12)	burlap (12)

- \_\_\_\_\_ empty; without productivity; lacking vegetation
- \_\_\_\_\_ set of laws for punishing crimes
- \_\_\_\_\_ fabric made from coarse fibers
- \_\_\_\_\_ deserted; lacking activity
- \_\_\_\_\_ harsh; rough
- \_\_\_\_\_ lacking air; smothering
- \_\_\_\_\_ great in size; expansive
- \_\_\_\_\_ offspring; family members
- \_\_\_\_\_ resolve; determination; follow-through

hastily (14)	counselor (16)	wearily (17)
society (18)	sanitary (19)	scarcity (21)
prospect (22)	testified (23)	despicable (25)

- \_\_\_\_\_ hateful; worthy of disgust
- \_\_\_\_\_ inadequate supply; not enough
- \_\_\_\_\_ spoke under oath; gave evidence
- \_\_\_\_\_ something expected or anticipated
- \_\_\_\_\_ people in a community; culture
- \_\_\_\_\_ clean; healthy
- \_\_\_\_\_ tiredly; showing exhaustion
- \_\_\_\_\_ advisor
- \_\_\_\_\_ quickly; hurriedly; with great speed

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Activity II  
Writing Synonyms from Context Clues  
Chapters 1-7

**Directions:** Replace each highlighted word in the following passages with the synonym that best fits the context of the sentence.

1. The campers are **forbidden** to lie in the hammock. It belongs to the Warden. The Warden owns the shade. (Pg. 3)

Synonym for **forbidden**:

- A. reminded
- B. urged
- C. instructed
- D. cursed
- E. not allowed

2. The apartment smelled the way it did because Stanley's father was trying to **invent** a way to **recycle** old sneakers. (Pg. 9)

A. Synonym for **invent**:

- A. stop
- B. design
- C. sells
- D. televise
- E. employ

B. Synonym for **recycle**:

- A. harm
- B. cook
- C. clean
- D. build
- E. reuse

3. "They all have nicknames," explained Mr. Pendanski. "However, I prefer to use the names their parents gave them—the names that *society will recognize them by* when they return to become useful and hardworking **members** of society." (Pg. 18)

A. Synonym for **recognize**:

- A. gather
- B. disconnect
- C. photograph
- D. count
- E. acknowledge

B. Synonym for **members**:

- A. participants
- B. craftsmen
- C. links
- D. adults
- E. children

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Activity III  
Writing Definitions and Sentences  
from Context Clues  
Chapters 1-7

**Directions:** For each highlighted word, write a definition that fits the context of the passage. Then, check your answers by looking the words up in the dictionary. Finally, write a sentence using each word. The first one is done for you as an example.

Example: There is no lake at Camp Green Lake. There once was a very large lake here, the largest lake in Texas. That was over a hundred years ago. Now it is just a dry, flat **wasteland**. (Pg. 1)

Definition for **wasteland**: country marked by lack of cultivation; unused, untended earth

Sentence: The settlers had no choice but to keep moving; there were no signs of life on the deserted wasteland.

1. On his last day of school, his math teacher, Mrs. Bell, taught **ratios**. As an example, she chose the heaviest kid in the class and the lightest kid in the class, and had them weigh themselves. Stanley weighed three times as much as the other boy. Mrs. Bell wrote the **ratio** on the board, 3:1, unaware of how much embarrassment she had caused both of them. (Pg. 7)

Definition for **ratio**:

Sentence for **ratio**: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. At such times she neglected to mention the bad luck that **befell** the first Stanley Yelnats. He lost his entire fortune when he was moving from New York to California. (Pg. 9)

Definition for **befell**:

Sentence for **befell**: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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3. It was too much of a **coincidence** to be a **mere** accident. Stanley had felt like he was holding **destiny's** shoes. (Pg. 24)

A. Definition for **coincidence**:

Sentence for **coincidence**: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

B. Definition for **mere**:

Sentence for **mere**: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

C. Definition for **destiny**:

Sentence for **destiny**: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. The sun had only just come up over the **horizon**, but he already could feel its hot rays against his face. (Pg. 31)

Definition for **horizon**:

Sentence for **horizon**: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. "Why not let Myra decide?" suggested Elya. "That's **preposterous!**" exclaimed Igor, **expelling** saliva as he spoke. (Pg. 34)

A. Definition for **preposterous**:

Sentence for **preposterous**: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



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Activity IV  
Completing Sentences  
Chapters 1-7

**Directions:** The following sentences each contain a vocabulary word from the text. Complete each sentence in a way that shows you understand the meaning of the highlighted vocabulary word. You may use a dictionary or thesaurus to help with the meaning.

**Example**

**Sentence starter containing vocabulary word:**

It may be a **coincidence** that the twins both gave birth to twins in the Twin Mountain Lodge on 2/2/02.

