

Year 6

Reading and Writing

Home Learning

Hi year 6,

This is **week three** of your home learning and it includes: reading activities, writing activities and a chance for you to be creative. You will need to complete the tasks in order. As always we want you to take care with your handwriting and presentation and are really looking forward to seeing some of the great learning we know you will complete this week so we can add this to our year 6 Star Learning page on the website.

There are quite a few chapters for you to read this week so don't be worried about the amount of pages in this pack – happy reading!

You will recognise our reading task sheets, learning objectives and steps to success. Make sure you use these to help you when working through each of the learning tasks.

Have fun with your learning!

Mrs Davie, Mrs Booth, Mrs McQuay and Mr Richards

Year 6 - Task one – reading focus (40 minutes)

Over the last two weeks, we have explored in detail the setting of Camp Green Lake. Now we are going to change our focus to investigate the main character – Stanley Yelnats.

We will need to use both our retrieval and interpreting skills to find out about this character

Retrieval – finding information from the text.

Inference/interpreting – reading between the lines to find the clues in a text.

Look at my example:

He didn't have any friends at home. He was overweight and the kids at his middle school often teased him about his size. Even his teachers sometimes made cruel comments without realizing it. On his last day of school, his math teacher, Mrs Bell, taught ratios. As an example, she chose the heaviest kid in the class and the lightest kid in the class, and had them weigh themselves. Stanley weighed three times as much as the other boy Mrs. Bell wrote the ratio on the board, 3:1, unaware of how much embarrassment she had caused both of them.

From this extract I can retrieve that:

- Stanley didn't have any friends,
- He was overweight and was bullied,
- Sometimes his teachers made cruel comments about him and humiliated him.

From this extract I can interpret/infer:

- Stanley did not enjoy school
- He was unfit and did not enjoy any sporting activities.

Task: What can you retrieve and interpret from the following extracts?

To use clues from the text to gather information about a character

Using the extracts, what do we know (retrieval) and what do we think we know (inference) about Stanley Yelnats – the main character.

Interpret



Stanley was sitting about ten rows back, handcuffed to his armrest His backpack lay on the seat next to him It contained his toothbrush, toothpaste, and a box of stationery his mother had given him He'd promised to write to her at least once a week.

When Stanley was younger he used to play with stuffed animals, and pretend the animals were at camp. Camp Fun and Games he called it. Sometimes he'd have them play soccer with a marble. Other times they'd run an obstacle course, or go bungee jumping off a table, tied to broken rubber bands. Now Stanley tried to pretend he was going to Camp Fun and Games. Maybe he'd make some friends, he thought. At least he'd get to swim in the lake.

his eyes. Stanley was not a bad kid. He was innocent of the crime for which he was convicted. He'd just been in the wrong place at the wrong time. It was all because of his no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather! He smiled. It was a family joke. Whenever anything went wrong, they always blamed Stanley's no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather.

Supposedly, he had a great-great-grandfather who had stolen a pig from a one-legged Gypsy, and she put a curse on him and all his descendants. Stanley and his parents didn't believe in curses, of course, but whenever anything went wrong, it felt good to be able to blame someone.

Stanley's father was also named Stanley Yelnats. Stanley's father's full name was Stanley Yelnats III. Our Stanley is Stanley Yelnats IV. Everyone in his family had always liked the fact that "Stanley Yelnats" was spelled the same frontward and backward. So they kept naming their sons Stanley. Stanley was an only child, as was every other Stanley Yelnats before him. All of them had something else in common. Despite their awful luck, they always remained hopeful. As Stanley's father liked to say, "I learn from failure." But perhaps that was part of the curse as well. If Stanley and his father weren't always hopeful, then it wouldn't hurt so much every time their hopes were crushed. "Not every Stanley Yelnats has been a failure," Stanley's mother often pointed out, whenever Stanley or his father became so discouraged that they actually started to believe in the curse.

The first Stanley Yelnats, Stanley's great-grandfather, had made a fortune in the stock market. "He couldn't have been too unlucky." At such times she neglected to mention the bad luck that befell the first Stanley Yelnats. He lost his entire fortune when he was moving from New York to California. His stagecoach was robbed by the outlaw Kissin' Kate Barlow. If it weren't for that, Stanley's family would now be living in a mansion on a beach in California. Instead, they were crammed in a tiny apartment that smelled of burning rubber and foot odor. If only, if only . . . The apartment smelled the way it did because Stanley's father was trying to invent a way to recycle old sneakers. "The first person who finds a use for old sneakers," he said, "will be a very rich man." It was this latest project that led to Stanley's arrest.

Is there anything else you can retrieve or interpret about Stanley Yelnats from chapters 1-4 ?

Read chapter 5 and 6 of the book Holes.



5

There were six large gray tents, and each one had a black letter on it: A, B, C, D, E, or F. The first five tents were for the campers. The counselors slept in F. Stanley was assigned to D tent. Mr. Pendanski was his counselor.

"My name is easy to remember," said Mr. Pendanski as he shook hands with Stanley just outside the tent. "Three easy words: pen, dance, key." Mr. Sir returned to the office. Mr. Pendanski was younger than Mr. Sir, and not nearly as scary looking. The top of his head was shaved so close it was almost bald, but his face was covered in a thick curly black beard. His nose was badly sunburned. "Mr. Sir isn't really so bad," said Mr. Pendanski. "He's just been in a bad mood ever since he quit smoking. The person you've got to worry about is the Warden. There's really only one rule at Camp Green Lake: Don't upset the Warden." Stanley nodded, as if he understood. "I want you to know, Stanley, that I respect you," Mr. Pendanski said. "I understand you've made some bad mistakes in your life. Otherwise you wouldn't be here. But everyone makes mistakes. You may have done some bad things, but that doesn't mean you're a bad kid." Stanley nodded.

