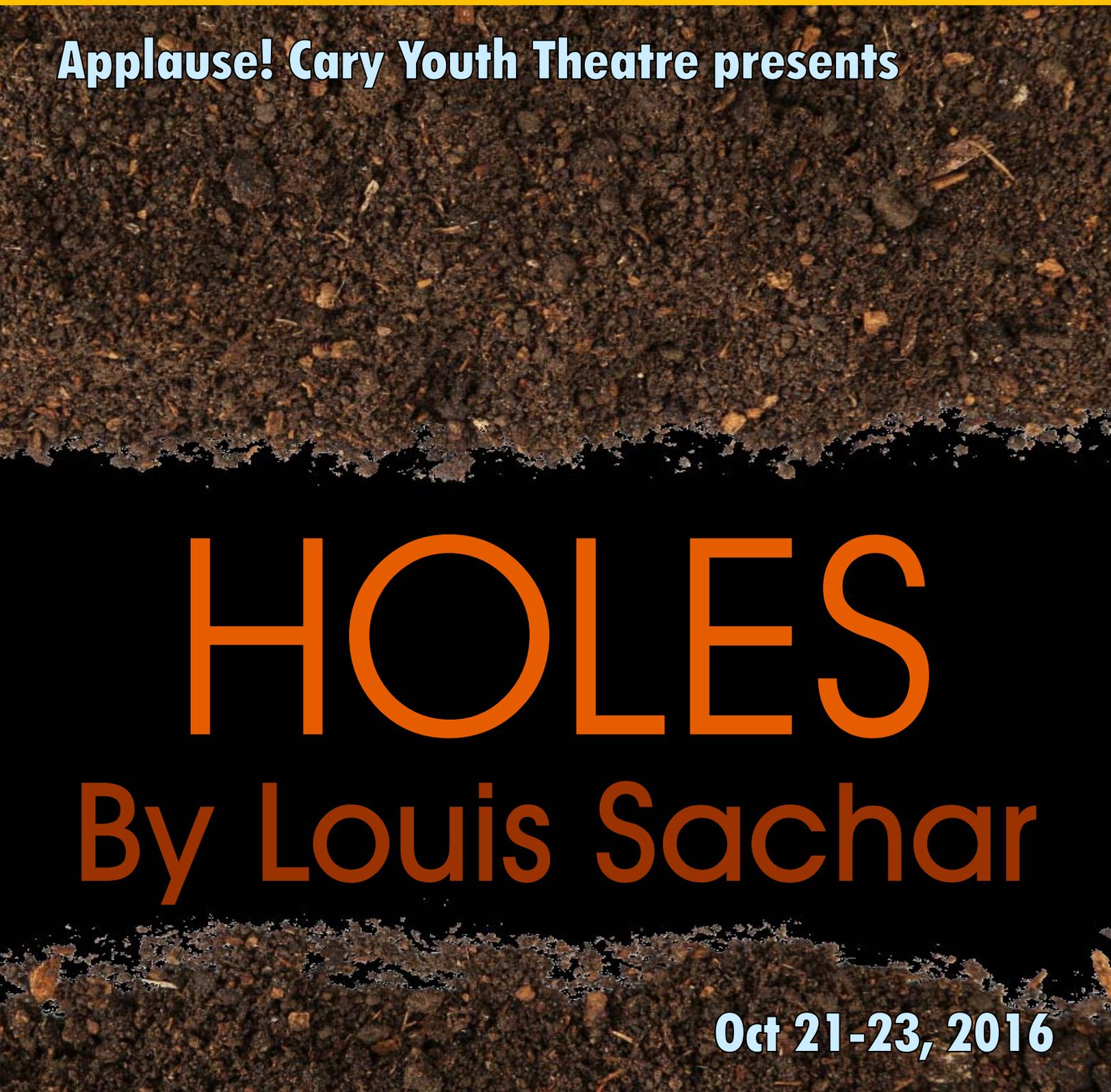


**Applause! Cary Youth Theatre presents**



# HOLES

By Louis Sachar

**Oct 21-23, 2016**

**Overall message of friendship, loyalty, and redemption; some adult themes of racism and violence may be upsetting for younger children.**

**Recommended for ages 9+.**

# PLAY SUMMARY:

Find vocabulary words in **bold** on the back of this guide.



