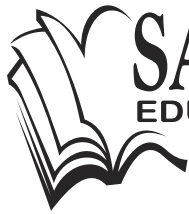


Focus **ON READING**

Holes

RICHARD J. LYNCH

This is a sample, not intended for classroom use.



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Introduction/Classroom Management

WELCOME TO *FOCUS ON READING*

Focus on Reading literature study guides are designed to help all students comprehend and analyze their reading. Many teachers have grappled with the question of how to make quality literature accessible to all students. Students who are already avid readers of quality literature are motivated to read and are familiar with prereading and reading strategies. However, struggling readers frequently lack basic reading skills and are not equipped with the prior knowledge and reading strategies to thoroughly engage in the classroom literature experience.

Focus on Reading is designed to make teachers' and students' lives easier! How? By providing materials that allow all students to take part in reading quality literature. Each *Focus on Reading* study guide contains activities that focus on vocabulary and comprehension skills that students need to get the most from their reading. In addition, each section within the guide contains a before-reading **Focus Your Reading** page containing tools to ensure success: **Vocabulary Words to Know**, **Things to Know**, and **Questions to Think About**. These study aids will help students who may not have the prior knowledge they need to truly comprehend the reading.

USING *FOCUS ON READING*

Focus on Reading is designed to make it easy for you to meet the individual needs of students who require additional reading skills support. Each *Focus on Reading* study guide contains teacher and student support materials, reproducible student activity sheets, an end-of-book test, and an answer key.

- **Focus on the Book**, a convenient reference page for the teacher, provides a brief overview of the entire book including a synopsis, information about the setting, author data, and historical background.
- **Focus Your Knowledge**, a reference page for students, is a whole-book, prereading activity designed to activate prior knowledge and immerse students in the topic.

The study guide divides the novel into 6 manageable sections to make it easy to plan classroom time. Five activities are devoted to each section of the novel.

Before Reading

- **Focus Your Reading** consists of 3 prereading sections:

Vocabulary Words to Know lists and defines 10 vocabulary words students will encounter in their reading. Students will not have to interrupt their reading to look up, ask for, or spend a lot of time figuring out the meaning of unfamiliar words. These words are later studied in-depth within the lesson.

Things to Know identifies terms or concepts that are integral to the reading but that may not be familiar to today's students. This section is intended to "level the playing field" for those students who may not have much prior knowledge about the time period, culture, or theme of the book. It also gets students involved with the book, increasing interest before they begin reading.

Questions to Think About helps students focus on the main ideas and important details they should be looking for as they read. This activity helps give students a *purpose* for reading. The goal of these guiding questions is to build knowledge, confidence, and comfort with the topics in the reading.

During Reading

- **Build Your Vocabulary** presents the 10 unit focus words in the exact context of the book. Students are then asked to write their own definitions and sentences for the words.
- **Check Your Understanding: Multiple Choice** offers 10 multiple-choice, literal comprehension questions for each section.
- **Check Your Understanding: Short Answer** contains 10 short-answer questions based on the reading.

After Reading

- **Deepen Your Understanding** is a writing activity that extends appreciation and analysis of the book. This activity focuses on critical thinking skills and literary analysis.
- **End-of-Book Test** contains 20 multiple-choice items covering the book. These items ask questions that require students to synthesize the information in the book and make inferences in their answers.

This is a sample, not intended for classroom use.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Focus on Reading is very flexible. It can be used by the whole class, by small groups, or by individuals. Each study guide divides the novel into 6 manageable units of study.

This literature comprehension program is simple to use. Just photocopy the lessons and distribute them at the appropriate time as students read the novel.

You may want to reproduce and discuss the **Focus Your Knowledge** page before distributing the paperbacks. This page develops and activates prior knowledge to ensure that students have a grounding in the book before beginning reading. After reading this whole-book prereading page, students are ready to dive into the book.

The **Focus Your Reading** prereading activities are the keystone of this program. They prepare students for what they are going to read, providing focus for the complex task of reading. These pages should be distributed before students actually begin reading the corresponding section of the novel. There are no questions to be answered on these pages; these are for reference and support during reading. Students may choose to take notes on these pages as they read. This will also give students a study tool for review before the **End-of-Book Test**.

