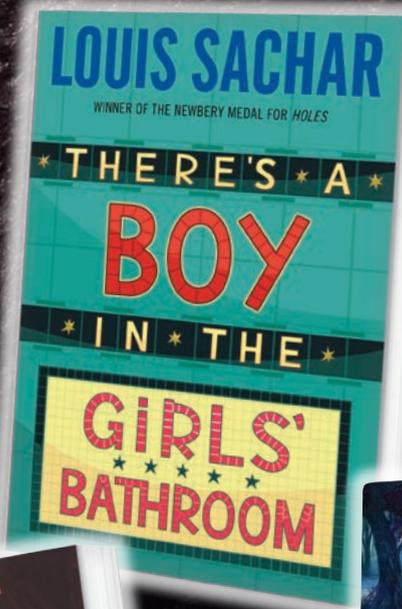
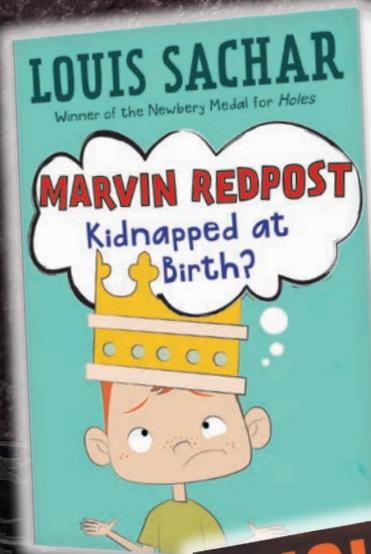


# LOUIS SACHAR

## AUTHOR STUDY GUIDE



INCLUDES  
COMMON CORE  
STANDARDS  
CORRELATIONS

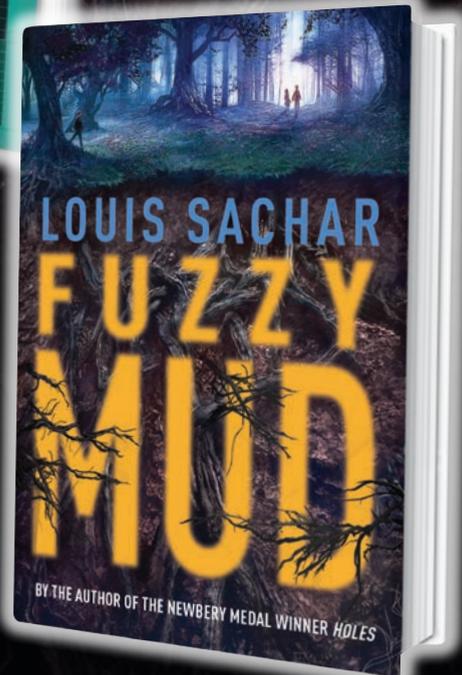
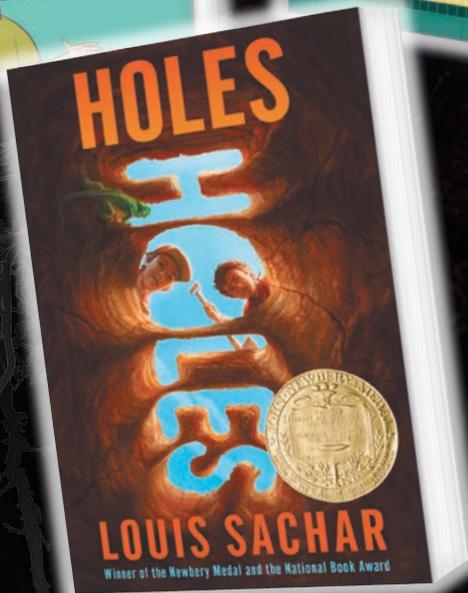




Photo © Perry Hagopian

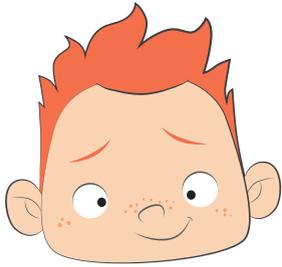
# Introduction

**LOUIS SACHAR** is the award-winning author of over twenty books. His novel *Holes* won both the National Book Award for Young People’s Literature and the Newbery Medal—an incredible achievement. It is no surprise that young readers love to read his books as much as educators love to teach them. The novels are funny and suspenseful, relevant and relatable, complex and thought-provoking. They naturally lend themselves to engaging discussions, and they are excellent models for sharing and teaching the craft of writing.

In this guide, you will find discussion questions and activities for the wide variety of titles by Louis Sachar: his Marvin Redpost series, his stand-alone chapter books, and his acclaimed middle-grade novels, including his newest, *Fuzzy Mud*.

The Common Core Standards encourage educators to develop students’ analytical skills through comparing and contrasting multiple works by the same author, and this guide includes many activities that help students to make connections between two or more Sachar books. The focus of this guide is to provide you with questions and activities that are aligned with the Common Core and put emphasis on ways to compare and contrast multiple novels for a unit that takes a closer look at recurring themes and techniques in one author’s body of work. The activities are structured to engage multiple learning styles to reach all your learners.

# MARVIN REDPOST



The Marvin Redpost series is filled with humor! Take a trip into the mind of this sensitive, contemplative boy as he maneuvers the everyday struggles of elementary school. Use the questions and activities in this Making Connections section to help students compare and contrast the characters and books; understand recurring themes; and discern, practice, and celebrate Sachar's writing choices and style.

## Making Connections!

### Dialogue

Have your students find examples in several books in the series where Sachar uses dialogue to make us laugh or create excitement. Students can then practice writing dialogue to create their own funny or exciting short narratives. Beware of tricky punctuation!

🔴 Correlates to Common Core Standard W.CCR.3

**Great for  
elementary  
read-alouds!**

### Main Idea

Rumors, gossip, and peer pressure rear their ugly heads in most of the Marvin Redpost books. Have your class discuss examples in the books where kids spread rumors. This PBS Kids resource may help the conversation: [PBSKids.org/itsmylife/friends/rumors](http://PBSKids.org/itsmylife/friends/rumors). Make connections between the information on the site and these examples. What is Sachar's main idea? What advice do your students have for the characters affected by the rumors and those spreading them?