Many years ago, Elya Yelnats, lovesick and desperate, broke a promise he made to an old gypsy fortune-teller. Bad luck has followed Elya's descendants ever since.

Years later, Elya's great-great-grandson Stanley is falsely accused of a crime and sent to Camp Green Lake, a juvenile detention center in the middle of the desert. Stanley and the other boys "build character" by digging large holes in the dirt every day. The work is exhausting and dangerous: water is scarce, and the desert is home to yellow-spotted lizards whose venom is strong enough to kill a person.

Stanley suspects the camp Warden has a hidden agenda. He's right – the Warden is obsessed with finding the long-lost treasure of infamous outlaw "Kissin' Kate" Barlow.

*Over a hundred years earlier in Green Lake, Texas, circa 1900...*

*Katherine Barlow falls in love with Sam, an onion seller. Sam is black and Katherine is white; in those days, their relationship was illegal. Threatened by irate townspeople, Katherine and Sam try to escape, but Sam is killed. Mad with grief, Katherine goes on a murdering, stealing rampage. Her treasure is supposedly buried in the desert, but has never been found.*

Back at Camp Green Lake, Stanley makes friends with the other boys, especially Zero. Zero eventually runs away, and Stanley finds him weak and dehydrated in the desert. They finally find water on a nearby mountaintop, and unexpectedly find a field of onions there, too.

After a few days, Stanley and Zero sneak back to Camp Green Lake to look for Kissin' Kate's treasure. They dig up a strange suitcase, but the Warden shows up and demands it. The Warden realizes Stanley and Zero are standing in a hole full of yellow-spotted lizards and decides to just wait for the lizards to bite (and kill) the boys.

A whirl of events follows: the origins of the suitcase are revealed, Stanley and Zero survive, and a surprising connection lifts the curse that has followed Stanley's family for generations.

## Activity: If Only

Stanley believes his family is cursed by his great-great-grandfather's broken promise, and wishes he could turn his luck around. What is something you wish would happen? What's standing in your way? How can you make your wish come true?

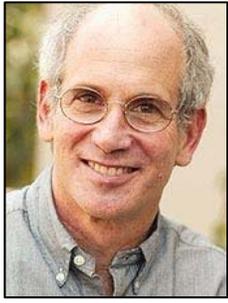
**I wish...**

**What's in my way?**

**What can I do?**

Learn more about conflicts on page 4. What kind of conflict is between you and your wish?

# LITERARY LINK:



Louis Sachar (born March 20, 1954) is an American writer of children's books, best known for the Wayside School series and Holes, which won the 1998 US National Book Award for Young People's Literature and the 1999 Newbery Medal. Ranked sixth among all-time children's novels in a survey published by *School Library Journal*, Holes has sold over 8 million copies worldwide, and was made into a major motion picture by Disney in 2003.

While in college at the University of California at Berkeley, Sachar began helping out at Hillside Elementary school in return for college credit. It became his favorite college class, a “life changing experience”.

After graduation, Sachar began working on Sideways Stories From Wayside School, a children's book set in an elementary school with supernatural elements. Although characters inspired by the students at Hillside Elementary, his wife and daughter, and even himself can be found in his writing, Sachar has said he draws very little from personal experience in his books.

Sideways Stories From Wayside School was published in 1978, and Sachar began to accumulate a fan base among young readers. His latest book, Fuzzy Mud, was published in 2015 to rave reviews.

## Activity: Everything's Connected

*Holes* intertwines present-day characters and events with **flashbacks** from the past. These connections help clarify what is happening in the play. What can you conclude when you match up these events?

### PAST

Kissin' Kate leaves a lipstick print on her victims.

Elya Yelnats breaks his promise to carry Madame Zeroni up a mountain.

Stanley's ancestor gets robbed by Kissin' Kate Barlow.

Sam sells onions as an herbal remedy against yellow-spotted lizards.