The **Focus Your Reading** pages also provide an excellent bridge to home. Parents, mentors, tutors, or

other involved adults can review vocabulary words with students, offer their own insights about the historical and cultural background outlined, and become familiar with the ideas students will be reading about. This can help families talk to students in a meaningful way about their reading, and it gives the adults something concrete to ask about to be sure that students are reading and understanding.

The **Build Your Vocabulary** and **Check Your Understanding: Multiple Choice** and **Short Answer** activities should be distributed when students begin reading the corresponding section of the novel. These literature guide pages are intended to help students comprehend and retain what they read; they should be available for students to refer to at any time during the reading.

Deepen Your Understanding is an optional extension activity that goes beyond literal questions about the book, asking students for their own ideas and opinions—and the reasons behind them. These postreading activities generally focus on literary analysis.

As reflected in its title, the **End-of-Book Test** is a postreading comprehension test to be completed after the entire novel has been read.

For your convenience, a clear **Answer Key** simplifies the scoring process.

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Focus on the Book

Synopsis

Middle-grade student Stanley Yelnats comes from a luckless family. Perhaps it is no one's fault, but people often like to blame someone for their bad luck, and the Yelnats family has a ready-made scapegoat: Stanley's great-great-grandfather. He once stole a pig from a one-legged Gypsy, and from then on bad luck has befallen every Yelnats generation. Isn't it bad luck that Stanley got arrested for stealing a pair of sneakers? Although he is innocent, who would believe his story that they just fell out of the sky? The judge gave Stanley a choice: prison or Camp Green Lake. Stanley chose the camp. Who wouldn't choose camp over jail? But imagine his surprise when arriving at camp (a facility for juvenile delinquents) to find there is neither a lake nor anything green. And instead of rugged, outdoor, character-building activities, every day under the hot Texas sun he and the other inmates each have to dig a five-foot hole. Dig enough holes, the theory goes, and a bad boy will miraculously become a good boy.

Alongside Stanley's story at Camp Green Lake, the reader learns the history of the area. The past and the present come together to explain the strange goings-on at the camp. It turns out that Stanley and one of the other boys have a connection that goes back to the days of Stanley's notorious great-great-grandfather. Through his experience with his fellow campers, Stanley develops self-confidence, and, eventually, his luck changes.

About the Author

Born in East Meadow, New York, in 1954, Louis Sachar received a bachelor's degree from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1976, a doctor of journalism degree from the University of California, San Francisco, in 1980, and a doctor of jurisprudence degree (law degree) from Hastings College of Law in 1980.

Sachar has had a varied career. He worked as shipping manager for a company in Norwalk, Connecticut, that manufactured women's sweaters; became a writer; practiced law while writing at night; and finally gave up law in 1989 to write full time.

The author's love of writing for children began by chance when he became a teacher's aide while in college. Because he loved the job and the children, he decided to write for that age group.

Historical Background

Stanley Yelnats, the main character in *Holes*, is sent to Camp Green Lake, a camp for juvenile delinquents. He has been convicted of theft. The National Juvenile Detention Association defines juvenile detention in part as the "temporary and safe custody of juveniles . . . who require a restricted environment for their own and the community's protection." Camp Green Lake does not meet the definition of safe, and it does nothing to help reform offenders. It does not offer medical and emotional services that juvenile detention is supposed to provide to help young offenders change their behavior.

In *Holes*, the legend of Kissin' Kate Barlow is told along with that of the contemporary Stanley Yelnats. Kissin' Kate Barlow became an outlaw in the 1800s because the law seemed unjust to her, and she rebelled against it. In the story, Kate falls in love with a black man, Sam. He is a popular figure in town, doing odd jobs and selling onions, which seem to have curative properties. Even when the townspeople consult the town's medical doctor, they still come to Sam for medical advice. Sam's acceptance in the town only holds as long as he stays within certain limits; when he kisses Kate and a local woman sees it, Sam becomes a wanted man, and Kate becomes an outcast. Sam is shot as he tries to escape in a boat. Sam is killed under the claim of justice, but he has no trial. His shooting, then, is a lynching. Kate's heart is broken, and she becomes an outlaw after killing the sheriff.