🔴 Correlates to Common Core Standard R.CCR.2

### Conflict

Poor Marvin goes through lots of turmoil and has lots of choices to make. Define conflict. What examples of conflict do your students have in their own lives? Ask students to help Marvin with his decisions (and practice their persuasive speaking skills!). Pick several internal conflicts from the series. Ask one student to play Marvin and two more students to stand on each side of him or her. One of the students should try to persuade Marvin to do one thing and the other student should try to persuade him to do the other. What will Marvin decide?

🔴 Correlates to Common Core Standard R.CCR.3

### Venn Diagram

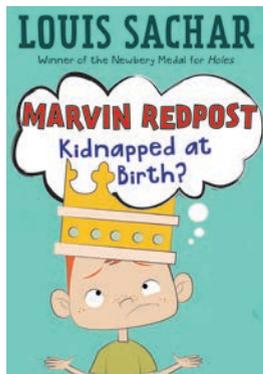
Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast two ideas, characters, settings, and other details from two books in the series. How are the two books similar? How do they differ?

🔴 Correlates to Common Core Standard R.CCR.9



# MARVIN REDPOST

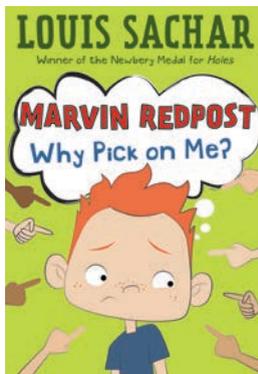
## #1: Kidnapped at Birth



Marvin thinks it would be better to be a prince than a regular kid in his own family. Will he leave his family to become a royal?

PB: 978-0-679-81946-2  
GLB: 978-0-553-53540-2

## #2: Why Pick on Me?



Will the rumor that Marvin is a nose picker ruin his life—or will his creativity help him “pick” up the pieces and restore his reputation?

PB: 978-0-679-81947-9  
GLB: 978-0-553-53541-9  
EL: 978-0-307-79715-5

## Discussion Questions

1. Why does Marvin originally make up the story about being kidnapped?
2. When Casey gives an explanation for Marvin's kidnapping, Mrs. North responds, “Well, I suppose anything is possible” (p. 27). What do you think she means?
3. Marvin's mother asks him what he “plan[s] to do” about his supposed royal connection and then pleasantly agrees to take Marvin for his blood test (p. 42). If she had refused, how do you think Marvin would have reacted?
4. What clues show that Marvin might be having doubts about wanting to be Prince Robert?
5. Why does Marvin fib about his blood type and change his mind about finding out if he is Prince Robert?

## Activities

- What are the different blood types, and why is it important to know yours? Write a persuasive letter convincing your classmates to learn their blood type. Be sure to use evidence to help you persuade!
- 🕒 **Correlates to Common Core Standard W.CCR.1**
- Research modern-day princes and princesses. What are their responsibilities? What do they do during the day? How do they have fun? Draw yourself as a prince or princess, then write a paragraph explaining one thing you would do to make the world a better place.
- 🕒 **Correlates to Common Core Standard W.CCR.2**

## Discussion Questions

1. On the very first page, what do we learn about Marvin's character? Why do you think Sachar shares this information with his readers right away?
2. Do you think Stuart and Nick are good friends? Why or why not? How do you define friendship?
3. What conflict does Marvin go through at school? What advice would you give Marvin when people “pick” on him?
4. How does the rumor affect Marvin's life? How do rumors get started? How can they be squashed?
5. How does Marvin turn his problem into something positive?

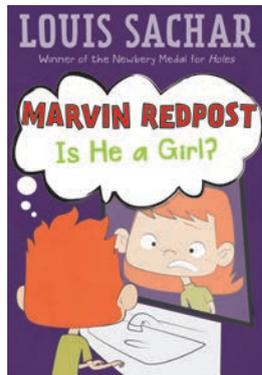
## Activities

- Write your own survey questions about reading and seal them in time capsules. What is your favorite book? Who is your favorite character? “Bury” the time capsules until the end of the school year to reveal how/if your responses have changed!
- 🕒 **Correlates to Common Core Standard W.CCR.7**
- Marvin's teacher, Mrs. North, states at the end of the novel, “We're all human, aren't we?” (p. 64). Using examples from life, write an informational piece that explains how we are all “human.”
- 🕒 **Correlates to Common Core Standard W.CCR.2**

**Grades 1-4**

# MARVIN REDPOST

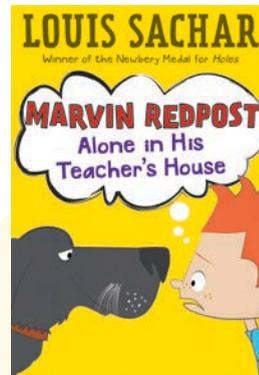
## #3: Is He a Girl?



Is Marvin really turning into a girl? With much humor, this book highlights the universal question—are boys and girls all that different?

PB: 978-0-679-81948-6  
GLB: 978-0-553-53542-6  
EL: 978-0-307-79716-2

## #4: Alone in His Teacher's House



Marvin feels very responsible and mature when his teacher asks him to dog-sit while she is away. How will he respond when the unexpected happens?

PB: 978-0-679-81949-3  
GLB: 978-0-679-91949-0  
EL: 978-0-307-79717-9

### Discussion Questions

1. Why might Marvin keep repeating that girls are “stupid” or do “stupid” things?
2. Why does Sachar compare Marvin sleeping to a “caterpillar in a cocoon” (p. 22)? What is he hinting might happen to Marvin?
3. How would Marvin define “normal”? How do you define “normal”? Is there a normal?
4. What do you think Marvin learns from walking in a girl’s shoes? Does it change him? How?
5. Marvin asks, “Was there really a difference in the way boys or girls thought?” (p. 57). What do you think?

