

Stanley – An Unlikely Hero?

At the beginning of *Holes*, Stanley Yelnats is an overweight bullied boy who lacks confidence. He is tormented by Derrick Dunne, who takes Stanley's belongings and throws them down the toilet. Even the teachers at his school embarrass him about his weight and they don't believe him when he tells them that he's being bullied. Later, at the camp, when Stanley's digging holes, he imagines Derrick being beaten up by the other boys and he feels that he's part of a friendship group for the first time.

Stanley thinks his family is cursed; his great-great-grandfather stole a pig from a lady with one leg and she put a curse on him and all his descendants. Stanley feels like he's always in the wrong place at the wrong time. In addition, Stanley's family are poor and live in a small apartment.

It is interesting that the other boys nickname Stanley 'Caveman' - perhaps this is because he is so big. The first sign that Stanley is heroic is when he writes to his mother. He is worried about her and wants her to think he's in a good place where he'll be OK. Letters tell her that the camp is like a summer camp and that activities like swimming in the lake happen. Stanley's kindness and concern for his mother's feelings are admirable.

Another admirable thing about Stanley, is the way he sees the potential in Zero; he quickly realises Zero is clever and he enjoys teaching him. Later, he is even willing to teach him without Zero digging his holes because he feels a sense of purpose in being a teacher and he sees Zero making progress.

Stanley is also heroic when he sets off to rescue Zero in the desert. He tries to steal the water truck but fails. Going into the desert puts him in great danger but he does it anyway.