Texas was the last state to officially abolish slavery. The Emancipation Proclamation was enacted January 1, 1863, but Texas did not officially free slaves until June 19, 1865. Between those dates, slaves continued to work as they always had. When Texas slaves were officially freed, the celebration known as Juneteenth was born.

Black Codes were laws passed by some Southern state legislatures after the Civil War. In Texas, Black Codes were enacted in 1865. These laws defined blacks' legal standing, continuing the inferior status that they had had before the Civil War. Among the laws was a prohibition against blacks marrying whites.

Focus Your Knowledge

- In *Holes*, you will find a story-within-a-story. One story deals with a boy in the present time. The other tells about some of the experiences of his great-great-grandfather, who had a curse put upon him. What is a curse? How is it supposed to affect the person it is put upon? Do you believe in curses? Why or why not?
- The great-great-grandfather's story took place one hundred ten years ago. How was life at that time different from life today? Consider such things as transportation, home appliances, amusements, schools, and jobs. What did men do at that time? What did women do? How did the population of our country at that time compare with the present population? Where did the people of towns one hundred years ago get their water and food? How do those sources compare with the sources we use today? How did the people of that time get their news? How do we get ours?
- The main character in *Holes*, Stanley, has been told that his great-great-grandfather was once robbed by a female bandit named Kissin' Kate Barlow. What do you know about the Wild West and bandits? Who were some famous outlaws of the time? Were there any women bandits among them?
- One boy in *Holes* does not know how to read. What would you be missing if you did not know how to read? How did you learn to read? Who taught you? How long did it take you to learn? How do you think you would go about teaching another person to read?

This is a sample, not intended for classroom use.

Focus Your Reading

Vocabulary Words to Know

Study the following words and definitions. You will meet these words in your reading. Be sure to jot down in your word journal any other unknown words from the reading.

shriveled—shrank and wrinkled
convicted—found guilty of a crime
perseverance—the ability to stick with a task despite obstacles
canteen—a container or flask for carrying water to drink
counselor—one who advises
sanitary—clean; free from germs

scarcity—insufficient amount
coincidence—events that accidentally happen at the same time but seem planned
despicable—something despised; contemptible
grimaced—made a face showing disgust

Things to Know

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

A **warden** is a person in charge of a prison who oversees the activities of the inmates.

When a person is suspected of committing a crime, he or she is usually arrested and tried in court. If the judge or jury feels that the person is guilty, he or she is convicted and sentenced, or given some punishment.

A juvenile correction facility is a place where young people, usually teenagers, are sent to be reformed. The routine there usually consists of exercise, military activities such as marching, and education. The goal of the facility is to improve the body, mind, and attitude of the offender and make him or her a better citizen.

This is a sample, not intended for classroom use.

Focus Your Reading

Questions to Think About

The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. Which wild animal at Camp Green Lake do the campers fear most? Why?
2. What luck did Stanley's great-grandfather have? What misfortune did he endure? Overall, was he lucky or unlucky?
3. Why doesn't Camp Green Lake have a fence around it and guard towers, as some prisons do?
4. How do you think Stanley feels about Mr. Sir? How does he probably feel about Mr. Pendanski?
5. If Elya loved Myra, why didn't he choose a number and try to win her as his wife?

This is a sample, not intended for classroom use.

Build Your Vocabulary

Read the sentences below. On the line, write your definition of the word in bold type. Then, on another sheet of paper, use that word in a new sentence of your own.