### Activities

- The illustrations in this novel reveal lots of information. Choose your favorite and write a detailed paragraph describing what you learn about the characters, central message/main idea, and events through this illustration.
- 🕒 **Correlates to Common Core Standard R.CCR.7**
- Debate the following ideas from the novel: Girls are afraid of lizards. Girls think lizards are gross. Little kids always tell the truth. Girls are smarter than boys. Boys are so immature. Boys are so stupid. Then discuss the difference between fact vs. opinion. Practice writing opinion statements and fact statements.
- 🕒 **Correlates to Common Core Standard SL.CCR.1**

### Discussion Questions

1. What does Marvin realize about Mrs. North after she tells him that she also has homework?
2. How do you feel when Marvin almost loses Mrs. North’s key? Why might Sachar add this event to his story?
3. Why does Marvin lie to Nick and Stuart when he says Mrs. North told him not to let anyone else into her house? Is it okay for him to lie?
4. Sachar writes, “[Mrs. North’s] house felt empty, like a cave” (p. 73). What does he mean by this simile?
5. Would you have been mad at Marvin if you were Mrs. North? Why or why not? Are you surprised by her response? Why or why not?

### Activities

- Create a pamphlet that lists the steps about how to take care of a dog. Include some of the details you read from the novel and research your own! Consider sharing your pamphlets with a local animal adoption shelter.
- 🕒 **Correlates to Common Core Standard W.CCR.7**
- Use context clues to write definitions for the following words: *waddle* (p. 11), *nuzzle* (p. 19), *hooligan* (p. 30), and *gritty* (p. 41).
- 🕒 **Correlates to Common Core Standard L.CCR.4**

### Also Available:

#5: Class President  
PB: 978-0-679-88999-1  
GLB: 978-0-553-53543-3  
EL: 978-0-307-80572-0

#6: A Flying Birthday Cake?  
PB: 978-0-679-89000-3  
GLB: 978-0-553-53544-0  
EL: 978-0-307-80573-7

#7: Super Fast, Out of Control!  
PB: 978-0-679-89001-0  
GLB: 978-0-553-53545-7  
EL: 978-0-307-80574-4

#8: A Magic Crystal?  
PB: 978-0-679-89002-7  
GLB: 978-0-553-53546-4  
EL: 978-0-307-80575-1



# LOUIS SACHAR'S UPPER ELEMENTARY NOVELS

*The Boy Who Lost His Face*, *Dogs Don't Tell Jokes*, and *There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom* are wonderful resources when studying a specific Sachar unit or units on Outcasts and Fitting In, Discovering Who You Are, and Friendship. This Making Connections section will help introduce your students to Sachar's humor, his sometimes awkward yet relatable characters, and the witty dialogue infused throughout his novels.

## Making Connections!

### Tableaus

Dive deep into Sachar's character development. Have groups choose a character from any Sachar novel and find one line of dialogue they think best represents that character. Then have students perform the tableau of the scene, speaking the line. Other groups guess which book and character the line is from. The class discusses the importance of each particular line of dialogue. What does it reveal about that character?

● Correlates to Common Core Standard R.CCR.1

### Found Poetry

As a class, define found poetry. Students create found poems using only words from several of Sachar's novels. The poem should highlight one of the recurring themes from the novels. Challenge students to add imagery and rhymes!

● Correlates to Common Core Standard R.CCR.2

### Get Up and Act!

This is an activity for all students, especially kinetic learners! Students create a mash-up of several of Sachar's novels. Have them fuse some of their favorite scenes/conflicts together, rehearse the scenes, then act them out for another ELA class to entice them to read the books too. They'll be bringing those book talks to life!

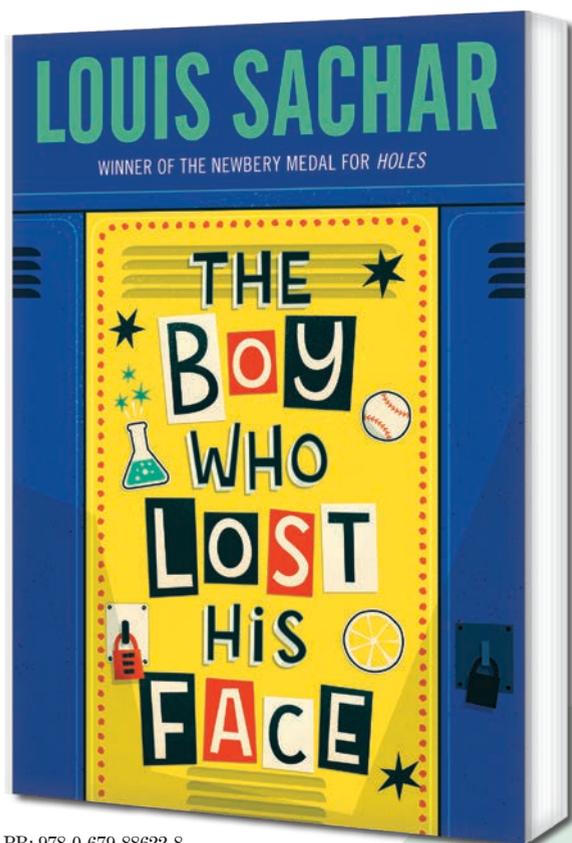
● Correlates to Common Core Standard SL.CCR.6

### Opinion Piece

Choose two characters from two different Sachar novels. Have students write opinion pieces that explain which of the two characters they believe overcame the most obstacles. Their pieces should include an introduction, a statement of their opinion, and evidence to support their statement. Hold a class discussion/debate upon completion of the pieces to hear others' views.

