



CONTENTS

Introduction

Teachers' Notes

Cast of Characters

Film/Book Synopsis

About the Author

Lesson 1

Storyboarding (symbolism, imagery and visualisation)

Lesson 2

Casting (character, names and identity)

Lesson 3

Poster/Advertisement Design (key ideas, phrases, images)

Lesson 4

Past and Present (flashbacks and the interweaving of stories)

Lesson 5

Perspective and Racism (writing an imaginary diary entry)

Lesson 6

From Page to Screen (writing a screenplay from the book and performing it)

Lesson 7

The Pitch (presentation of ideas, genre)

Lesson 8

Selling the Film (marketing proposal, press release, ICT research)

Lesson 9

Reviews (comparing film and book)

Lesson 10

Fun Quiz - website

Further Information



INTRODUCTION

'Camp Green Lake is a camp for bad boys. If you take a bad boy and make him dig a hole every day in the hot sun, it will turn him into a good boy. That was what some people thought.' (p.5)

Holes is the uplifting story of Stanley Yelnats (played by newcomer Shia LaBeouf), a boy dogged by family bad luck and innocent of the crime that has caused him to be sent to a juvenile correctional facility. Is it just bad luck? Or could it be fate?

Holes has been adapted from the book by award-winning Louis Sachar (one of the BBC's The Big Read Top 100), and has quickly taken its place amongst the classics of children's fiction. Interweaving two stories from the past, brought together and resolved by Stanley in the present, Holes is a faithful and satisfying adaptation of a touching and funny book.

This study guide is for teachers and students, and concentrates on the many layered themes of the story, looking at the film and book in conjunction, and considers the process of adaptation of one medium to another.



pictured on right: Stanley Yelnats © 2003 Walden Media, LLC





TEACHERS' NOTES

KS3 Framework references are listed below and are specifically Year 8 teaching objectives, but the tasks can be easily adapted to suit different year groups and abilities across the key stage. This digital resource is primarily for English/Media studies, although there are many elements that can be taught in other lessons (see Further Information, p. 21).

The initial lessons assume that students will be reading the book alongside the set tasks: chapter coverage is indicated at the beginning of each 'lesson', where appropriate. Teachers are left to their own discretion with regard to structuring reading time to coincide with the tasks. By the end of lesson 6 the reading of *Holes* should be complete; for lesson 9, students should have seen the film in advance.

No time frame has been provided for lessons as tasks have been grouped by theme to accommodate differing lesson and reading times. Most tasks are designed to be group activities, but may be adapted.

National Curriculum/Framework for Teaching English References

Lesson 1: Storyboarding (symbolism, imagery and visualisation)

Word: W9 Specialist vocabulary; W11 figurative language

Reading: R5 trace the development of themes

Writing: W8 develop an imaginative treatment; W10 organise and present information

Speaking and Listening: SL11 recognise and build on other people's contributions

Lesson 2: Casting (character, names and identity)

Sentence: S9 Adapt stylistic conventions

Reading: R12 Independent reading; R5 Developing themes; R8 Meaning and media

Writing: W8 Developing an imaginative treatment; W10 Organising and presenting information

Speaking and Listening: L10 Using talk; S15 Drama in role; S4 Provide and explanation or commentary





Lesson 3: Poster/Advertisement Design (key ideas, phrases, images)

Word: W11 figurative language; W12 formality and word choice

Sentence: S9 adapting a stylistic convention

Reading: R1 combining information

Writing: W7 experiment with different language choices; W10 organise and present information

Speaking and Listening: SL10 use talk to question, hypothesise, speculate, evaluate, solve problems

Lesson 4: Past and Present (flashbacks and the interweaving of stories)

Reading: R14 recognise the conventions of some common literary forms

Writing: W10 organise and present information

This lesson also addresses aspects of numeracy

Lesson 5: Perspective and Racism (writing an imaginary diary entry)

Sentence: S1 combine clauses; S2 sentence structures; S3 punctuation; S4 tenses

Reading: R6 recognise bias and objectivity; R15 texts and their times

Writing: W2 re-read work and revise; W6 figurative language; W7 language choice

Lesson 6: From Page to Screen (writing a screenplay from the book and performing it)

Reading: R5 development of themes; R6 recognise bias and objectivity

Writing: W8 imaginative treatment

Speaking and Listening: D16 collaborate in, and evaluate, the presentation of dramatic performances

Lesson 7: The Pitch (presentation of ideas, genre)