It seemed pointless to try and tell his counselor that he was innocent. He figured that everyone probably said that. He didn't want Mr. Pen-dance-key to think he had a bad attitude. "I'm going to help you turn your life around," said his counselor. "But you're going to have to help, too. Can I count on your help?"

"Yes, sir," Stanley said.

Mr. Pendanski said, "Good," and patted Stanley on the back. Two boys, each carrying a shovel, were coming across the compound. Mr. Pendanski called to them. "Rex! Alan! I want you to come say hello to Stanley. He's the newest member of our team." The boys glanced wearily at Stanley. They were dripping with sweat, and their faces were so dirty that it took Stanley a moment to notice that one kid was white and the other black. "What happened to Barf Bag?" asked the black kid.

"Lewis is still in the hospital," said Mr. Pendanski. "He won't be returning." He told the boys to come shake Stanley's hand and introduce themselves, "like gentlemen."

"Hi," the white kid grunted.

"That's Alan," said Mr. Pendanski.

"My name's not Alan," the boy said. "It's Squid. And that's X-Ray."

"Hey," said X-Ray. He smiled and shook Stanley's hand. He wore glasses, but they were so dirty that Stanley wondered how he could see out of them. Mr. Pendanski told Alan to go to the Rec Hall and bring the other boys to meet Stanley. Then he led him inside the tent.

There were seven cots, each one less than two feet from the one next to it. "Which was Lewis's cot?" Mr. Pendanski asked.

"Barf Bag slept here," said X-Ray, kicking at one of the beds.

"All right, Stanley, that'll be yours," said Mr. Pendanski. Stanley looked at the cot and nodded. He wasn't particularly thrilled about sleeping in the same cot that had been used by somebody named Barf Bag.

Seven crates were stacked in two piles at one side of the tent. The open end of the crates faced outward. Stanley put his backpack, change of clothes, and towel in what used to be Barf Bag's crate. It was at the bottom of the stack that had three in it. Squid returned with four other boys. The first three were introduced by Mr. Pendanski as Jose, Theodore, and Ricky. They called themselves Magnet, Armpit, and Zigzag. "They all have nicknames," explained Mr. Pendanski. "However, I prefer to use the names their parents gave them— the names that society will recognize them by when they return to become useful and hardworking members of society."

"It ain't just a nickname," X-Ray told Mr. Pendanski. He tapped the rim of his glasses. "I can see inside you, Mom. You've got a big fat heart." The last boy either didn't have a real name or else he didn't have a nickname. Both Mr. Pendanski and X-Ray called him Zero. "You know why his name's Zero?" asked Mr. Pendanski. "Because there's nothing inside his head." He smiled and playfully shook Zero's shoulder. Zero said nothing.

"And that's Mom!" a boy said.

Mr. Pendanski smiled at him. "If it makes you feel better to call me Mom, Theodore, go ahead and call me Mom." He turned to Stanley. "If you have questions, Theodore will help you. You got that, Theodore. I'm depending on you." Theodore spit a thin line of saliva between his teeth, causing some of the other boys to complain about the need to keep their "home" sanitary. "You were all new here once," said Mr. Pendanski, "and you all know what it feels like. I'm counting on every one of you to help Stanley."

Stanley looked at the ground. Mr. Pendanski left the tent, and soon the other boys began to file out as well, taking their towels and change of clothes with them. Stanley was relieved to be left alone, but he was so thirsty he felt as if he would die if he didn't get something to drink soon.

"Hey, uh, Theodore," he said, going after him. "Do you know where I can fill my canteen?" Theodore whirled and grabbed Stanley by his collar.

"My name's not Thee-o-dore," he said. "It's Armpit." He threw Stanley to the ground. Stanley stared up at him, terrified. "There's a water spigot on the wall of the shower stall."

"Thanks . . . Armpit," said Stanley. As he watched the boy turn and walk away, he couldn't for the life of him figure out why anyone would want to be called Armpit. In a way, it made him feel a little better about having to sleep in a cot that had been used by somebody named Barf Bag. Maybe it was a term of respect.

6

Stanley took a shower— if you could call it that, ate dinner— if you could call it that, and went to bed— if you could call his smelly and scratchy cot a bed. Because of the scarcity of water, each camper was only allowed a four-minute shower. It took Stanley nearly that long to get used to the cold water. There was no knob for hot water. He kept stepping into, then jumping back from, the spray, until the water shut off automatically. He never managed to use his bar of soap, which was just as well, because he wouldn't have had time to rinse off the suds.

Dinner was some kind of stewed meat and vegetables. The meat was brown and the vegetables had once been green. Everything tasted pretty much the same. He ate it all, and used his slice of white bread to mop up the juice. Stanley had never been one to leave food

on his plate, no matter how it tasted. "What'd you do?" one of the campers asked him. At first Stanley didn't know what he meant. "They sent you here for a reason."

"Oh," he realized. "I stole a pair of sneakers." The other boys thought that was funny. Stanley wasn't sure why. Maybe because their crimes were a lot worse than stealing shoes.

"From a store, or-were they on someone's feet?" asked Squid.

"Uh, neither," Stanley answered. "They belonged to Clyde Livingston." Nobody believed him.

"Sweet Feet?" said X-Ray.

"Yeah, right!" "No way," said Squid.

