

Welcome back from the Easter break. I hope you are all well and had a wonderful couple of weeks enjoying the sunshine as much as possible.

Can I just remind you that all you can do is your best in these very strange times and please remember your parents are only making you work to help your learning in the future. I'm certain they too would much prefer to be relaxing on the sofa but they know, as you do, that your education is important so try not to resist their efforts too much. Please email the office if you have any questions or an achievement you want to share and they will forward these on to us.

Over the next two days (Monday and Tuesday) could you please read chapters 16 – 19 of Holes. Remember to make a note of any vocabulary you aren't sure of and look it up and if possible use it in your own vocabulary when talking to people. I will send out some comprehension questions on Wednesday for you.

Stay home and stay safe

## 16

As Stanley entered the Wreck Room, he could hear X-Ray's voice from all the way across the room. "See what I'm saying," X-Ray said. "Am I right, or am I right?" The other bodies in the room were little more than bags of flesh and bones, dumped across broken chairs and couches. X-Ray was full of life, laughing and waving his arms around as he talked. "Yo, Caveman, my man!" he called out. Stanley made his way across the room. "Hey, slide on over, Squid," said X-Ray. "Make room for the Caveman." Stanley crashed on the couch. He had looked for a hidden camera in the shower. He hadn't seen anything, and he hoped the Warden hadn't either. "What's the matter?" asked X-Ray. "You guys tired or something?" He laughed. "Hey, keep it down, will you," groaned Zigzag. "I'm trying to watch TV." Stanley glanced uncertainly at Zigzag, who was staring very intently at the busted television screen.

The Warden greeted the boys at breakfast the next morning and went with them to the holes. Four dug in the holes, and three tended to the wheelbarrows. "Glad you're here, X-Ray," she said to him. "We need your sharp eyes." Stanley spent more time pushing the wheelbarrow than digging, because he was such a slow digger. He carted away the excess dirt and dumped it into previously dug holes. He was careful not to dump any of it in the hole where the gold tube was actually found. He could still see the tube in his mind. It seemed so familiar, but he just couldn't place it. He thought that it might have been the lid to a fancy gold pen. K B could have been the initials of a famous author. The only famous authors he could think of were Charles Dickens, William Shakespeare, and Mark Twain. Besides, it didn't really look like the top of a pen. By lunchtime the Warden was beginning to lose her patience. She made them eat quickly, so they could get back to work. "If you can't get them to work any faster," she told Mr. Sir, "then you're going to have to climb down there and dig with them." After that, everyone worked faster, especially when Mr. Sir was watching them. Stanley practically ran when he pushed his wheelbarrow. Mr. Sir reminded

them that they weren't Girl Scouts. They didn't quit digging until after every other group had finished.

Later, as Stanley sat sprawled across an understuffed chair, he tried to think of a way to tell the Warden where the tube was really found, without getting himself or X-Ray into trouble. It didn't seem possible. He even thought about sneaking out at night and digging in that hole by himself. But the last thing he wanted to do after digging all day was to "dig at night, too. Besides, the shovels were locked up at night, presumably so they couldn't be used as weapons. Mr. Pendanski entered the Wreck Room. "Stanley," he called as he made his way to him. "His name's Caveman," said X-Ray. "Stanley," said Mr. Pendanski. "My name's Caveman," said Stanley. "Well, I have a letter here for someone named Stanley Yelnats," said Mr. Pendanski. He turned over an envelope in his hands. "It doesn't say Caveman anywhere." "Uh, thanks," Stanley said, taking it. It was from his mother. "Who's it from?" Squid asked. "Your mother?" Stanley put it in the big pocket of his pants. "Aren't you going to read it to us?" asked Armpit. "Give him some space," said X-Ray. "If Caveman doesn't want to read it to us, he doesn't have to. It's probably from his girlfriend." Stanley smiled.

He read it later, after the other boys had gone to dinner.

Dear Stanley, It was wonderful to hear from you. Your letter made me feel like one of the other moms who can afford to send their kids to summer camp. I know it's not the same, but I am very proud of you for trying to make the best of a bad situation. Who knows? Maybe something good will come of this. Your father thinks he is real close to a breakthrough on his sneaker project. I hope so. The landlord is threatening to evict us because of the odor. I feel sorry for the little old lady who lived in a shoe. It must have smelled awful! Love from both of us,

"What's so funny?" Zero asked. It startled him. He thought Zero had gone to dinner with the others. "Nothing. Just something my mom wrote." "What'd she say?" Zero asked. "Nothing." "Oh, sorry," said Zero. "Well, see my dad is trying to invent a way to recycle old sneakers. So the apartment kind of smells bad, because he's always cooking these old sneakers. So anyway, in the letter my mom said she felt sorry for that little old lady who lived in a shoe, you know, because it must have smelled bad in there." Zero stared blankly at him. "You know, the nursery rhyme?" Zero said nothing. "You've heard the nursery rhyme about the little old lady who lived in a shoe?" "No." Stanley was amazed. "How does it go?" asked Zero. "Didn't you ever watch Sesame Street?" Stanley asked. Zero stared blankly. Stanley headed on to dinner. He would have felt pretty silly reciting nursery rhymes at Camp Green Lake.