Writing: W8 imaginative treatment; W10 organise and present information; W13 present a case persuasively

Speaking and Listening: S3 formal presentation; S4 commentary; L6 own skills as listeners; G9 group talk





Lesson 8: Selling the Film (marketing proposal, press release, ICT research)

Sentence: S8 use of stylistic conventions; S9 adapting stylistic conventions

Reading: R1 combine information; R2 independent research

Writing: W5 commentary and description in narrative; W13 present a case persuasively

Lesson 9: Reviews (comparing film and book)

Sentence: S8 stylistic conventions

Reading: R1 combine information; R3 make notes; R5 trace the development of themes; R6 recognise bias and objectivity; R8 how meanings change when presented in different forms

Writing: R18 write a critical review

Speaking and Listening: L7 listen for a specific purpose

For all lessons

Visit: www.filmeducation.org and www.holes.com





CAST OF CHARACTERS

The Warden.....	Sigourney Weaver
Mr Sir.....	Jon Voight
Dr Pendanski.....	Tim Blake Nelson
Stanley (Caveman).....	Shia LaBeouf
Zero (Hector).....	Khleo Thomas
Squid (Alan).....	Jake M Smith
Armpit (Theodore).....	Byron Cotton
X-Ray (Rex).....	Brenden Jefferson
Magnet (Jose).....	Miguel Castro
Zigzag (Ricky).....	Max Kasch
Stanley's Mother.....	Siobhan Fallon Hogan
Stanley's Father.....	Henry Winkler
Clyde 'Sweetfeet' Livingston.....	Rick Fox
Madame Zeroni.....	Eartha Kitt
Elya Yelnats.....	Damien Luvara
Kissin' Kate Barlow.....	Patricia Arquette
Sam.....	Dulé Hill
Trout Walker.....	Scott Plank



pictured on left: Mr Sir, The Warden, Dr Pendanski; right: The Camp Green Lake Gang © 2003 Walden Media, LLC



FILM/BOOK SYNOPSIS

Stanley, an unlucky and bullied boy, is sent to a juvenile correctional facility at Camp Green Lake, deep in the Texas desert, when he is convicted of stealing a pair of sneakers belonging to Clyde 'Sweetfeet' Livingston. On arrival he realises that this is no ordinary 'camp': here the boys must dig one hole per day, five feet across and five feet down in the blistering heat, with little water. The other boys, with their strange nicknames, are not initially friendly, but he becomes a part of their group, forming a special friendship with the quiet Zero.

Stanley soon begins to wonder exactly why they are digging the holes in the bed of the dried-up lake – especially as the Warden is uncommonly interested in anything that they find. Does it have anything to do with the outlaw Kissin' Kate Barlow, who robbed Stanley's great-grandfather one hundred years ago? Can he escape from his inherited bad luck? After Zero runs away, Stanley must rescue his friend, solve the mystery and break the curse, once and for all.

Locations:

Early C19th, Latvia

Late C19th, Green Lake, Texas

Present day, Camp Green Lake



pictured on left and right: Stanley and Zero © 2003 Walden Media, LLC



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Louis Sachar, author and screenwriter of the film and book, was born in New York in 1954.

As a full-time writer, Louis's work-day routine includes shutting himself away in his study where he writes for two hours daily, with his dogs for company. Louis says that '...writing is a kind of self-hypnosis...' (from www.kidsreads.com): he writes and re-writes his novels, and does not talk about his work in progress, even to his wife and daughter. He had his first children's book published, 'Sideways Stories from Wayside School' whilst he was still at college. After graduating as a lawyer, he continued to write fiction and eventually gave up practicing law to concentrate on his writing. He began writing the 'Marvin Redpost' series when his daughter was four, which is why Marvin has a four-year-old sister.

Louis wrote the screenplay for the film, as the director (Andrew Davis) was keen to make a faithful rendition of the book, and capture the special mix of comedy, mystery and sense of purpose that Louis conveys in *Holes*. He says that he had a wonderful experience making the film, and got to see the process from the beginning. He was most impressed with the amount of hard work that goes into film production:

'All you ever hear about movies is the glamour, hype, and stardom, but what I never realised is how hard everybody works. A lot of the movie was filmed in 100-degree heat. And members of the production company dug 450 holes in the Mojave Desert in California.'