### PRESENT

Stanley and Zero eat onions for three days.

Stanley and Zero find an old suitcase buried in the desert.

Stanley carries Zero up the mountain.

Stanley finds a lipstick tube in the dirt.

### POSSIBLE CONCLUSIONS:

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# WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Dramatic conflict happens when a character faces a problem. Uncertainty about a conflict's outcome creates tension. A play can have multiple conflicts, which may resolve at any point during the play (or not at all).

## TYPES OF DRAMATIC CONFLICT:

**Man vs. Man:** A character's problem is with other characters; often protagonist vs antagonist.

**Man vs. Society:** The problem is with some element of society: school, a law, societal norms, etc.

**Man vs. Self:** The problem is internal, such as having to make a decision.

**Man vs. Nature:** The problem is a natural occurrence: storm, avalanche, bitter cold, etc.

**Man vs. Fate:** The problem seems uncontrollable, or is a strange/unbelievable coincidence.

**Man vs. Machine:** The problem is with technology or other man-made elements.

## CONFLICT ANALYSIS: MAN vs. SOCIETY IN HOLES:

One example of this type of conflict is the cruel treatment of Sam and Katherine in the town of Green Lake.

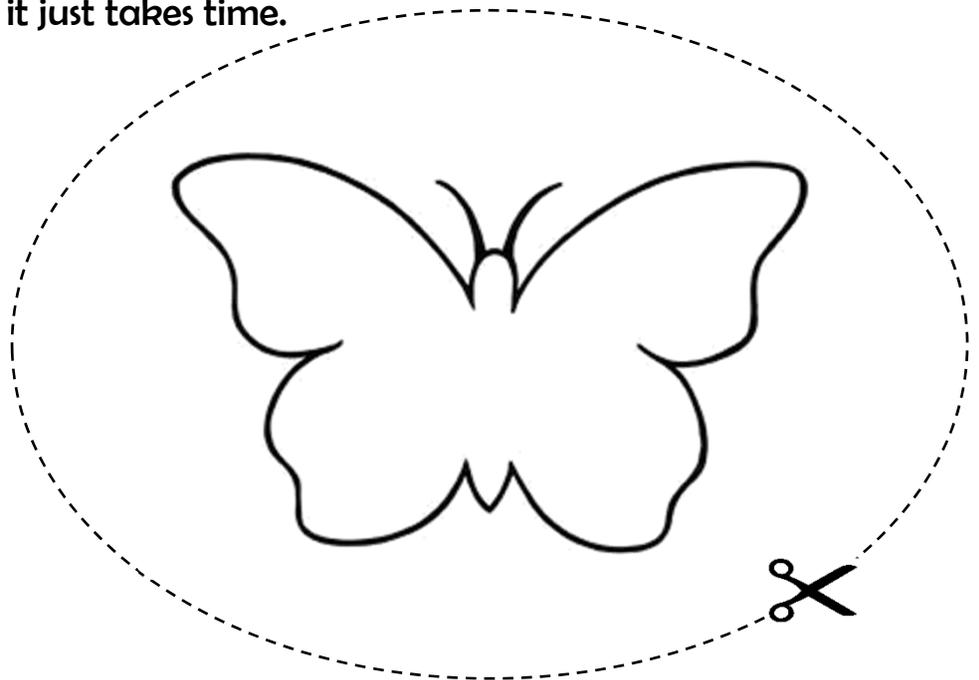
Many people in the late 1800s to mid-1900s shared similar racist attitudes. By 1900, new laws and old customs in the United States had created a segregated society that condemned Americans of color to second-class citizenship. Legislation known as Jim Crow laws separated people of color from whites in schools, housing, jobs, public gathering places, and more. It was also against the law for a black man to pursue a romantic relationship with a white woman. Black men who violated this law could be punished by being hanged, shot, or worse. The US Supreme Court ruled segregation illegal in 1954.

## Activity: Silver Lining

The rise of Kissin' Kate Barlow after Sam's death is one piece in the puzzle of events that helps Stanley lift his family's curse. It is possible for beautiful things to come out of difficult or unusual circumstances; sometimes it just takes time.

