

Tuesday 31th March

Read chapter 14 and 15.

Make notes on any words you are unsure of and use a dictionary (book or online) to find the meaning of them. Tomorrow you will have a comprehension task on chapter 11 – 15 😊

14

That night, as Stanley lay on his scratchy and smelly cot, he tried to figure out what he could have done differently, but there was nothing he could do. For once in his unlucky life, he was in the right place at the right time, and it still didn't help him. "You got it?" he asked X-Ray the next morning at breakfast. X-Ray looked at him with half-opened eyes behind his dirty glasses. "I don't know what you're talking about," he grumbled. "You know . . ." said Stanley. "No, I don't know!" X-Ray snapped. "So just leave me alone, okay? I don't want to talk to you." Stanley didn't say another word. Mr. Sir marched the boys out to the lake, chewing sunflower seeds along the way and spitting out the shells. He scraped the ground with his boot heel, to mark where each boy was supposed to dig. Stanley stamped down on the back of the blade of the shovel, piercing the hard, dry earth. He couldn't figure out why X-Ray snapped at him. If he wasn't going to produce the tube, why did he make Stanley give it to him? Was he just going to keep it? The tube was gold in color, but Stanley didn't think it was real gold. The water truck came a little after sunrise. Stanley finished his last drop of water and stepped up out of his hole. At this time of day, Stanley sometimes could see some distant hills or mountains on the other side of the lake. They were only visible for a short while and would soon disappear behind the haze of heat and dirt. The truck stopped, and the dust cloud drifted past it. X-Ray took his place at the front of the line. Mr. Pendanski filled his canteen. "Thanks, Mom," X-Ray said. He didn't mention the tube. Mr. Pendanski filled all the canteens, then climbed back into the cab of the pickup. He still had to bring water to Group E. Stanley could see them digging about two hundred yards away. "Mr. Pendanski!" X-Ray shouted from his hole. "Wait! Mr. Pendanski! I think I might have found something!" The boys all followed Mr. Pendanski as he walked over to X-Ray's hole. Stanley could see the gold tube sticking out of some dirt on the end of X-Ray's shovel. Mr. Pendanski examined it and took a long look at its flat bottom. "I think the Warden is going to like this." "Does X-Ray get the day off?" asked Squid. "Just keep digging until someone says

otherwise," Mr. Pendanski said. Then he smiled. "But if I were you, Rex, I wouldn't dig too hard."

Stanley watched the cloud of dust move across the lake to the cabin beneath the trees. The boys in Group E were just going to have to wait. It didn't take long for the pickup to return. Mr. Pendanski stepped out of the cab. A tall woman with red hair stepped out of the passenger side. She looked even taller than she was, since Stanley was down in his hole. She wore a black cowboy hat and black cowboy boots which were studded with turquoise stones. The sleeves on her shirt were rolled up, and her arms were covered with freckles, as was her face. She walked right up to X-Ray. "This where you found it?" "Yes, ma'am." "Your good work will be rewarded." She turned to Mr. Pendanski. "Drive X-Ray back to camp. Let him take a double shower, and give him some clean clothes. But first I want you to fill everyone's canteen." "I just filled them a little while ago," said Mr. Pendanski. The Warden stared hard at him. "Excuse me," she said. Her voice was soft. "I had just filled them when Rex—" "Excuse me," the Warden said again. "Did I ask you when you last filled them?" "No, but it's just—" "Excuse me." Mr. Pendanski stopped talking. The Warden wiggled her finger for him to come to her. "It's hot and it's only going to get hotter," she said. "Now, these fine boys have been working hard. Don't you think it might be possible that they might have taken a drink since you last filled their canteens?" Mr. Pendanski said nothing. The Warden turned to Stanley. "Caveman, will you come here, please?" Stanley was surprised she knew his name. He had never seen her. Until she stepped out of the truck, he didn't even know the Warden was a woman. He nervously went toward her. "Mr. Pendanski and I have been having a discussion. Have you taken a drink since Mr. Pendanski last filled your canteen?" Stanley didn't want to cause any trouble for Mr. Pendanski. "I still got plenty left," he said. "Excuse me." He stopped. "Yeah, I drank some." "Thank you. May I see your canteen please." Stanley handed it to her. Her fingernails were painted dark red. She gently shook the canteen, letting the water swish inside the plastic container. "Do you hear the empty spaces?" she asked. "Yes," said Mr. Pendanski. "Then fill it," she said. "And the next time I tell you to do something, I expect you to do it without questioning my authority. If it's too much trouble for you to fill a canteen, I'll give you a shovel. You can dig the hole, and the Caveman can fill your canteen."