(p. 13, 'The Holes Story: A Conversation with Louis Sachar' by Kate Davis, *Read Magazine*, Vol. 52, No. 9, December 20, 2002)

Louis has a small part in the film: watch out for his appearance.

pictured from left to right: Andrew Davis, Louis Sachar © 2003 Walden Media, LLC





LESSON 1: STORYBOARDING

(symbolism, imagery and visualisation)

Coverage: chs 1-7

Read these initial chapters of Holes and discuss the themes and imagery that become apparent in the first part of the book, for example how is Camp Green Lake described and why is this at odds with its name?

Now read the following information about storyboarding and complete the task.




Storyboarding

Storyboarding is a process of visualising written text, with technical camera details added, to allow a director to convey his intentions on how he would like to film a particular scene. It looks rather like a comic-strip.

Some of the technical information will refer to action, camera direction and lighting.

Angles

- straight-on angle
- high angle (the camera looking down on its subject)
- low angle (the camera looking up at its subject)

STORYBOARD	
What you can see	What you can hear
	
	
	

Think about the affect that using these differently will have on the shot (will it emphasise the vulnerability of the subject if the camera is at a high angle looking down?)

Level

- level camera shot (where the horizon is horizontal)
- tilting
- panning





Height of the Camera

This will determine the perspective of the audience, so that if the point of view were that of a child, the camera's height would be close to the ground.

Camera Distance from Subject

- extreme long shot (for framing landscapes)
- long shot (the character is at a distance, their whole body is in view)
- mid shot (the character is shown from the knees/waist up, or full body if sitting)
- close-up (shows character's head and shoulders, used to show character's facial expression)
- extreme close-up (shows part of the face, lips to eyes, to convey emotion)
- over the shoulder shot (view taken from over the shoulder of character, to show what he/she is seeing)
- point-of-view shot (from character's pov)
- two shot (shows two characters)

task

Now that you are familiar with the storyboarding process, turn to chapter 10 of *Holes* and storyboard the section beginning 'As long as the sun wasn't out yet' (p.49 Bloomsbury 2000) to 'He'd found his miracle' (p. 50). When you read each sentence try to capture what you see in your head; pick out the adjectives (descriptive words) and any descriptive sentences: think how you can show your imagination in pictures.



Visit: www.filmeducation.org and www.holes.com





LESSON 2: CASTING

(character, names and identity)

Coverage: chs 8-17

Why are names so important in the story? All of the boys have unusual nicknames: X-Ray, Magnet, Armpit etc. Why do their nicknames suit each character? Why is it important that Stanley's name is a palindrome (a word that is spelt the same backwards as it is forwards)? Do you think 'Caveman' is an appropriate name for Stanley?

task

Link the actual name of the boy, his nickname and a personality trait that he possesses. Find textual evidence (quote page numbers) to support your reasons.

Theodore	Alan	Squid
Rex	mean	smelly
Magnet	unpredictable	X-Ray
Zigzag	Ricky	
steals things	poor eyesight	
Armpit		

Visit: www.filmeducation.org and www.holes.com



task

In groups, imagine that one of you is a character from Holes, the rest of the group will ask your character questions and you must answer in character. (Note to teachers: you may feel that you are best able to fill this role, perhaps taking the persona of one of the adults in the story, Mr Sir or Pendanski?)

task

You are the casting agent for the production company that is to make Holes into a movie. Make suggestions for possible actors for each role, allowing for appearance, voice, demeanour and behaviour. Now write an advertisement for the role to be placed in an industry magazine.



Visit: www.filmeducation.org and www.holes.com

pictured on left: Mr Sir, right: The Camp Green Lake Gang © 2003 Walden Media, LLC



LESSON 3: POSTER/ADVERTISEMENT DESIGN

(key ideas, phrases, images)

task

Design a poster for *Holes*: make a list of the key elements of the story (e.g. digging holes, buried treasure, an ancient family curse) and pick a striking image from the film. What do you want to convey to the audience? How will you entice people to come and see the movie? Think about the kind of language used in movie advertising.

Things to include:

- title
- stars
- tag-line
- credits - the name of your production company (Walden Media and Buena Vista International (UK) Limited), website address etc.
- release date

Often the tag-line of the film is as important as the image on the poster, as its object is to condense the essence of the film in one memorable phrase (for example: *Men in Black 2* - Same Planet; *New Scum* or *Lord of the Rings, The Two Towers* - A new power is rising). Make up your own tag-line, perhaps using a quote from the book.