Now, as Stanley lay on his cot, he thought it was kind of funny in a way. Nobody had believed him when he said he was innocent. Now, when he said he stole them, nobody believed him either. Clyde "Sweet Feet" Livingston was a famous baseball player. He'd led the American League in stolen bases over the last three years. He was also the only player in history to ever hit four triples in one game. Stanley had a poster of him hanging on the wall of his bedroom. He used to have the poster anyway. He didn't know where it was now. It had been taken by the police and was used as evidence of his guilt in the courtroom. Clyde Livingston also came to court. In spite of everything, when Stanley found out that Sweet Feet was going to be there, he was actually excited about the prospect of meeting his hero. Clyde Livingston testified that they were his sneakers and that he had donated them to help raise money for the homeless shelter. He said he couldn't imagine what kind of horrible person would steal from homeless children. That was the worst part for Stanley. His hero thought he was a no-good-dirty-rotten thief.

As Stanley tried to turn over on his cot, he was afraid it was going to collapse under all his weight. He barely fit in it. When he finally managed to roll over on his stomach, the smell was so bad that he had to turn over again and try sleeping on his back. The cot smelled like sour milk.

Though it was night, the air was still very warm. Armpit was snoring two cots away.

Back at school, a bully named Derrick Dunne used to torment Stanley. The teachers never took Stanley's complaints seriously, because Derrick was so much smaller than Stanley. Some teachers even seemed to find it amusing that a little kid like Derrick could pick on someone as big as Stanley.

On the day Stanley was arrested, Derrick had taken Stanley's notebook and, after a long game of come-and-get-it, finally dropped it in the toilet in the boys' restroom. By the time Stanley retrieved it, he had missed his bus and had to walk home. It was while he was walking home, carrying his wet notebook, with the prospect of having to copy the ruined pages, that the sneakers fell from the sky. "I was walking home and the sneakers fell from the sky," he had told the judge. "One hit me on the head." It had hurt, too. They hadn't exactly fallen from the sky. He had just walked out from under a freeway overpass when the shoe hit him on the head. Stanley took it as some kind of sign. His father had been trying to figure out a way to recycle old sneakers, and suddenly a pair of sneakers fell on top of him, seemingly out of nowhere, like a gift from God. Naturally, he had no way of knowing they belonged to Clyde Livingston.

In fact, the shoes were anything but sweet. Whoever had worn them had had a bad case of foot odor. Stanley couldn't help but think that there was something special about the shoes, that they would somehow provide the key to his father's invention. It was too much of a coincidence to be a mere accident. Stanley had felt like he was holding destiny's shoes. He ran. Thinking back now, he wasn't sure why he ran. Maybe he was in a hurry to bring the

shoes to his father, or maybe he was trying to run away from his miserable and humiliating day at school. A patrol car pulled alongside him. A policeman asked him why he was running. Then he took the shoes and made a call on his radio.

Shortly thereafter, Stanley was arrested. It turned out the sneakers had been stolen from a display at the homeless shelter. That evening rich people were going to come to the shelter and pay a hundred dollars to eat the food that the poor people ate every day for free. Clyde Livingston, who had once lived at the shelter when he was younger, was going to speak and sign autographs. His shoes would be auctioned, and it was expected that they would sell for over five thousand dollars. All the money would go to help the homeless.

Because of the baseball schedule, Stanley's trial was delayed several months. His parents couldn't afford a lawyer. "You don't need a lawyer," his mother had said. "Just tell the truth." Stanley told the truth, but perhaps it would have been better if he had lied a little. He could have said he found the shoes in the street. No one believed they fell from the sky. It wasn't destiny, he realized. It was his no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather!

The judge called Stanley's crime despicable. "The shoes were valued at over five thousand dollars. It was money that would provide food and shelter for the homeless. And you stole that from them, just so you could have a souvenir." The judge said that there was an opening at Camp Green Lake, and he suggested that the discipline of the camp might improve Stanley's character. It was either that or jail. Stanley's parents asked if they could have some time to find out more about Camp Green Lake, but the judge advised them to make a quick decision. "Vacancies don't last long at Camp Green Lake."

To organise information about a character

Using all the information you have retrieved and interpreted create a detailed fact page about Stanley Yelnats.

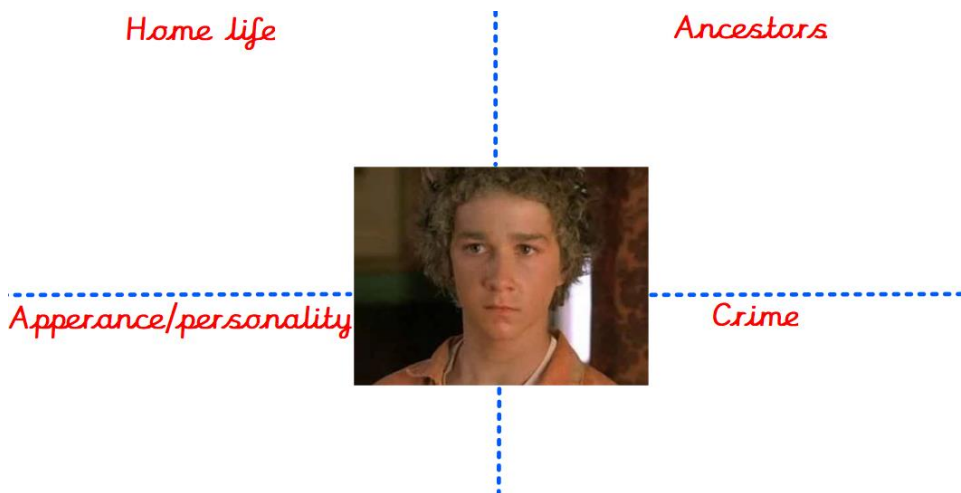
Interpret



After reading the first 6 chapters of Holes, you should now know a lot about the character of Stanley Yelnats.