# 17

For the next week and a half, the boys continued to dig in and around the area where X-Ray had supposedly found the gold tube. They widened X-Ray's hole, as well as the holes Armpit and Squid had been digging, until the fourth day, when all three holes met and formed one big hole. As the days wore on, the Warden became less and less patient. She arrived later in the morning and left earlier in the afternoon. Meanwhile, the boys continued to dig later and later. "This is no bigger than it was when I left you yesterday," she said after arriving late one morning, well after sunrise. "What have you been doing down there?"

"Nothing," said Squid. It was the wrong thing to say. At just that moment, Armpit was returning from a bathroom break. "How nice of you to join us," she said. "And what have you been doing?" "I had to . . . you know . . . go." The Warden jabbed at Armpit with her pitchfork, knocking him backward into the big hole. The pitchfork left three holes in the front of his shirt, and three tiny spots of blood. "You're giving these boys too much water," the Warden told Mr. Pendanski.

They continued to dig until late afternoon, long after all the other groups had finished for the day. Stanley was down in the big hole, along with the other six boys. They had stopped using the wheelbarrows. He dug his shovel into the side of the hole. He scooped up some dirt, and was raising it up to the surface when Zigzag's shovel caught him in the side of the head. He collapsed. He wasn't sure if he passed out or not. He looked up to see Zigzag's wild head staring down at him. "I ain't digging that dirt up," Zigzag said. "That's your dirt." "Hey, Mom!" Magnet called. "Caveman's been hurt." Stanley brought his fingers up the side of his neck. He felt his wet blood and a pretty big gash just below his ear. Magnet helped Stanley to his feet, then up and out of the hole. Mr. Sir made a bandage out of a piece of his sack of sunflower seeds and taped it over Stanley's wound. Then he told him to get back to work. "It isn't nap time." When Stanley returned to the hole, Zigzag was waiting for him. "That's your dirt," Zigzag said. "You have to dig it up. It's covering up my dirt." Stanley felt a little dizzy. He could see a small pile of dirt. It took him a moment to realize that it was the dirt which had been on his shovel when he was hit. He scooped it up, then Zigzag dug his shovel into the ground underneath where "Stanley's dirt" had been.

# 18

The next morning Mr. Sir marched the boys to another section of the lake, and each boy dug his own hole, five feet deep and five feet wide. Stanley was glad to be away from the big hole. At least now he knew just how much he had to dig for the day. And it was a relief not to have other shovels swinging past his face, or the Warden hanging around. He dug his shovel into the dirt, then slowly turned to dump it into a pile. He had to make his turns smooth and slow. If he jerked too quickly, he felt a throbbing pain just above his neck where Zigzag's shovel had hit him.

That part of his head, between his neck and ear, was considerably swollen. There were no mirrors in camp, but he imagined he looked like he had a hard-boiled egg sticking out of him. The remainder of his body hardly hurt at all. His muscles had strengthened, and his hands were tough and callused. He was still the slowest digger, but not all that much slower than Magnet. Less than thirty minutes after Magnet returned to camp, Stanley spat into his hole. After his shower, he put his dirty clothes in his crate and got out his box of stationery. He stayed in the tent to write the letter so Squid and the other boys wouldn't make fun of him for writing to his mother.

Dear Mom and Dad, Camp is hard, but challenging. We've been running obstacle courses, and have to swim long distances on the lake. Tomorrow we learn...

He stopped writing as Zero walked into the tent, then returned to his letter. He didn't care what Zero thought. Zero was nobody.

...to rock climb. I know that sounds scary, but don't worry,

Zero was standing beside him now, watching him write. Stanley turned, and felt his neck throb. "I don't like it when you read over my shoulder, okay?" Zero said nothing.

I'll be careful. It's not all fun and games here, but I think I'm getting a lot out of it. It builds character. The other boys...

"I don't know how," said Zero. "What?" "Can you teach me?" Stanley didn't know what he was talking about. "Teach you what, to rock climb?" Zero stared at him with penetrating eyes. "What?" said Stanley. He was hot, tired, and sore. "I want to learn to read and write,"

said Zero. Stanley let out a short laugh. He wasn't laughing at Zero. He was just surprised. All this time he had thought Zero was reading over his shoulder. "Sorry," he said. "I don't know how to teach." After digging all day, he didn't have the strength to try to teach Zero to read and write. He needed to save his energy for the people who counted. "You don't have to teach me to write," said Zero. "Just to read. I don't have anybody to write to." "Sorry," Stanley said again.

His muscles and hands weren't the only parts of his body that had toughened over the past several weeks. His heart had hardened as well. He finished his letter. He barely had enough moisture in his mouth to seal and stamp the envelope. It seemed that no matter how much water he drank, he was always thirsty.