Visit: www.filmeducation.org and www.holes.com

pictured on top and middle: Stanley and Zero; bottom: Stanley © 2003 Walden Media, LLC





LESSON 4: PAST AND PRESENT

(flashbacks and the interweaving of stories)

Coverage: chs 18-28

Holes has three stories interwoven: Elya Yelnats, Stanley's no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather, who is cursed by the gipsy; the story of Kissin' Kate Barlow, a school teacher who became an outlaw; and Stanley's imprisonment at Camp Green Lake. Why does the novel switch between the stories? What do you think are the connections between them? How do we know that the time and location have changed?

In film, this convention is called flashback. Can you think of examples of films where this has been used? How did the director convey to the audience that the setting had changed? Was the lighting or mood different? Is the past filmed in black and white? What affect did it have on the film as a whole?

task

Make a timeline of the three different storylines, plotting the events on a chart and making a note of where (and when) they cross over. Using flashback affects the order in which the story is told; why do you think Louis Sachar wrote Holes in this way?



Visit: www.filmeducation.org and www.holes.com

pictured: Stanley and Zero © 2003 Walden Media, LLC



LESSON 5: PERSPECTIVE AND RACISM

(writing an imaginary diary entry)

Coverage: chs 29-39

When asked how he creates believable characters, Louis Sachar replied:

'I put myself in their situation. I try to figure out what Stanley would be thinking. You always have to imagine what your character would be feeling and thinking, to see yourself as the character.'



(p. 15, 'The Holes Story: A Conversation with Louis Sachar' by Kate Davis, Read Magazine, Vol. 52, No. 9, December 20, 2002)

task

Read chapters 25 and 26 carefully. Imagine that you are Katherine Barlow and write a diary entry for her the day after she killed the sheriff, explaining her actions and describing her feelings. Think about her relationship with Sam and the townspeople's reactions to it and the consequences for the town after Sam is killed.

task

EXTENSION TASK:

Imagine that you are a director and have been asked to 'guest direct' an additional scene that will be included on the DVD release. In the scene serene teacher Katherine Barlow (played by Patricia Arquette) transforms herself into outlaw Kissin' Kate Barlow. Write down instructions for her to follow whilst she acts out the scene. How she should act – angry, upset, determined and why? What is her 'motivation'? Remember to include how she should use props, like her new 'outlaw' clothes, during the scene. Would she treat them gently, as she would a silk dress?

pictured: Mr Sir © 2003 Walden Media, LLC





LESSON 6: FROM PAGE TO SCREEN

(writing a screenplay from the book and performing it)

Coverage: chs 40-50

task

Pick a chapter from the book that you think is particularly dramatic. Turn the prose into a screenplay (this will include dialogue and direction). How will you convey what is going on without the presence of a narrator? How much dialogue does the scene need? Do you need to add more or change anything from the book? Remember to include any particular directional instructions such as camera angles and lighting (remembering the techniques you used for storyboarding). As you will be performing this scene, take into account any props you may need. Think of any instructions you would give an actor who is using your screenplay (what are the characters' feelings at this moment in time?).

task

Now perform your scene in front of another group. Discuss how you could have done it differently and whether or not you captured the meaning and emotional impact of the scene as it is described in the novel.

Visit: www.filmeducation.org
and www.holes.com



pictured: Stanley © 2003 Walden Media, LLC





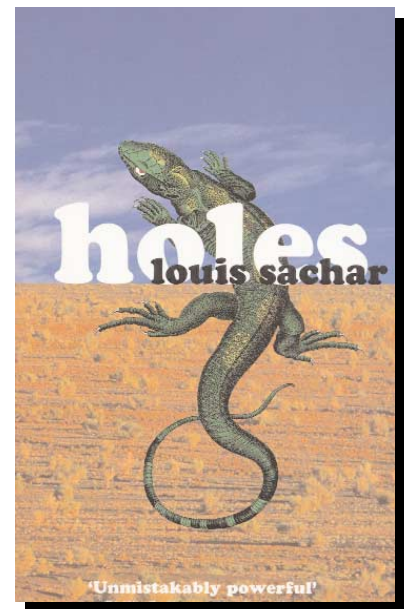
LESSON 7: THE PITCH

(presentation of ideas, genre)

task

Now that you have finished reading *Holes* you should have a good idea of the type (or genre) of book that it is. How would you describe it? Is it an adventure story? A comedy? Or a mixture of several different genres? Think back to Lesson 3 when you designed a poster for the film version of the book; what were the key words you used to describe the story on the poster?