● Correlates to Common Core Standard W.CCR.1

Grades 3-7



PB: 978-0-679-88622-8  
EL: 978-0-307-79713-1

# THE BOY WHO LOST HIS FACE

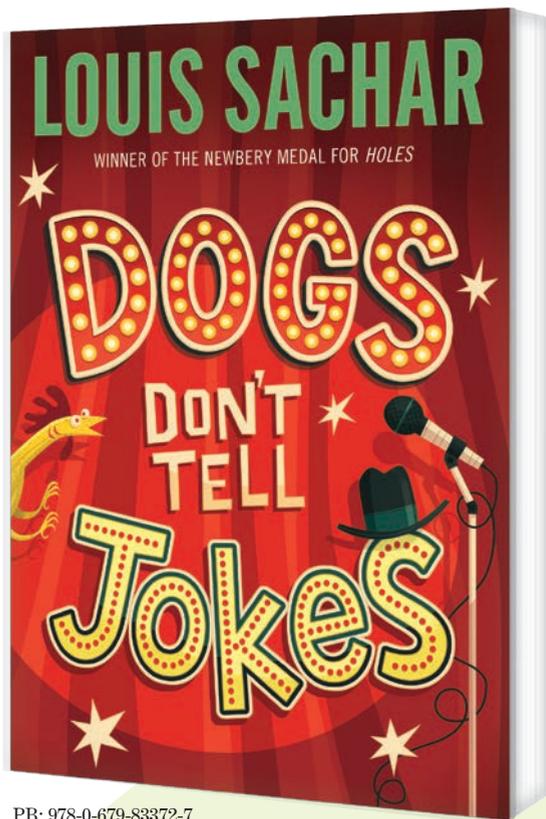
After David pulls a prank on an old lady, he's certain that she cursed him. Will he apologize to her and end it, or will he have to live with consequences of his actions—forever?

## Discussion Questions

1. How would the story be different if David had returned and apologized immediately to Mrs. Bayfield? Have you ever done something that took you a long time to apologize for? Why is it so difficult to apologize sometimes?
2. David is afraid of all sorts of things. What do you think he would do if he weren't afraid of anything? What would you do if you weren't afraid? How would life be different if we all listened to and acted on our conscience?
3. At one point, David comes to the realization that "Sometimes you just have to do what your friends want you to do . . . no matter how terrible it is" (p. 130). Do you agree or disagree with this? Why?
4. What changes does David go through in the novel?
5. What examples of foreshadowing do you see in the story? What effect do they have on the reader?
6. How does Sachar change the structure of his writing during the fight at Roger's house? How does it affect the reading of this scene?
7. Do you think it is a "curse" to be kind and caring in "this cold world we live in" (p. 191)? Explain. Do you think we are all "cursed" at some point in our lives?

## Activities

- Have you ever tripped on a rock in front of all your friends? Or stubbed a toe on the kitchen chair? Get revenge on those inanimate objects by writing your own super-powerful rhyming curses.
- 🔗 Correlates to Common Core Standard W.CCR.4
- Many characters in the novel don't reveal who they really are—they seem to wear masks to hide their true selves. Choose a character you think is "hiding." Decorate the outside of a mask to show what the character shares about himself/herself with their friends and family throughout the novel. Write one thing on the inside of the mask that the character hides. Take it a step further and decorate your own mask about yourself!
- 🔗 Correlates to Common Core Standard R.CCR.2



PB: 978-0-679-83372-7  
EL: 978-0-307-79712-4

# DOGS DON'T TELL Jokes

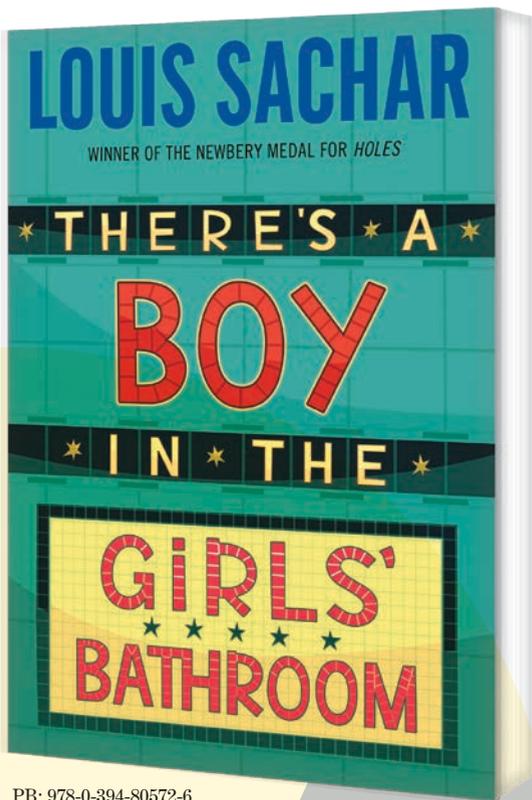
Will Gary's jokes be the source of or the solution to his problems?

## Discussion Questions

1. What details does Sachar use to show Gary as an outcast?
2. How does Gary's relationship with his parents develop throughout the novel? What evidence do we see of this?
3. Is Joe a good friend to Gary? Why or why not? Is Angeline a good friend?
4. Gary's mother says to him, "You tell jokes because you're afraid to let people see who you are. You hide behind a wall of jokes" (p. 64). Do you agree with Gary's mother? Why or why not?
5. Adults often tell kids they should never quit. Is it ever okay to quit?
6. Why does Gary thank Fred after the talent show?
7. Why do you think Gary cries after the talent show?

## Activities

- What techniques do comedians use to create "good" comedy? List some of Gary's suggestions from the novel and research other sources. Then create a short video that teaches one of the techniques on how to be funny. Test out your new comedic chops on an audience!
-  Correlates to Common Core Standard W.CCR.7
- Gary loves hats! Discuss in groups what it means to "wear different hats" for different purposes. Does Gary do this? Does it mean that we are not being ourselves, or does it mean we have more than one side of our personality? Choose two metaphoric hats you wear in your own life (such as a "hat" for school vs. a "hat" for playing on the playground). Design these two hats and explain in writing how and why your hats are different.
-  Correlates to Common Core Standard W.CCR.2



PB: 978-0-394-80572-6  
EL: 978-0-307-79711-7  
CD: 978-0-804-12326-6

# THERE'S A BOY IN THE GIRLS' BATHROOM

**Bradley feels like no one likes him because no one really knows who he is until the school counselor Carla helps him to see it's good to "just be you."**

## Discussion Questions

1. How does Sachar portray the adult figures throughout the novel? Whom can Bradley truly rely on? Track how his relationships with adults in his life remain the same or change.
2. Why does Bradley think "he had to hate Jeff before Jeff hated him" (p. 8)?
3. Do you think Jeff is a true friend? Carla asks Jeff, "What do you think friendship is?" (p. 29). How would you answer that question?
4. Carla says to Colleen, "If a monster says hello to you, you should say hello to it. If you don't, then I have to wonder which one of you is really the monster" (p. 138). How could her words apply to your own classroom/school/society?
5. Why are the parents so angry at the Concerned Parents Organization? If you were sitting in on the meeting, with whom would you agree?
6. What is significant about Bradley telling Jeff, "I'm not sick . . . I'm normal" (p. 164)?
7. How is it symbolic that Bradley gives Ronnie, the little red rabbit with the broken ear, to Carla as a parting gift?