Task:

1. Divided a double page into four sections and write the following headings, like this:



2. Stick your image of Stanley yelnats in the middle of the page,



3. Organise and record everything you have retrieved and interpreted about Stanley from the last 6 chapters under these headings.

Year 6 - Task four – reading focus (40 minutes)

Stanley is not the only character we have been introduced to in this book.

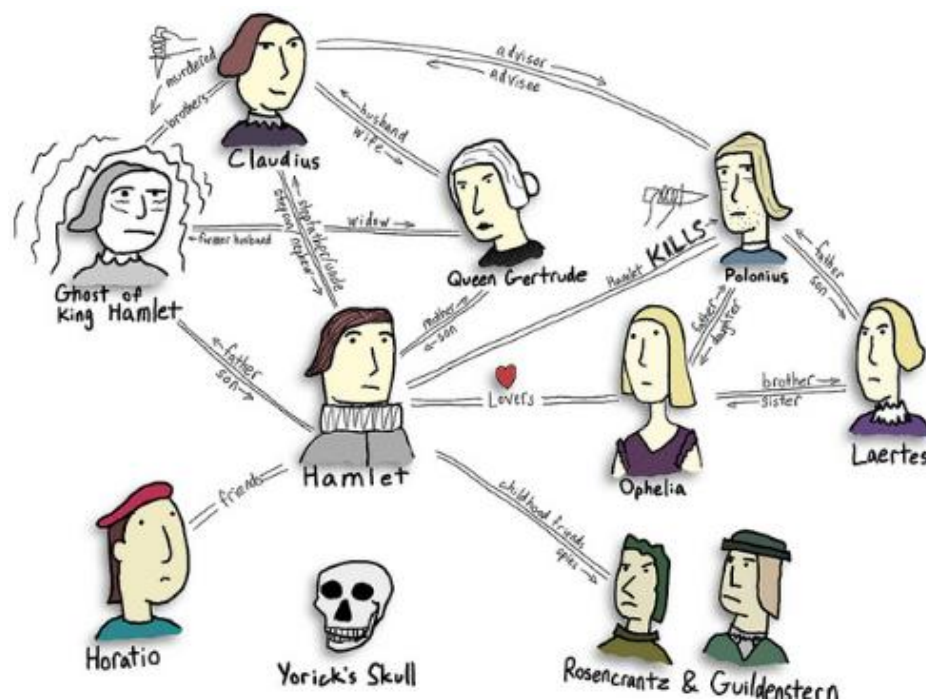
Task 1:

Make a list of all the characters Stanley has a connection with across the first 6 chapters.

- Stanley's mum
- Stanley's Dad
- Mr Sir

Task 2:

Now we have a list of all the different characters, we need to think about how they are all linked to Stanley. To do this we are going to create a character web.



A character web has the main character in the middle.

In this example from the Shakespearian play Hamlet – Hamlet (the main character) is in the centre and all the other characters he has contact with are spread across the rest of the page.

The lines from Hamlet to the different characters tell us how they are

connected. For example, Hamlet and Queen Gertrude are linked as they are mother and son.

Task 3

Place Stanley in the middle of your page – use a double page if you prefer- and create a character web. How does Stanley know these characters? How are they linked? Can you add extra detail by explaining Stanley's opinions about these different characters? How can you make your character web look interesting? Can you add images? Colour?

TLHT create a character web

Using chapters 1-6, create an interesting and engaging character web about all the other people Stanley has met and has links to.

Retrieve

Read chapter 7, 8 and 9 of the book Holes and add to your previous tasks.



7

The shovel felt heavy in Stanley's soft, fleshy hands. He tried to jam it into the earth, but the blade banged against the ground and bounced off without making a dent. The vibrations ran up the shaft of the shovel and into Stanley's wrists, making his bones rattle.

It was still dark. The only light came from the moon and the stars, more stars than Stanley had ever seen before. It seemed he had only just gotten to sleep when Mr. Pendanski came in and woke everyone up.

Using all his might, he brought the shovel back down onto the dry lake bed. The force stung his hands but made no impression on the earth. He wondered if he had a defective shovel. He glanced at Zero, about fifteen feet away, who scooped out a shovelful of dirt and dumped it on a pile that was already almost a foot tall.

For breakfast they'd been served some kind of lukewarm cereal. The best part was the orange juice. They each got a pint carton. The cereal actually didn't taste too bad, but it had smelled just like his cot. Then they filled their canteens, got their shovels, and were marched out across the lake. Each group was assigned a different area. The shovels were kept in a shed near the showers. They all looked the same to Stanley, although X-Ray had his own special shovel, which no one else was allowed to use. X-Ray claimed it was shorter than the others, but if it was, it was only by a fraction of an inch. The shovels were five feet long, from the tip of the steel blade to the end of the wooden shaft. Stanley's hole would have to be as deep as his shovel, and he'd have to be able to lay the shovel flat across the bottom in any direction. That was why X-Ray wanted the shortest shovel.

The lake was so full of holes and mounds that it reminded Stanley of pictures he'd seen of the moon. "If you find anything interesting or unusual," Mr. Pendanski had told him, "you should report it either to me or Mr. Sir when we come around with the water truck. If the Warden likes what you found, you'll get the rest of the day off."

"What are we supposed to be looking for?" Stanley asked him.