1. “The town **shriveled** and dried up along with the lake, and the people who lived there.”
shriveled: _____
2. “He was innocent of the crime for which he was **convicted**.”
convicted: _____
3. “To be a successful inventor you need three things: intelligence, **perseverance**, and just a little bit of luck.”
perseverance: _____
4. “He was also given white sneakers, an orange cap, and a **canteen** made of heavy plastic, which unfortunately was empty.”
canteen: _____
5. “If you dig up anything interesting, you are to report it to me or any other **counselor**.”
counselor: _____
6. “Theodore spit a thin line of saliva between his teeth, causing some of the other boys to complain about the need to keep their ‘home’ **sanitary**.”
sanitary: _____
7. “Because of the **scarcity** of water, each camper was only allowed a four-minute shower.”
scarcity: _____
8. “It was too much of a **coincidence** to be a mere accident.”
coincidence: _____
9. “The judge called Stanley’s crime **despicable**.”
despicable: _____
10. “Stanley’s hole was . . . not quite wide enough on the bottom. He **grimaced** as he sliced off a chunk of dirt, then raised it up and flung it into a pile.”
grimaced: _____

This is a sample, not intended for classroom use.

Check Your Understanding

Multiple Choice

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

- Why are the campers forbidden to lie in the hammock?
 - It doesn't belong to the camp.
 - Scorpions have made their home in it.
 - It belongs to the Warden.
- Why hadn't Stanley enjoyed the bus ride to Camp Green Lake?
 - The bus had no air conditioning, and he was in handcuffs.
 - The bus driver was rude to him.
 - He was afraid the rifle the guard had on his lap would accidentally discharge.
- Why does Stanley feel sorry for the guard and the bus driver?
 - Mr. Sir won't share his sunflower seeds.
 - Although it is terribly hot, they have to wear heavy uniforms.
 - They have had a nine-hour drive already and face another back.
- Why does Mr. Sir tell Stanley, "This isn't a Girl Scout camp"?
 - He thinks Stanley has mistaken the camp for one the Girl Scouts use.
 - There are no girls at Camp Green Lake.
 - He wants Stanley to know that Camp Green Lake means a hard life.
- Why doesn't Mr. Pendanski think that Stanley is a bad kid?
 - If Stanley were a bad kid, he'd have gone to jail.
 - Everyone makes mistakes.
 - He can tell by looking at Stanley that he isn't bad.
- Why does Mr. Pendanski call the boys by their first names, not their nicknames?
 - Their first names will be what society calls them when they get out of camp.
 - He can't remember all the nicknames.
 - The nicknames are offensive to him.
- Why is Stanley's first shower unsatisfactory?
 - The water is cold, and the shower is short.
 - The water is too hot, and there is no way to turn it down.
 - There isn't any soap.
- What does Clyde Livingston, Stanley's hero, think about Stanley?
 - that he is innocent of the crime he was charged with
 - that he just has bad luck
 - that he is a no-good thief
- When do the boys begin digging their holes each day, and why?
 - after breakfast, because they are well rested and well fed
 - before the sun is up, because it is cooler then
 - before breakfast, so that they can work up a good appetite
- Why is it a surprise that Zero is the fastest digger in Group D?
 - He hates digging more than the others.
 - He is the smallest boy in the group.
 - He hasn't had much practice.

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Check Your Understanding

Short Answer

Write a short answer for each question.

1. Do you think Stanley would have chosen the camp or jail if he knew what the camp was like?
2. What is Stanley's father trying to invent?
3. Why does Stanley say, "Duh" when he sees the sign saying the Texas Penal Code does not allow guns, explosives, weapons, drugs, or alcohol at the camp?
4. Why do you think the boys at the camp all call Mr. Pendanski "Mom"?
5. Do the nicknames at the camp tell something about the boys? If so, what?
6. Why do you think the boys don't believe Stanley when he says he stole Clyde Livingston's sneakers?
7. Why did the baseball schedule delay Stanley's trial?
8. How does each boy know that his hole is exactly five feet wide and five feet deep?
9. What did Madame Zeroth think of Myra Menke? Why?
10. Why did Sarah Yelnats name her child Stanley?

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Deepen Your Understanding

In writing, a *flashback* is an interruption of events telling things that happened in the past. In *Holes*, there are numerous flashbacks that tell something about Stanley's father or ancestors. What do you think of this device? Do you think it makes Stanley's story more interesting? Is it confusing? Explain your ideas about flashbacks in this novel.

SAMPLE

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