The original title of the book was *Wrong Time, Wrong Place, Wrong Kid*. Why do you think it was renamed *Holes*? Is this a better title? Can you think of a better one?



task

To get a movie made the writer or director will need the backing of a producer to provide the finances needed to put the project into production. Sometimes the producer is part of a studio: in the case of *Holes*, the studio that produced it was Disney. The initial meeting between the people with the idea for the film and the potential backers is called a 'pitch'.

Now imagine that you have the idea to turn *Holes* the book into *Holes* the film; you must now 'sell' your idea to the producer as concisely as you can. You do not have long, as the producer is a busy person and has many people to see. In pairs, come up with a short presentation (no longer than three minutes) in which you describe the essential elements of the book (the synopsis), why it is a story worth telling and who the audience might be. Remember that the film must have the potential to make money, and therefore must appeal to a large audience. (Note to teachers: it may be worth showing the clip from 'The Player' (1992: Dir. Robert Altman, Certificate 15) where the writer describes his script in terms of other films. Remember to point out that this is satire!) You could use your poster design and your storyboard as part of your presentation if you wish. Now present your pitch to the rest of the class. Afterwards discuss what makes a good pitch. Are the types of words used very memorable? Or, are the images more important?





LESSON 8: SELLING THE FILM

(marketing proposal, press release, ICT research)

task

Holes the movie has been made: imagine that you are part of the post-production team that must sell the movie to the prospective audience.

Think of the different ways in which you find out about a movie before it is released: television, the internet, poster campaigns, interviews in magazines etc. Now brainstorm all of the possible media outlets you will have to target to ensure as many people as possible know about your film. (Remember that the film came from a popular book, so you should publicise that as well, with a tie-in edition etc.)

Its UK release date is scheduled for October 24, 2003. Why do you think this date was picked? What other films are being released around this time?
(Visit www.launchingfilms.co.uk)

task

Now consider **who** you will be targeting in your publicity campaign: who is your target audience? Why? How will you reach this audience through the media?

For this task you will need internet access. Online, research all the different kinds of advertising you can find relating to the film/book of Holes (visit www.holes.com). Can you think of something that does not appear to have been done?

task

EXTENSION TASK:

Often the first, or most memorable time we hear about a film is through a trailer. Design a trailer for Holes, detailing which scenes from the film you would use and why; write the script for a voice-over and describe the kind of music you would use (if any). Remember to include all the information that the audience will need and will encourage them to see the film. A trailer is a taster of a movie, so you should not reveal too many things about the plot; tease your audience by giving them small pieces of information and make them want to find out more.

Visit: www.filmeducation.org and www.holes.com



LESSON 9: REVIEWS

(comparing film and book)

Coverage: Book and film

task

Now watch the film. Make notes on anything that is different from the book. Is it better or worse? Why? Did the film live up to your expectations?

Write a review for your school newspaper, comparing the two. Point out the differences between them and evaluate the success the film had in bringing the issues and themes of the book to light. Did the actors do justice to Sachar's characters? Were there any scenes in the film that you thought were particularly well done? Did the film adaptation make you consider the book any differently? Finally, give the film a star rating.



Visit: www.filmeducation.org and www.holes.com



LESSON 10: FUN QUIZ

For the interactive quiz to test your knowledge of Holes click here on the link to:

www.filmeducation.org





FURTHER INFORMATION

Cross Curricular Topics

PSE

There are many issues in Holes that can be discussed in PSE lessons:

- punishment and juvenile delinquency
- illiteracy
- racism
- bullying
- homelessness

www.channel4.com/learning has good resources for PSE lessons, especially for law-related subjects.

History

In History lessons, Holes could be used as a springboard for exploring aspects of slavery and the Wild West.

www.espresso.co.uk

www.civilrightsmuseum.org

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award97/codhtml/hawphome.html>

Geography

Holes is set in the arid Texas desert. Check out the following websites for more information:

www.netstate.com/states/intro/tx_intro.htm

www.texas.gov

Science

For information about desert life try:

www.cdri.org

www.brainpop.com/science/ecology/desert/index.weml

www.eduscapes.com/nature/lizard/

www.ub.ntnu.no/scorpion-files/

www.42explore.com/snake2.htm





Information on onions can be found at:

www.magicvalleygrowers.com/history.html

www.sunspiced.com/ohistory.html

Information on inventions:

www.howthingswork.com

www.greatachievements.org/

ICT and Media

www.holes.com

www.walden.com

www.kidsreads.com

www.filmeducation.org

Related Holes Publications

'Holes: The Official Movie Scrapbook', Kovacs and LeMaire, (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2003)