"You're not looking for anything. You're digging to build character. It's just if you find anything, the Warden would like to know about it." He glanced helplessly at his shovel. It wasn't defective. He was defective. He noticed a thin crack in the ground. He placed the point of his shovel on top of it, then jumped on the back of the blade with both feet. The shovel sank a few inches into the packed earth. He smiled. For once in his life it paid to be overweight. He leaned on the shaft and pried up his first shovelful of dirt, then dumped it off to the side. Only ten million more to go, he thought, then placed the shovel back in the crack and jumped on it again. He unearthed several shovelfuls of dirt in this manner, before it occurred to him that he was dumping his dirt within the perimeter of his hole. He laid his shovel flat on the ground and marked where the edges of his hole would be. Five feet was awfully wide. He moved the dirt he'd already dug up out past his mark. He took a drink from his canteen. Five feet would be awfully deep, too.

The digging got easier after a while. The ground was hardest at the surface, where the sun had baked a crust about eight inches deep. Beneath that, the earth was looser. But by the

time Stanley broke past the crust, a blister had formed in the middle of his right thumb, and it hurt to hold the shovel.

Stanley's great-great-grandfather was named Elya Yelnats. He was born in Latvia. When he was fifteen years old he fell in love with Myra Menke. (He didn't know he was Stanley's great-great-grandfather.) Myra Menke was fourteen. She would turn fifteen in two months, at which time her father had decided she should be married. Elya went to her father to ask for her hand, but so did Igor Barkov, the pig farmer. Igor was fifty-seven years old. He had a red nose and fat puffy cheeks. "I will trade you my fattest pig for your daughter," Igor offered. "And what have you got?" Myra's father asked Elya.

"A heart full of love," said Elya.

"I'd rather have a fat pig," said Myra's father.

Desperate, Elya went to see Madame Zeroni, an old Egyptian woman who lived on the edge of town. He had become friends with her, though she was quite a bit older than him. She was even older than Igor Barkov. The other boys of his village liked to mud wrestle. Elya preferred visiting Madame Zeroni and listening to her many stories. Madame Zeroni had dark skin and a very wide mouth. When she looked at you, her eyes seemed to expand, and you felt like she was looking right through you.

"Elya, what's wrong?" she asked, before he even told her he was upset. She was sitting in a homemade wheelchair. She had no left foot. Her leg stopped at her ankle. "I'm in love with Myra Menke," Elya confessed. "But Igor Barkov has offered to trade his fattest pig for her. I can't compete with that."

"Good," said Madame Zeroni. "You're too young to get married. You've got your whole life ahead of you."

"But I love Myra."

"Myra's head is as empty as a flowerpot."

"But she's beautiful."

"So is a flowerpot. Can she push a plow? Can she milk a goat? No, she is too delicate. Can she have an intelligent conversation? No, she is silly and foolish. Will she take care of you when you are sick? No, she is spoiled and will only want you to take care of her. So, she is beautiful. So what? Ptuui!" Madame Zeroni spat on the dirt. She told Elya that he should go to America. "Like my son. That's where your future lies. Not with Myra Menke." But Elya would hear none of that. He was fifteen, and all he could see was Myra's shallow beauty.

Madame Zeroni hated to see Elya so forlorn. Against her better judgment, she agreed to help him. "It just so happens, my sow gave birth to a litter of piglets yesterday," she said. "There is one little runt whom she won't suckle. You may have him. He would die anyway." Madame Zeroni led Elya around the back of her house where she kept her pigs. Elya took the tiny piglet, but he didn't see what good it would do him. It wasn't much bigger than a rat. "He'll grow," Madame Zeroni assured him. "Do you see that mountain on the edge of the forest?" "Yes," said Elya.

"On the top of the mountain there is a stream where the water runs uphill. You must carry the piglet every day to the top of the mountain and let it drink from the stream. As it drinks, you are to sing to him." She taught Elya a special song to sing to the pig. "On the day of Myra's fifteenth birthday, you should carry the pig up the mountain for the last time. Then take it directly to Myra's father. It will be fatter than any of Igor's pigs."

"If it is that big and fat," asked Elya, "how will I be able to carry it up the mountain?"

"The piglet is not too heavy for you now, is it?" asked Madame Zeroni.

"Of course not," said Elya.

"Do you think it will be too heavy for you tomorrow?"

"No."

"Every day you will carry the pig up the mountain. It will get a little bigger, but you will get a little stronger. After you give the pig to Myra's father, I want you to do one more thing for me."

"Anything," said Elya.

"I want you to carry me up the mountain. I want to drink from the stream, and I want you to sing the song to me." Elya promised he would. Madame Zeroni warned that if he failed to do this, he and his descendants would be doomed for all of eternity.

At the time, Elya thought nothing of the curse. He was just a fifteen-year-old kid, and "eternity" didn't seem much longer than a week from Tuesday. Besides, he liked Madame Zeroni and would be glad to carry her up the mountain. He would have done it right then and there, but he wasn't yet strong enough.

Stanley was still digging. His hole was about three feet deep, but only in the center. It sloped upward to the edges. The sun had only just come up over the horizon, but he already could feel its hot rays against his face. As he reached down to pick up his canteen, he felt a sudden rush of dizziness and put his hands on his knees to steady himself. For a moment he was afraid he would throw up, but the moment passed. He drank the last drop of water from his canteen. He had blisters on every one of his fingers, and one in the center of each palm.