She turned back to Stanley. "I don't think that would be too much trouble for you, would it?" "No," said Stanley. "So what will it be?" she asked Mr. Pendanski. "Do you want to fill the canteens or do you want to dig?" "I'll fill the canteens," said Mr. Pendanski. "Thank you."

15

Mr. Pendanski filled the canteens. The Warden got a pitchfork out of the back of the pickup. She poked it through X-Ray's dirt pile, to see if anything else might have been buried in there as well. "After you drop off X-Ray, I want you to bring back three wheelbarrows," she said. X-Ray got in the pickup. As the truck pulled away, he leaned out the wide window and waved. "Zero," said the Warden. "I want you to take over X-Ray's hole." She seemed to know that Zero was the fastest digger. "Armpit and Squid, you will keep digging where you have been," she said. "But you're each going to have a helper. Zigzag, you help Armpit. Magnet will help Squid. And Caveman, you'll work with Zero. We're going to dig the dirt twice. Zero will dig it out of the hole, and Caveman will carefully shovel it into a wheelbarrow. Zigzag will do the same for Armpit, and the same with Magnet and Squid. We don't want to miss anything. If either of you find something, you'll both get the rest of the day off, and a double shower. "When the wheelbarrows are full, you are to dump them away from this area. We don't want any dirt piles to get in the way." The Warden remained at the site for the remainder of the day, along with Mr. Pendanski and Mr. Sir, who showed up after a while. Occasionally Mr. Sir would leave to take water to the other groups of campers, but otherwise he and the water truck stayed parked there. The Warden saw to it that nobody in Group D was ever thirsty. Stanley did as he was told. He carefully looked through all the dirt dug up by Zero, as he shoveled it into a wheelbarrow, though he knew he wouldn't find anything. It was easier than digging his own hole. When the wheelbarrow was full, he took it a good distance away before dumping it. The Warden couldn't keep still. She kept walking around, looking over the boys' shoulders, and sticking her pitchfork through the dirt piles. "You're doing fine, just fine," she told Stanley. After a while, she told the boys to switch places, so that Stanley, Zigzag, and Magnet dug in the holes, and Zero, Armpit, and Squid shoveled the excavated dirt into the wheelbarrows.

After lunch, Zero took over the digging again, and Stanley returned to the wheelbarrow. "There's no hurry," the Warden said several times. "The main thing is not to miss anything." The boys dug until each hole was well over six feet deep and wide. Still, it was easier for two boys to dig a six-foot hole than it was for one boy to dig a five-foot hole. "All right, that's enough for today," the Warden said. "I've waited this long, I can wait another day." Mr. Sir drove her back to her cabin. "I wonder how she knew all our names," Stanley said as he walked back to the compound. "She watches us all the time," said Zigzag. "She's got hidden microphones and cameras all over the place. In the tents, the Wreck Room, the shower." "The shower?" asked Stanley. He wondered if Zigzag was just being paranoid. "The cameras are tiny," said Armpit. "No bigger than the toenail on your little toe." Stanley had his doubts about that. He didn't think they could make cameras that small. Microphones, maybe. He realized that was why X-Ray didn't want to talk to him about the gold tube at breakfast. X-Ray was afraid the Warden might have been listening. One thing was certain: They weren't just digging to "build character." They were definitely looking for something. And whatever they were looking for, they were looking in the wrong place. Stanley gazed out across the lake, toward the spot where he had been digging yesterday when he found the gold tube. He dug the hole into his memory.