## Activities

- Sachar writes that Bradley is "an island" (p. 3). Listen to Simon & Garfunkel's song "I Am a Rock." Define and discuss metaphor. Compare and contrast how the writers of the novel and the song convey their characters' loneliness.

### 🔗 Correlates to Common Core Standard R.CCR.9

- As a pre-reading activity, stand in a straight line in the middle of the room. Your teacher will read the following statements from the novel. Step to one side to agree and the other to disagree, and be ready to defend your positions. You may change sides if you feel persuaded by your peers' arguments.

"A teacher can often learn a lot more from a student than a student can learn from a teacher." (p. 38)

"Friendships are stronger when everyone has different opinions to share." (p. 47)

"Children learn better when they're not under pressure. They do better when they can enjoy school." (p. 150)

"You don't have to keep promises to children." (p. 151)

"It's more important to teach children *how* to think, instead of what to think." (p. 152)

### 🔗 Correlates to Common Core Standard SL.CCR.1

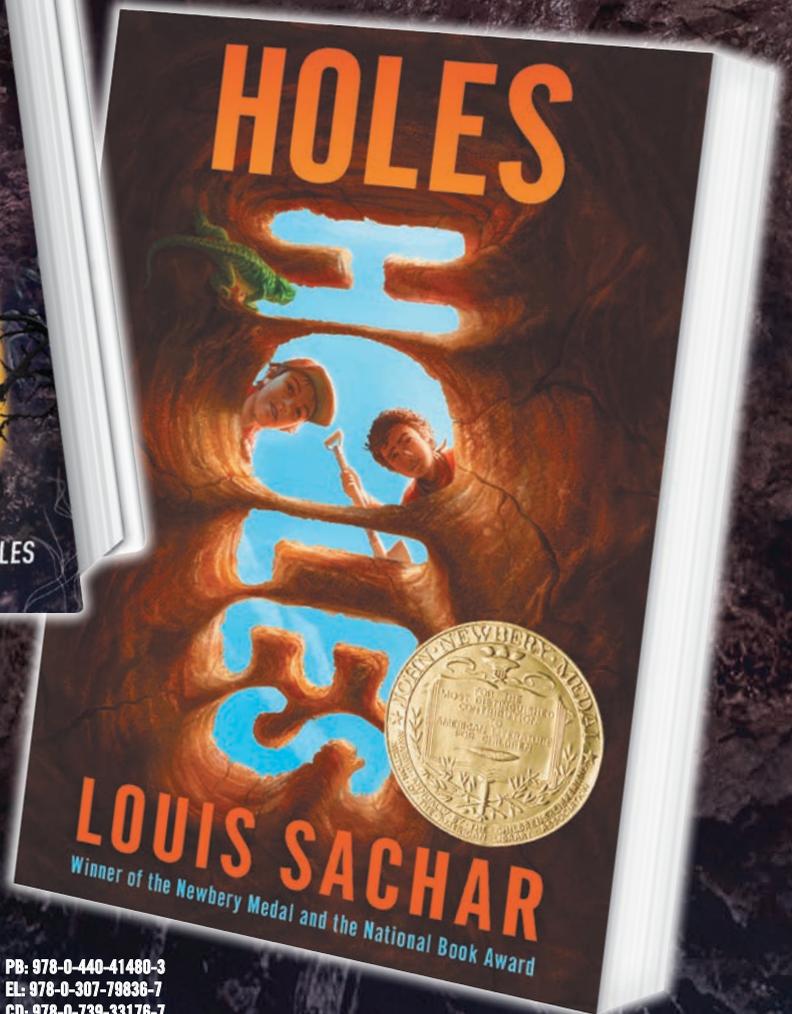
# FUZZY MUD

Both of these novels would be relevant additions to any unit on Ethics, Community Responsibility, Friends and Enemies, and Coming of Age. Use these two suspenseful novels to help your students dive deep to understanding how to create setting, character development, and forming two sides of an argument.



HC: 978-0-385-74378-5  
GLB: 978-0-375-99129-5  
EL: 978-0-385-37021-9  
CD: 978-0-8041-2136-1

**Grades 5 & Up**



PB: 978-0-440-41480-3  
EL: 978-0-307-79836-7  
CD: 978-0-739-33176-7

# AND HOLES

## MAKING CONNECTIONS!

### Setting and Personification

Sachar's settings in both novels are so significant that they are like characters. Define personification with the class. Have students draw an outline of a person. Using details and imagery from the novels, have groups illustrate the settings *inside* the outline and label the setting with human characteristics that they think describes the setting (such as cruel and impatient). Share Sachar's interview on setting with your students: [PBS.org/news-hour/bb/entertainment-july-dec98-sacher\\_11-25](https://www.pbs.org/news-hour/bb/entertainment-july-dec98-sacher_11-25). Guide students in writing their own stories in which the setting drives the plot.

🔗 **Correlates to Common Core Standard R.CCR.1**

### Career Search

Identify the jobs that each of the adults holds in the novels. Have each student choose one and research the job's responsibilities and the positive and negative aspects of it. Students should write a persuasive piece that argues whether they feel the character from the novel performed his/her job well and why. Direct students to use examples from the novel and from their research to support their claims.