1. The **forlorn** look on Billy's face meant he \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
2. The **prospect** of playing on the team \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
3. Sandra's smile through the pain gave Doctor Ben an idea about her **character**.  
He thought she \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
4. The baseball team needed a good hitter who could **deftly** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
5. The coach for the home team **grimaced** when \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
6. Following the theft of the library books, a new rule was put into place. **Thereafter**, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

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### Activity V Roots and Prefixes Chapters 1-7

- A. The Latin *solus* means “alone.” The words below are all from the *solus* root. Define each one and give a synonym for it.

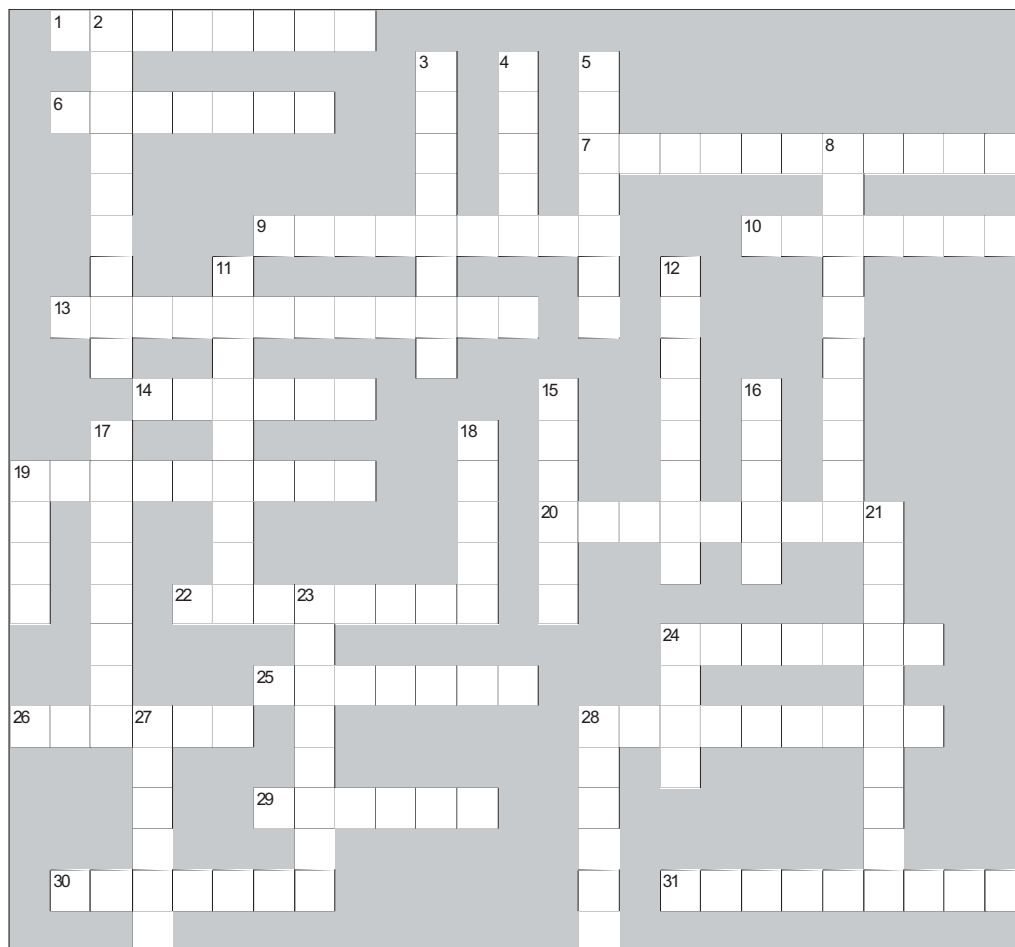
WORD	DEFINITION	SYNONYM
1. desolate		
2. solitary		
3. sole		
4. solitude		
5. solo		
6. soliloquy		

- B. All the words below come from the Latin *pressi*, meaning “press.” From the definition of each word, try to figure out the meaning of its prefix. If you need help, consult a dictionary.

WORD	DEFINITION	PREFIX	MEANING
1. impression	mark in something; indentation	im / in	
2. repress	to press back	re	
3. express	to bring out; to say or show	ex	
4. oppress	to use unfair power against	op	
5. compress	to squeeze together	com	
6. suppress	to press under	sup/ sub	

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Activity VI  
Crossword Puzzle  
Chapters 1-7



Across

- 1. not enough
- 6. speedily
- 7. chance
- 9. laws and penalties
- 10. fate
- 13. resolve; determination; follow-through
- 14. faucet
- 19. advisor
- 20. gave evidence
- 22. anticipated thing
- 24. opening

25. dig up

- 26. part of
- 28. deserted area
- 29. without vegetation
- 30. tiredly
- 31. preying; hunting

Down

- 2. nature; repute
- 3. smothering
- 4. relationship; percentage
- 5. community
- 8. beastly

11. outer boundary

- 12. deserted; lacking activity
- 15. skillfully
- 16. harsh; rough
- 17. room temperature
- 18. strength
- 19. lump of earth
- 21. offspring
- 23. clean condition
- 24. expansive
- 27. coarse, woven fabric
- 28. prison head