Everyone else's hole was a lot deeper than his. He couldn't actually see their holes but could tell by the size of their dirt piles. He saw a cloud of dust moving across the wasteland and noticed that the other boys had stopped digging and were watching it, too. The dirt cloud moved closer, and he could see that it trailed behind a red pickup truck. The truck stopped near where they were digging, and the boys lined up behind it, X-Ray in front, Zero at the rear. Stanley got in line behind Zero. Mr. Sir filled each of their canteens from a tank of water in the bed of the pickup. As he took Stanley's canteen from him, he said, "This isn't the Girl Scouts, is it?" Stanley raised and lowered one shoulder. Mr. Sir followed Stanley back to his hole to see how he was doing. "You better get with it," he said. "Or else you're going to be digging in the hottest part of the day." He popped some sunflower seeds into his mouth, deftly removed the shells with his teeth, and spat them into Stanley's hole.

Every day Elya carried the little piglet up the mountain and sang to it as it drank from the stream. As the pig grew fatter, Elya grew stronger. On the day of Myra's fifteenth birthday, Elya's pig weighed over fifty stones. Madame Zeroni had told him to carry the pig up the mountain on that day as well, but Elya didn't want to present himself to Myra smelling like a pig. Instead, he took a bath. It was his second bath in less than a week. Then he led the pig to Myra's. Igor Barkov was there with his pig as well. "These are two of the finest pigs I've ever seen," Myra's father declared. He was also impressed with Elya, who seemed to have grown bigger and stronger in the last two months. "I used to think you were a good-for-nothing book reader," he said. "But I see now you could be an excellent mud wrestler."

"May I marry your daughter?" Elya boldly asked.

"First, I must weigh the pigs."

Alas, poor Elya should have carried his pig up the mountain one last time. The two pigs weighed exactly the same.

Stanley's blisters had ripped open, and new blisters formed. He kept changing his grip on the shovel to try to avoid the pain. Finally, he removed his cap and held it between the shaft of his shovel and his raw hands. This helped, but digging was harder because the cap would slip and slide. The sun beat down on his unprotected head and neck. Though he tried to convince himself otherwise, he'd been aware for a while that his piles of dirt were too close to his hole. The piles were outside his five-foot circle, but he could see he was going to run out of room. Still, he pretended otherwise and kept adding more dirt to the piles, piles that he would eventually have to move.

The problem was that when the dirt was in the ground, it was compacted. It expanded when it was excavated. The piles were a lot bigger than his hole was deep. It was either now or later. Reluctantly, he climbed up out of his hole, and once again dug his shovel into his previously dug dirt.

Myra's father got down on his hands and knees and closely examined each pig, tail to snout. "Those are two of the finest pigs I have ever seen," he said at last. "How am I to decide? I have only one daughter."

"Why not let Myra decide?" suggested Elya.

"That's preposterous!" exclaimed Igor, expelling saliva as he spoke.

"Myra is just an empty-headed girl," said her father. "How can she possibly decide, when I, her father, can't?"

"She knows how she feels in her heart," said Elya. Myra's father rubbed his chin. Then he laughed and said, "Why not?" He slapped Elya on the back. "It doesn't matter to me. A pig is a pig."

He summoned his daughter. Elya blushed when Myra entered the room. "Good afternoon, Myra," he said. She looked at him.

"You're Elya, right?" she asked.

"Myra," said her father.

"Elya and Igor have each offered a pig for your hand in marriage. It doesn't matter to me. A pig is a pig. So I will let you make the choice. Whom do you wish to marry?" Myra looked confused.

"You want me to decide?"

"That's right, my blossom," said her father.

"Gee, I don't know," said Myra. "Which pig weighs more?"

"They both weigh the same," said her father. "Golly," said Myra, "I guess I choose Elya— No, Igor. No, Elya. No, Igor. Oh, I know! I'll think of a number between one and ten. I'll marry whoever guesses the closest number. Okay, I'm ready."

"Ten," guessed Igor. Elya said nothing.

"Elya?" said Myra. "What number do you guess?" Elya didn't pick a number.

"Marry Igor," he muttered. "You can keep my pig as a wedding present."

The next time the water truck came it was driven by Mr. Pendanski, who also brought sack lunches. Stanley sat with his back against a pile of dirt and ate. He had a baloney sandwich, potato chips, and a large chocolate-chip cookie. "How you doin'?" asked Magnet.

"Not real good," said Stanley.

"Well, the first hole's the hardest," Magnet said. Stanley took a long, deep breath. He couldn't afford to dawdle. He was way behind the others, and the sun just kept getting hotter. It wasn't even noon yet. But he didn't know if he had the strength to stand up. He thought about quitting. He wondered what they would do to him. What could they do to him? His clothes were soaked with sweat. In school he had learned that sweating was good for you. It was nature's way of keeping you cool. So why was he so hot?

Using his shovel for support, he managed to get to his feet. "Where are we supposed to go to the bathroom?" he asked Magnet. Magnet gestured with his arms to the great expanse around them. "Pick a hole, any hole," he said. Stanley staggered across the lake, almost falling over a dirt pile. Behind him he heard Magnet say, "But first make sure nothing's living in it."

After leaving Myra's house, Elya wandered aimlessly through the town, until he found himself down by the wharf. He sat on the edge of a pier and stared down into the cold, black water. He could not understand how Myra had trouble deciding between him and Igor. He thought she loved him. Even if she didn't love him, couldn't she see what a foul person Igor was? It was like Madame Zeroni had said. Her head was as empty as a flowerpot. Some men were gathering on another dock, and he went to see what was going on.

A sign read: DECK HANDS WANTED FREE PASSAGE TO AMERICA

He had no sailing experience, but the ship's captain signed him aboard. The captain could see that Elya was a man of great strength. Not everybody could carry a full-grown pig up the side of a mountain. It wasn't until the ship had cleared the harbor and was heading out across the Atlantic that he suddenly remembered his promise to carry Madame Zeroni up the mountain. He felt terrible. He wasn't afraid of the curse. He thought that was a lot of nonsense. He felt bad because he knew Madame Zeroni had wanted to drink from the stream before she died.