🔗 **Correlates to Common Core Standard W.CCR.1**

### Debates/Themes

Both novels highlight some controversial topics. Have students research some of the topics and form debate teams. Select a panel of judges and hold a formal debate. The guest judges decide the winners! Debate resources are available on this site: [EducationWorld.com/a\\_lesson/lesson/lesson304b.shtml](http://EducationWorld.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson304b.shtml).

🔗 **Correlates to Common Core Standard W.CCR.7**

### Characterization Letters

Sachar creates such well-developed characters that we feel we really know them. Have your students prove that they do! Students should choose one character from *Fuzzy Mud* and one character from *Holes*. Have them write a letter from one to the other revealing two things your character would probably not reveal to anyone else. Hint: students should pay close attention to their character's internal conflicts!

🔗 **Correlates to Common Core Standard W.CCR.4**

## WRITING PROMPTS

Reading great books is not just for entertainment. Reading great books is a way to study the craft of writing and observe techniques and then try your own hand at it. Spending time learning about an author and his process is one of the best ways to develop and inform your own writing process.

### Setting: A Narrative

Guide your students in writing their own stories in which the setting affects the narrative. Discuss how the setting in *Holes* and *Fuzzy Mud* are essential to the plot of each story. Begin with an exercise in which students set each of these novels in another location (like *Holes* on the coast or *Fuzzy Mud* on an island) and explore how this would change the story. As a class, brainstorm as many different settings for a story as possible. Students should pick one new setting and explore the details of how this setting could play an essential role in a story of their own (such as the darkness of a cave, the jostling of a subway ride, or the unsupported floorboards in a house first being built). Students should write a story in which some detail(s) of the setting cause a conflict for the main character. Then challenge students to take the same main character and same basic plot that they imagined but now plopped that character down in a different setting. Have them share all the different versions and discuss what they notice. This is a great follow-up to the Setting and Personification activity above.

🔗 **Correlates to Common Core Standard W.CCR.3**

### Writing Process: An Opinion Piece

Louis Sachar is often asked in interviews how he approaches writing. Have your students listen to and read these interviews to learn more about his writing process. Then have them write an opinion piece in which they discuss whether Sachar's writing process would work for them. Be sure to have students state their opinion, provide specific details about his writing process, and logically order their reasons to support their opinion.

🔗 **Correlates to Common Core Standard W.CCR.1**

# FUZZY MUD

Sachar creates a novel filled with suspense that grabs readers and doesn't let go. Will Tamaya and Marshall survive their dangerous journey through the woods, or will what's lurking in the leaves destroy them and their community?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the setting of Woodridge Academy and its surroundings near the woods play an important role in the story?
2. Sachar infuses the story with the testimony of the Senate's secret hearings. Why does Sachar thread the testimony of the Senate's secret hearings throughout the story? What purpose does it serve in the telling of this story, and how does it affect the reader?
3. Tamaya wonders, "When did it become bad to be good?" (p. 5). Discuss.
4. Tamaya's teacher once said courage means pretending to be brave. "After all, if you're not scared, then there's nothing to be brave about, is there?" (p. 15). Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. Define dramatic irony with your class. Where do we see examples of this in the novel? How does it affect our reading of it?
6. Discuss the difference between internal and external conflicts. What internal conflicts does Tamaya experience? What external conflicts does she experience?
7. Marshall admits to himself that he is glad that Chad has gone missing. Does it make you a bad person to simply *think* about something bad happening to someone?
8. Jonathan Fitzman reveals at the hearings that he "never wanted to hurt anyone" (p. 116). Do a person's intentions matter?
9. Which characters go through a transformation or evolution during the novel? How do we know?

10. How do you feel about the Committee on Energy and the Environment voting to continue the production of Biolene as a source of clean, affordable energy? Discuss their other options. How did the equations at the end of the chapters affect you as a reader? What effect did the equation on page 170 have on you? Is it different from the others? Why or why not?

## ACTIVITIES

### Virtues

At Woodridge Academy, students must memorize and follow ten virtues. Ask students to find the list of virtues, and identify 3 of the 10 ways Tamaya *does* follow them. Think about what beliefs help guide you in your life. You may interview family members and make a list of their family's ten virtues. Then, in groups, pretend to sit on the board of directors of a new school and decide on the school's ten virtues. Then, using technology, create a marketing pamphlet that highlights them for new students and their families.

🔗 **Correlates to Common Core Standard W.CCR.6**

### Descriptive Writing

Tamaya's teacher, Ms. Filbert, challenges students to describe through details how to blow up a balloon. Write a "how, to" piece where you use descriptive step-by-step writing to show readers how to do something (for instance, how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, or how to brush one's teeth). Your teacher will invite several guests into your class to listen to the pieces and test the use of your details!

🔗 **Correlates to Common Core Standard W.CCR.4**



## STEM CONNECTIONS

### Compare and Contrast

In the novel, fuzzy mud and the spread of bacteria set off a scare. In real life, plagues have caused similar fear—but they can also be fascinating. Research plagues at the library and on the Internet. Then use a Venn diagram or another graphic organizer to compare and contrast how microbes and microorganisms can have both positive and negative effects on the human world. Use your notes to expand your writing into an essay.

🔗 **Correlates to Common Core Standards RST.6-8.2, W.CCR.2**

### To Quarantine or Not to Quarantine?

When the rash from the fuzzy mud begins to spread, the president orders a quarantine. Research examples when real quarantines have been ordered in human history. What was the purpose of the quarantine? How did the illnesses spread? Which groups were for the quarantine, which were against, and why? Following the research, join in a class debate on whether quarantines are always necessary. Use your research to support your claims.

🔗 **Correlates to Common Core Standard W.CCR.7**

### Content-Specific Vocabulary

Studying content-specific vocabulary can help students grasp the meaning behind the text, and is a key element of any ELA (and history, science, and math!) classroom. Having confidence with the vocabulary helps students move forward and interact with the text. Encourage students to use multiple resources to clarify meanings and express their comprehension.