He was awakened one night by a strange noise. At first he thought it might have been some kind of animal, and it frightened him. But as the sleep cleared from his head, he realized that the noise was coming from the cot next to him. Squid was crying. "You okay?" Stanley whispered. Squid's head jerked around. He sniffed and caught his breath. "Yeah, I just . . . I'm fine," he whispered, and sniffed again. In the morning Stanley asked Squid if he was feeling better. "What are you, my mother?" asked Squid. Stanley raised and lowered one shoulder. "I got allergies, okay?" Squid said. "Okay," said Stanley. "You open your mouth again, and I'll break your jaw."

Stanley kept his mouth shut most of the time. He didn't talk too much to any of the boys, afraid that he might say the wrong thing. They called him Caveman and all that, but he couldn't forget that they were dangerous, too. They were all here for a reason. As Mr. Sir would say, this wasn't a Girl Scout camp. Stanley was thankful that there were no racial problems. X-Ray, Armpit, and Zero were black. He, Squid, and Zigzag were white. Magnet was Hispanic. On the lake they were all the same reddish brown color—the color of dirt. He looked up from his hole to see the water truck and its trailing dust cloud. His canteen was still almost a quarter full. He quickly drank it down, then took his place in line, behind Magnet and in front of Zero. The air was thick with heat, dust, and exhaust fumes. Mr. Sir filled their canteens. The truck pulled away. Stanley was back in his hole, shovel in hand, when he heard Magnet call out. "Anybody want some sunflower seeds?" Magnet was standing at ground level, holding a sack of seeds. He popped a handful into his mouth, chewed, and swallowed, shells and all. "Over here," called X-Ray. The sack looked to be about half full. Magnet rolled up the top, then tossed it to X-Ray. "How'd you get them without Mr. Sir seeing you?" asked Armpit. "I can't help it," Magnet said. He held both hands up, wiggled his fingers, and laughed. "My fingers are like little magnets."

The sack went from X-Ray to Armpit to Squid. "It's sure good to eat something that doesn't come from a can," said Armpit. Squid tossed the sack to Zigzag. Stanley knew it would come to him next. He didn't even want it. From the moment Magnet shouted, "Anybody want some sunflower seeds," he knew there would be trouble. Mr. Sir was sure to come back. And anyway, the salted shells would only make him thirsty. "Coming your way, Caveman," said Zigzag. "Airmail and special delivery . . ." It's unclear whether the seeds spilled before they got to Stanley or after he dropped the bag. It seemed to him that Zigzag hadn't rolled up the top before throwing it, and that was the reason he didn't catch it. But it all happened very fast. One moment the sack was flying through the air, and the next thing Stanley knew the sack was in his hole and the seeds were spilled across the dirt. "Oh, man!" said Magnet. "Sorry," Stanley said as he tried to sweep the seeds back into the sack. "I don't want to eat dirt," said X-Ray. Stanley didn't know what to do. "The truck's coming!" shouted Zigzag. Stanley looked up at the approaching dust cloud, then back down at the spilled seeds. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time. What else is new? He dug his shovel into his hole, and tried to turn over the dirt and bury the seeds. What he should have done, he realized

later, was knock one of his dirt piles back into his hole. But the idea of putting dirt into his hole was unthinkable. "Hello, Mr. Sir," said X-Ray. "Back so soon?" "It seems like you were just here," said Armpit. "Time flies when you're having fun," said Magnet. Stanley continued to turn the dirt over in his hole. "You Girl Scouts having a good time?" asked Mr. Sir. He moved from one hole to another. He kicked a dirt pile by Magnet's hole, then he moved toward Stanley. Stanley could see two seeds at the bottom of his hole. As he tried to cover them up, he unearthed a corner of the sack. "Well, what do you know, Caveman?" said Mr. Sir, standing over him. "It looks like you found something." Stanley didn't know what to do. "Dig it out," Mr. Sir said. "We'll take it to the Warden. Maybe she'll give you the rest of the day off." "It's not anything," Stanley muttered. "Let me be the judge of that," said Mr. Sir. Stanley reached down and pulled up the empty burlap sack. He tried to hand it to Mr. Sir, but he wouldn't take it. "So, tell me, Caveman," said Mr. Sir. "How did my sack of sunflower seeds get in your hole?"

"I stole it from your truck." "You did?" "Yes, Mr. Sir." "What happened to all the sunflower seeds?" "I ate them." "By yourself." "Yes, Mr. Sir." "Hey, Caveman!" shouted Armpit. "How come you didn't share any with us?" "That's cold, man," said X-Ray. "I thought you were our friend," said Magnet. Mr. Sir looked around from one boy to another, then back to Stanley. "We'll see what the Warden has to say about this. Let's go." Stanley climbed up out of his hole and followed Mr. Sir to the truck. He still held the empty sack. It felt good to sit inside the truck, out of the direct rays of the sun. Stanley was surprised he could feel good about anything at the moment, but he did. It felt good to sit down on a comfortable seat for a change. And as the truck bounced along the dirt, he was able to appreciate the air blowing through the open window onto his hot and sweaty face.