Zero was the smallest kid in Group D, but he was the first one to finish digging. "You're finished?" Stanley asked enviously. Zero said nothing. Stanley walked to Zero's hole and watched him measure it with his shovel. The top of his hole was a perfect circle, and the sides were smooth and steep. Not one dirt clod more than necessary had been removed from the earth. Zero pulled himself up to the surface. He didn't even smile. He looked down at his perfectly dug hole, spat in it, then turned and headed back to the camp compound. "Zero's one weird dude," said Zigzag.

Stanley would have laughed, but he didn't have the strength. Zigzag had to be the "weirdest dude" Stanley had ever seen. He had a long skinny neck, and a big round head with wild frizzy blond hair that stuck out in all directions. His head seemed to bob up and down on his neck, like it was on a spring.

Armpit was the second one to finish digging. He also spat into his hole before heading back to the camp compound. One by one, Stanley watched each of the boys spit into his hole and return to the camp compound. Stanley kept digging. His hole was almost up to his shoulders, although it was hard to tell exactly where ground level was because his dirt piles completely surrounded the hole. The deeper he got, the harder it was to raise the dirt up and out of the hole. Once again, he realized, he was going to have to move the piles. His cap was stained with blood from his hands. He felt like he was digging his own grave.

In America, Elya learned to speak English. He fell in love with a woman named Sarah Miller. She could push a plow, milk a goat, and, most important, think for herself. She and Elya often stayed up half the night talking and laughing together. Their life was not easy. Elya worked hard, but bad luck seemed to follow him everywhere. He always seemed to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. He remembered Madame Zeroni telling him that she had a son in America. Elya was forever looking for him. He'd walk up to complete strangers and ask

if they knew someone named Zeroni, or had ever heard of anyone named Zeroni. No one did. Elya wasn't sure what he'd do if he ever found Madame Zeroni's son anyway. Carry him up a mountain and sing the pig lullaby to him?

After his barn was struck by lightning for the third time, he told Sarah about his broken promise to Madame Zeroni. "I'm worse than a pig thief," he said. "You should leave me and find someone who isn't cursed."

"I'm not leaving you," said Sarah.

"But I want you to do one thing for me."

"Anything," said Elya. Sarah smiled.

"Sing me the pig lullaby."

He sang it for her. Her eyes sparkled. "That's so pretty. What does it mean?" Elya tried his best to translate it from Latvian into English, but it wasn't the same. "It rhymes in Latvian," he told her.

"I could tell," said Sarah.

A year later their child was born. Sarah named him Stanley because she noticed that "Stanley" was "Yelnats" spelled backward. Sarah changed the words of the pig lullaby so that they rhymed, and every night she sang it to little Stanley.

"If only, if only," the woodpecker sighs, The bark on the tree was as soft as the skies. While the wolf waits below, hungry and lonely, Crying to the moo— oo— oon, If only, if only."

Stanley's hole was as deep as his shovel, but not quite wide enough on the bottom. He grimaced as he sliced off a chunk of dirt, then raised it up and flung it onto a pile. He laid his shovel back down on the bottom of his hole and, to his surprise, it fit. He rotated it and only had to chip off a few chunks of dirt, here and there, before it could lie flat across his hole in every direction.

He heard the water truck approaching, and felt a strange sense of pride at being able to show Mr. Sir, or Mr. Pendanski, that he had dug his first hole. He put his hands on the rim and tried to pull himself up. He couldn't do it. His arms were too weak to lift his heavy body. He used his legs to help, but he just didn't have any strength. He was trapped in his hole. It was almost funny, but he wasn't in the mood to laugh. "Stanley!" he heard Mr. Pendanski call. Using his shovel, he dug two footholds in the hole wall. He climbed out to see Mr. Pendanski walking over to him. "I was afraid you'd fainted," Mr. Pendanski said. "You wouldn't have been the first."

"I'm finished," Stanley said, putting his blood-spotted cap back on his head.

"All right!" said Mr. Pendanski, raising his hand for a high five, but Stanley ignored it. He didn't have the strength. Mr. Pendanski lowered his hand and looked down at Stanley's hole. "Well done," he said. "You want a ride back?" Stanley shook his head.

"I'll walk."

Mr. Pendanski climbed back into the truck without filling Stanley's canteen. Stanley waited for him to drive away, then took another look at his hole. He knew it was nothing to be proud of, but he felt proud nonetheless. He sucked up his last bit of saliva and spat.

A lot of people don't believe in curses. A lot of people don't believe in yellow-spotted lizards either, but if one bites you, it doesn't make a difference whether you believe in it or not. Actually, it is kind of odd that scientists named the lizard after its yellow spots.

Each lizard has exactly eleven yellow spots, but the spots are hard to see on its yellow-green body. The lizard is from six to ten inches long and has big red eyes. In truth, its eyes are yellow, and it is the skin around the eyes which is red, but everyone always speaks of its red eyes. It also has black teeth and a milky white tongue. Looking at one, you would have thought that it should have been named a "red-eyed" lizard, or a "black-toothed" lizard, or perhaps a "white-tongued" lizard. If you've ever been close enough to see the yellow spots, you are probably dead.

The yellow-spotted lizards like to live in holes, which offer shade from the sun and protection from predatory birds. Up to twenty lizards may live in one hole. They have strong, powerful legs, and can leap out of very deep holes to attack their prey. They eat small animals, insects, certain cactus thorns, and the shells of sunflower seeds.