*United States Senate Committee on Energy* (p. 8), *viable* (p. 9), *bacteria* (p. 10), *slime mold* (p. 10), *DNA* (p. 10), *single-celled* (p. 10), *microorganism* (p. 10), *microbe* (p. 10), *organism* (p. 37), *disintegrate* (p. 53), *disaster* (p. 63), *fertilizer* (p. 63), *hydrogen peroxide* (p. 74), *hydrocortisone* (p. 76), *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* (p. 99), *database* (p. 99), *quarantine* (p. 100), *vitality* (p. 113), *reproduce* (p. 113), *congealed* (p. 113), *ratio* (p. 113), *evaporate* (p. 114), *vacuum fuel injection system* (p. 114), *mutation* (p. 114), *defect* (p. 115), *speculation* (p. 115), *rabid* (p. 127), *strain* (p. 149), *biosphere* (p. 150), *evolve* (p. 150), *adapt* (p. 150), *climate* (p. 150), *nerve cell* (p. 153), *National Institutes of Health* (p. 153), *epidemic* (p. 154), *hazmat suit* (p. 156), *National Guard* (p. 156), *hypodermic needle* (p. 157), *vet tech* (p. 158), *enzyme* (p. 159), *test case* (p. 160), *decipher* (p. 162), *hibernate* (p. 170), *disintegrated membrane* (p. 170), *Hobson's choice* (p. 177), *oxygen-tolerant* (p. 180), *organic* (p. 180)

🔗 **Correlates to Common Core Standards RST.6-8.4, L.CCR.6**

★ “Grounded in well-rounded central characters, this compelling novel holds as much suspense as fuel for discussion.” —*Booklist*, Starred

“Fast-paced. . . . An exciting story of school life, friends, and bullies that becomes a quick meditation on the promise and dangers of modern science.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

“This engaging eco-cautionary tale . . . will captivate readers while giving them plenty to think about.” —*School Library Journal*



★ “A dazzling blend of social commentary, tall tale and magic realism.”

—*Publishers Weekly*, Starred

★ “There is no question, kids will love *Holes*.”

—*School Library Journal*, Starred

Newbery Medal Winner

National Book Award for Young People’s Literature

ALA Notable Children’s Book

ALA Best Book for Young Adults

ALA Quick Pick for Reluctant Readers

### **A State Award Superstar!**

Arizona Young Readers Award Nominee

Colorado Blue Spruce Young Adult Book Award Winner

Florida Sunshine State Book Award Winner

Hawaii Nene Award Winner

Illinois Rebecca Caudill Young Readers Award Winner

Kansas William White Award Winner

Kentucky Bluegrass Award Winner

Maine Student Book Award Winner

Maryland Black-Eyed Susan Award Winner

Massachusetts Children’s Book Award Winner

Missouri Mark Twain Award Winner

New Jersey Garden State Teen Book Award Winner

New Mexico Land of Enchantment Book Award Winner

New York State Three Apples Award Nominee

North Dakota Flicker Tale Children’s Book Award Winner

Ohio Buckeye Children’s Book Award Winner

Oklahoma Sequoyah Children’s Book Award Winner

Pacific Northwest Young Reader’s Choice Award Winner

Pennsylvania Young Reader’s Choice Award Winner

South Dakota Prairie Pasque Award Winner

Tennessee Volunteer State Book Award Winner

Texas Lone Star Reading List

Vermont Dorothy Canfield Fischer Book Award Winner

Washington Evergreen Young Adult Book Award Winner

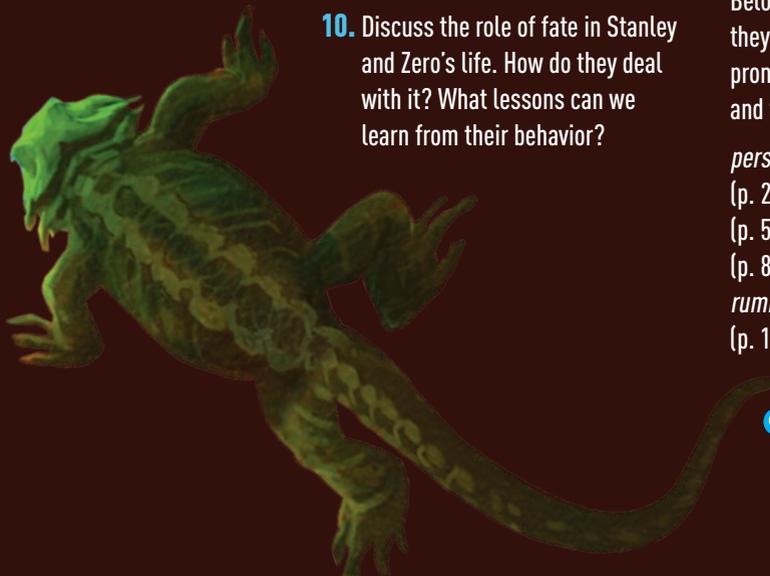
Wisconsin Golden Archer Book Award Winner

Wyoming Indian Paintbrush Award Winner

**How did Stanley’s true character get so buried?  
Will the digging at Camp Green Lake unearth the clues to  
help Stanley escape his misery?**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of Stanley's real name and nickname in the novel? What is the significance of other characters' names and nicknames? What kinds of nicknames do the people in your life have and how do they impact them?
2. Discuss how the title, *Holes*, is a recurring motif throughout the novel. Discuss its significance both literally and metaphorically.
3. Recount the curse on Stanley's family. How do they react to it, and what does this reveal about their character?
4. What three stories are woven together to make up this novel? What is reoccurring in all three narratives? Why might Sachar have chosen to write his novel this way?
5. Compare and contrast the role of prejudice in the different stories throughout the book.
6. The Warden is such a great villain. Brainstorm words that describe her character other than mean, evil, and scary. Select the one that you feel is most responsible for making her so scary. Pull out details from the text that you feel best support that description of her character.
7. Why do you think Stanley lies in the letters that he writes home? What would you have done?
8. As Stanley's skin begins to harden from digging holes, what else is changing about him? What other turning points for his character stand out to you?
9. Reread the different verses/versions of the pig lullaby as they appear throughout the story. How is the version at the end of the story different from the ones at the beginning? How does the change in tone of the lullaby reflect the change in tone at the end of the novel?
10. Discuss the role of fate in Stanley and Zero's life. How do they deal with it? What lessons can we learn from their behavior?