- ❖ Cut out this shape and fold it in half.
- ❖ Color the outside dully to look like a cocoon, but color the butterfly on the inside brightly.
- ❖ When the "cocoon" is opened, the butterfly is revealed.

*It can take up to a month for a butterfly to hatch from its cocoon!*



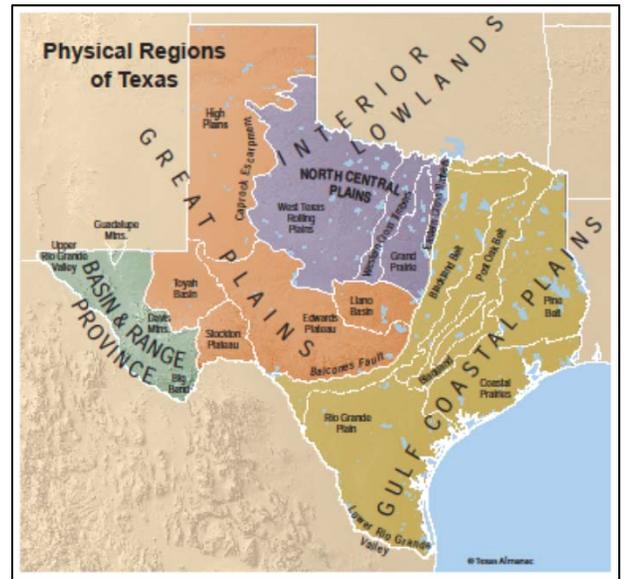
# COMMON GROUND:

The town of Green Lake, Texas in *Holes* was written as a fictional place, but there is a real Green Lake in Texas with a similar history. The real Green Lake is the largest freshwater lake in Texas. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a successful agricultural community nearby, but it was virtually abandoned after the Civil War.

In *Holes*, Camp Green Lake was once the largest lake in Texas but after a long drought, the lake dried up. The surrounding community, once thriving, became a ghost town.

The fictional Camp Green Lake is located in a desert biome, home to rattlesnakes, scorpions, and (also fictional) yellow-spotted lizards. Desert biomes usually receive less than 10 inches of rain each year.

The real Green Lake is in Texas's coastal plain region, which has no deserts or mountains. Texas's mountain and desert regions extend farther to the west, towards the New Mexico and Mexico borders.



## Activity: Strong Like a Cactus

Stanley and Zero were lucky to find water in the desert! Have you ever wondered how plants survive with scarce water?

**MATERIALS:** 3 wet paper towels ♦ cookie sheet ♦ paper clips ♦ large piece of waxed paper

- ✓ Lay one wet paper towel flat on the cookie sheet.
- ✓ Roll up the second wet paper towel, secure with paper clips, and place it on the cookie sheet.
- ✓ Stack the last paper towel on top of the waxed paper and roll the two pieces together. Secure with paper clips and place on the cookie sheet.
- ✓ After 24 hours, check the paper towels.

### What happened?

- ❖ Paper towel #1 was completely exposed to air, which probably caused all the water to evaporate.
- ❖ Rolling up paper towel #2 kept some parts of it from being exposed, so it should be a little bit damp.
- ❖ Paper towel #3 was completely protected from evaporation. It was probably still wet!

Many desert plants have a waxy coating on the outside of their stems and leaves that helps them store water and protects them from losing moisture in the hot sun and dry air of the desert.

# GLOSSARY:

Antagonist:	A character or group of characters who opposes a protagonist; often a villain. From the Greek word antagonistēs meaning “opponent, competitor, enemy, rival”.
Biome:	A large region that shares a similar type of climate and certain types of living things.
Coastal Plain:	An area of flat, low-lying land adjacent to a seacoast.
Flashback:	A scene in a movie, novel, etc., set in a time earlier than the main story.
Infamous:	Well-known for some bad quality or deed.
Newbery Medal:	Awarded annually by the Association for Library Service to Children to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children.
Protagonist:	The leading character, hero, or heroine of a drama or other literary work.

“It is better to take many small steps in the right direction than to make a great leap forward only to stumble backward.”

*Louis Sachar*

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