9

Stanley stood in the shower and let the cold water pour over his hot and sore body. It was four minutes of heaven. For the second day in a row he didn't use soap. He was too tired. There was no roof over the shower building, and the walls were raised up six inches off the ground except in the corners. There was no drain in the floor. The water ran out under the walls and evaporated quickly in the sun.

He put on his clean set of orange clothes. He returned to his tent, put his duty clothes in his crate, got out his pen and box of stationery, and headed to the rec room. A sign on the door said WRECK ROOM.

Nearly everything in the room was broken; the TV, the pinball machine, the furniture. Even the people looked broken, with their worn-out bodies sprawled over the various chairs and sofas. X-Ray and Armpit were playing pool. The surface of the table reminded Stanley of the surface of the lake. It was full of bumps and holes because so many people had carved their initials into the felt. There was a hole in the far wall, and an electric fan had been placed in front of it. Cheap air-conditioning. At least the fan worked.

As Stanley made his way across the room, he tripped over an outstretched leg. "Hey, watch it!" said an orange lump on a chair.

"You watch it," muttered Stanley, too tired to care.

"What'd you say?" the Lump demanded. "Nothin'," said Stanley. The Lump rose. He was almost as big as Stanley and a lot tougher.

"You said something." He poked his fat finger in Stanley's neck. "What'd you say?" A crowd quickly formed around them.

"Be cool," said X-Ray. He put his hand on Stanley's shoulder. "You don't want to mess with the Caveman," he warned.

"The Caveman's cool," said Armpit.

"I'm not looking for trouble," Stanley said. "I'm just tired, that's all."

The Lump grunted. X-Ray and Armpit led Stanley over to a couch. Squid slid over to make room as Stanley sat down. "Did you see the Caveman back there?" X-Ray asked.

"The Caveman's one tough dude," said Squid, and he lightly punched Stanley's arm. Stanley leaned back against the torn vinyl upholstery. Despite his shower, his body still radiated heat.

"I wasn't trying to start anything," he said. The last thing he wanted to do after killing himself all day on the lake was to get in a fight with a boy called the Caveman. He was glad X-Ray and Armpit had come to his rescue. "Well, how'd you like your first hole?" asked Squid. Stanley groaned, and the other boys laughed.

"Well, the first hole's the hardest," said Stanley.

"No way," said X-Ray. "The second hole's a lot harder. You're hurting before you even get started. If you think you're sore now, just wait and see how you feel tomorrow morning, right?"

"That's right," said Squid.

"Plus, the fun's gone," said X-Ray.

"The fun?" asked Stanley.

"Don't lie to me," said X-Ray.

"I bet you always wanted to dig a big hole, right? Am I right?" Stanley had never really thought about it before, but he knew better than to tell X-Ray he wasn't right.

"Every kid in the world wants to dig a great big hole," said X-Ray. "To China, right?"

"Right," said Stanley.

"See what I mean," said X-Ray. "That's what I'm saying. But now the fun's gone. And you still got to do it again, and again, and again."

"Camp Fun and Games," said Stanley.

"What's in the box?" asked Squid. Stanley had forgotten he had brought it. "Uh, paper. I was going to write a letter to my mother."

"Your mother?" laughed Squid.

"She'll worry if I don't." Squid scowled. Stanley looked around the room. This was the one place in camp where the boys could enjoy themselves, and what'd they do? They wrecked it. The glass on the TV was smashed, as if someone had put his foot through it. Every table and chair seemed to be missing at least one leg. Everything leaned. He waited to write the letter until after Squid had gotten up and joined the game of pool.

Tasks:

- 1. Can you add anything you have found out about Stanley Yelnats to the fact page you completed in task three?**
- 2. Can you add any other characters to the character web you created in task four?**

Year 6 - Task five – writing focus (1 hour) – To write in role

Task:

You are Stanley Yelnats sat in the Wreck room the morning after your first full day at Camp Green Lake.

You get out the letter you have received from your mum and have a read to remind yourself of what she said. Then you get out your pen and paper and write her a reply.

M Yelnats

Apartment 13

Corsicana Drive

94503

21/4/20

Dearest Stanley,

Your Dad and I miss you so much! The apartment seems so quiet without you around. All the neighbours have been asking after you and I even had a letter from your school trying to find out how you were!

Dad is continuing to persevere with his invention - like only he can - he is confident that he may have finally made a break through, but I'm not so sure. Nevertheless the apartment still smells like burnt rubber and smelly feet, so fingers crossed he comes up with something soon.

I've been trying to keep busy and have just started a new cleaning job in the local community centre to raise some extra funds. In truth it's not the money I'm worried about I just needed something to keep my mind from worrying about you all day every day.

I really hope you are in good spirits and have settled in well to the camp. One of the mums I spoke to when you were taken away from court said it was much safer than prison (I really hope this is true).

How was the bus journey? Did you like my sandwiches I packed for you? I hope you ate them all and you like the food, I do worry about you feeling hungry all the time. We both know how much you enjoy a hearty meal.

So enough about me and my worrying. How have your first days been? What are the people like? Fingers crossed you have met some kind and caring boys, just like you, who are showing you the ropes and helping you to settle in. I'm interested to find out what you get up to all day? How are you sleeping? I'm thinking of redecorating your bedroom for when you return home.

Anyway, I better get off now. Things to do, people to see and all that! I love you my cuddly baby boy. Stay safe and write soon. Not long till I have you back at home where you belong.

All my love always

Mum xxx

P.S Remember to change your underwear every day!

Please send your letters to Y6teachers@shirleyschools.co.uk we would love to read them.