



Activity Ideas and Lesson Plans

Louis Sachar's *HOLES* inspires so many activities and projects both inside the classroom and out. Here are some ideas for you to try out!

Activity Ideas:

- Try digging holes. It is harder than it seems!!! While you're at it start a garden or plant some flowers or trees.
- Stanley's family is cursed- all because of his "no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing great-great grandfather." Find out about your ancestors and create your own family tree.
- Create your own inventions inspired by Stanley's father.
- Draw a detailed map of Camp Green Lake. Don't forget to include the warden's house, the two trees, God's Thumb, and Sam's old boat.
- What is your Camp Green Lake nickname? What about your brother, teacher, dog and parents?
- Act out your favorite scenes from the book.
- Write a letter to Stanley at camp.
- Hold a mock trial and see if your jury would convict Stanley of stealing Clyde "Sweet Feet" Livingston's shoes.

Lesson Plan Ideas:

Palindromes

What do all of the following words have in common?

Level, Mom, Eye, Racecar, Civic, Pop, Madam

All these words have letters that are in the same order whether you read them forward or backward. Words like this are called palindromes. Palindromes also exist as phrases and even whole sentences. Can you spot any palindromes in the following sentence? *Hannah sees her friend in a blue kayak.*

Based on the clues, can you figure out what the palindrome is?

1. _ _ _ _ Middle of the day. (noon)
2. _ _ _ A joke played on someone. (gag)
3. _ _ _ A female sibling. (sis)
4. _ _ _ _ A marshmallow treat at Easter time. (peep)

The name of the main character in *Holes* is an excellent example of a palindrome: *Stanley Yelnats*. What would the palindrome names be for other characters in *Holes*? What would your palindrome name be?

Zero = Zero Orez
Zigzag = Zigzag Gazgiz
Barfbag = Barfbag Gabfrab
Magnet = Magnet Tengam

Armpit = Armpit Tipmra
Caveman = Caveman Namevac
Mr. Sir = Mr. Sir Rism
Warden = Warden Nedraw

Some fun common palindrome phrases and sentences are:

- Never odd or even
- Star rats
- A Toyota
- Don't nod.
- Step on no pets.
- Stop pots!
- Madam, I'm Adam.
- Do geese see God?
- Go hang a salami! I'm a lasagna hog.

Work with a partner or two and play with groups of words. Can your group create a palindrome sentence? Remember that each word in the sentence doesn't have to be a palindrome, just the sentence as a whole. It may be best to start with particular words and build your phrase or sentence from there.

Artifacts in a Bag

Gather a bunch of objects that relate back to the book and put each object into its own brown paper bag. If you have difficulty obtaining the items, you could put a picture of each item in the bag instead. Some of the objects you might think of including:

- *a tube of lipstick*
- *sneaker*
- *(plastic sand toy) shovel*
- *onion*
- *(plastic toy) lizard*
- *bottle of nail polish*
- *(stuffed animal) donkey*
- *bag of sunflower seeds*
- *handcuffs/sheriff's badge*
- *jar of peaches*
- *jar of sand*
- *toy boat (maybe even write 'Mary Lou' on the side)*
- *(stuffed animal/plastic toy) pig*

Depending on the number of items you have, divide students into pairs or trios (or individuals) and let each grouping pick a paper bag. Each group should then look at the item in the bag and figure out how its importance/how it connects to *Holes*. There are a couple of ways you could proceed from here.

1. After each group has had a few minutes to look at their item and figure out the connection to the book, have the entire class gather in a circle and let each group orally tell the others about the significance of their item.
2. After each group has had a few minutes to look at their item and write down its connection to the book, have them put the item back in the bag and switch bags with another group. Students

then write down the connection of this new item and switch with another group. Continue this until each group has had an opportunity to view at least 5 items each. Then discuss each item's significance as a whole class.

Superstitions

What is a *superstition*? Have students look up the word superstition and then discuss its meaning as a class. Discuss where superstitions may come from and the consequences of believing them. Often students don't realize that they regularly use/come across superstitions in their own lives. Provide students with a list of common superstitions. Have them check the ones they are familiar with and perhaps even do without thinking. (Examples: not opening an umbrella in the house; Friday the 13th) Have students discuss or write about their own – or their lack of – superstitions.

What superstition exists in the novel *Holes*? Is there more than one? How does the belief in each superstition shape the lives of the characters in the story?

- Elya Yelnats and Madame Zaroni (no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather...)
- The Warden, her grandfather, and the holes being dug at Camp Greenlake

You can even have your students take this idea a step further and research superstitions that exist in other cultures. They should include who believes in them and where on a map this group/culture can be found.

Onion: Writing Exercise

In the novel, the author uses an onion as a metaphor for how people can be. Have your students write and explain how an onion and a person have similar qualities.

For the teacher:

- A metaphor is a comparison of two unlike things. However, metaphors do not use the *like*, *as*, or *resembles*. (A comparison using *like*, *as*, or *resembles* is a simile.)

Metaphor: His smile is the sunshine in our day.

NOT a metaphor: His smile is like sunshine.

Metaphor: Suzy is the cherry on top of a hot-fudge sundae!

NOT a metaphor: She is as sweet as sugar.

- Symbols are a word, a picture or an object that represents (or symbolizes) another thing. The novel *Holes* is full of symbols. Holes symbolize negativity and despair. Water symbolizes hope. Nicknames equal acceptance. Onions represent happiness and healing.
- An onion has sequentially removable layers that conceal something important and good underneath. You may say that a person's true self/character is the same way. People have layers. Peeling an onion can relate to the idea of looking deeper and discovering more about

yourself or others. It represents a learning process whereby you don't accept a problem or idea or person at face value. Peeling an onion often causes the person doing so to cry...

- Onions grow by planting a seed that needs to be tended to and cared for. The same could be said about how a person's character develops. Also, onions grow in the dirt, and the edible part isn't even seen; it grows completely underground. Like Sam in the story, onions are humble and unassuming with nothing in particular fancy about them.

Holes Vocabulary Words:

accelerate	destiny	hesitate	recede
afflict	destroy	horizon	remedy
agony	distract	identity	required
appropriate	drawl	inexplicable	resent
astonishment	encourage	innocent	riot
authority	excavate	jolt	shaft
awesome	excess	jurisdiction	shrill
bacteria	expand	leech	smug
barren	expanse	lurch	society
character	expression	metallic	sparingly
coincidence	familiar	mirage	sprawl
condemned	feeble	mock	stagger
contrite	fossil	ointment	tedious
dawdle	foul	precarious	upholstery
defiance	fungus	precipice	wade
deft	gesture	predatory	wharf
delirious	grotesque	protruding	writhe
desolate	gully	radiate	