## ACTIVITIES

### Pre-Reading

Write about a time when something really unfair happened to you. What did you do about it? How did it make you feel?

🔗 **Correlates to Common Core Standard W.CCR.4**

### Setting

Using details from the text, draw two pictures of the setting of the novel: one that depicts what Stanley envisions Camp Green Lake will be like, and another that shows what he actually finds.

🔗 **Correlates to Common Core Standard R.CCR.3**

### Structure

After watching the *Holes* movie with your class, discuss the major structural differences between a novel and film script. Review the four important written elements of a screenplay: slug line, action text, character name, and dialogue. Adapt another scene in the novel.

🔗 **Correlates to Common Core Standard R.CCR.5**

### Symbols and Imagery

Design two different uniforms for the children at Camp Green Lake. Using symbolic imagery and text, in one version depict what you believe Camp Green Lake should do for the children sentenced there. In the other version depict the reality of Camp Green Lake in the novel. Then research the juvenile justice system in the United States and discuss what you feel are the most effective ways to discipline and rehabilitate youth.

🔗 **Correlates to Common Core Standard R.CCR.1**

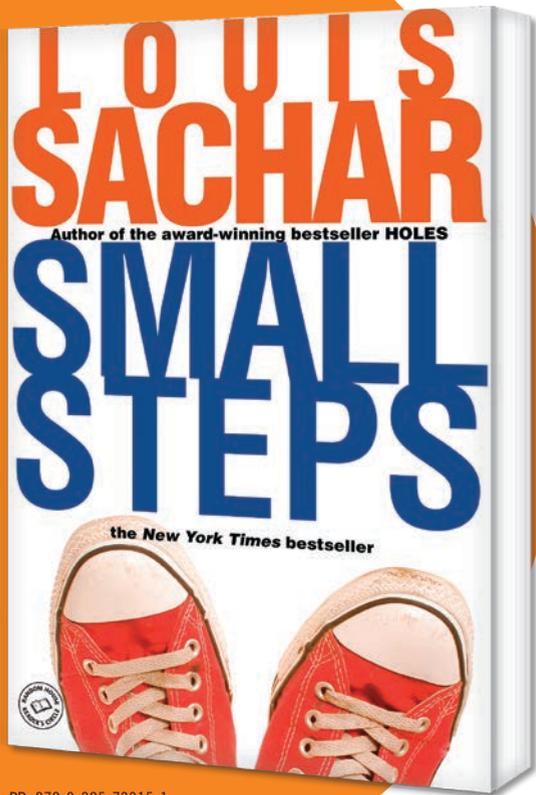
### Academic Vocabulary

Below is a list of words that may require additional attention as they play a key role in the text. Draw your attention to spelling and pronunciation as well as roots and affixes. Keep track of the words and try to use them in discussion and writing throughout the unit.

*perseverance* (p. 8), *society* (p. 18), *testify* (p. 23), *despicable* (p. 25), *preposterous* (p. 34), *foothold* (p. 40), *radiate* (p. 45), *smug* (p. 54), *etch* (p. 61), *presumably* (p. 74), *racial* (p. 84), *condemn* (p. 88), *refuge* (p. 93), *defiance* (p. 96), *concoction* (p. 108), *rummage* (p. 121), *delirious* (p. 128), *feeble* (p. 135), *unconscious* (p. 139), *mirage* (p. 152), *fugitive* (p. 188), *authenticate* (p. 215), *jurisdiction* (p. 218), *incarcerate* (p. 222)

🔗 **Correlates to Common Core Standards R.CCR.10, L.CCR.6L**

ALSO BY **LOUIS SACHAR**

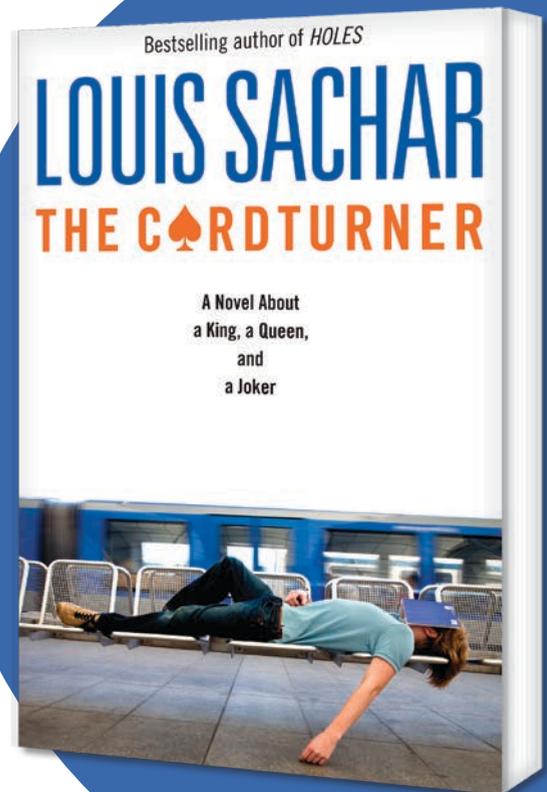


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- ★ “An obvious windfall for smart and puzzle-minded teens, this is a great story to boot, with genuine characters (save the scheming parents) and real relationships, balanced by casual, confident storytelling.” —*Booklist*, Starred
- ★ “A portrait of a reflective teenager whose life is infinitely enriched by connections he never expected to make.”  
—*Publishers Weekly*, Starred
- ★ “Intelligent readers will love this work—it’s in the cards.”  
—*Kirkus Reviews*, Starred

**Grades 7 & up**

- ★ “[F]ans will be thrilled by the tightening of the plot elements to the single, suspenseful point, and they will eagerly follow the sometimes stumbling, sometimes sprinting progress of Sachar’s fallible yet heroic protagonist.” —*Booklist*, Starred
- “Sachar is a master storyteller who creates memorable characters.” —*School Library Journal*
- “His prose is clear and relaxed, and funny in a low-key, observant way.” —*The New York Times*



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