These notes have been written to help teachers use the Accelerated Literacy teaching strategies in Years 7 and 8.

Outcomes of the teaching sequence

At the end of this teaching sequence, students should be able to:

1. read the passages studied fluently and with a high level of inferential comprehension
2. discuss the story; give opinions about the author’s language choices; identify the story's structure, theme and ideology
3. spell chosen words and understand related spelling strategies
4. use the story as a model for writing.

Notes

- The following notes have been written for teachers who have attended professional development workshops in teaching Accelerated Literacy. The notes presume some understanding about how to teach the program.
- For a detailed explanation of how to implement the teaching sequence, please refer to the teachers’ handouts from the first professional development workshop. Additionally, you could refer to http://www.nalp.edu.au.
- It is also assumed that teachers have read the text on which these notes are based and have a detailed understanding of the text before beginning a teaching sequence.
- Teachers are responsible for ensuring the suitability of the text on which these notes are based for their particular teaching context.
Teaching Notes

Holes
Secondary

holes
Louis Sachar

National Accelerated Literacy Program
Extracts from *Holes* are reproduced by permission of Trident Media Group

These notes were written by Wendy Cowey and Kate McGrath and have been produced as part of the National Accelerated Literacy Program.

Printed in Australia by uniprint NT
## Contents

**Using this resource** .................................................................................................................. 1

**Holes** ..................................................................................................................................... 5
- Synopsis of the story ................................................................................................................. 6
- Theme ........................................................................................................................................ 6
- Why use this story? ................................................................................................................... 6
- Structure of the text .................................................................................................................. 6
- Language features of the text ................................................................................................... 9
- Books with similar themes ......................................................................................................... 10

**Accelerated Literacy teaching** ............................................................................................ 11
- Teaching the sequence ............................................................................................................. 12

**In the classroom** .................................................................................................................. 13
- Literate orientation .................................................................................................................. 14
- Transformations ...................................................................................................................... 29
- Spelling .................................................................................................................................... 34
- Writing ...................................................................................................................................... 37

**Appendices** .......................................................................................................................... 41
- Sample weekly plan .................................................................................................................. 42

**Photocopiable masters** ........................................................................................................ 45
- Study passage one .................................................................................................................... 46
- Study passage two .................................................................................................................... 53
Using this resource
Year level

These notes have been written to help teachers use the Accelerated Literacy teaching strategies in Years 7 and 8.

Outcomes of the teaching sequence

At the end of this teaching sequence, students should be able to:

- read the passages studied fluently and with a high level of inferential comprehension
- discuss the story: give opinions about the author’s language choices; identify the story’s structure, theme and ideology
- spell chosen words and understand related spelling strategies
- use the story as a model for writing.

Notes

- The following notes have been written for teachers who have attended professional development workshops in teaching Accelerated Literacy. The notes presume some understanding about how to teach the program.
- For a detailed explanation of how to implement the teaching sequence, please refer to the teachers’ handouts from the first professional development workshop. Additionally, you could refer to [http://www.nalp.edu.au](http://www.nalp.edu.au).
- It is also assumed that teachers have read the text on which these notes are based and have a detailed understanding of the text before beginning a teaching sequence.
- Teachers are responsible for ensuring the suitability of the text on which these notes are based for their particular teaching context.
**The text**


Go to Louis Sachar’s website, at [http://www.louissachar.com](http://www.louissachar.com), for information about the author and his books. The movie, *Holes*, is available on DVD.

**Teaching DVDs**

*Holes: Teaching Notes* are supported by a teaching DVD.

Teaching DVDs are designed to support classroom teaching by demonstrating best practice for the program. They are video clips of real teaching in real classrooms, shot so teachers can watch Accelerated Literacy teaching in practice. They provide authentic examples of the negotiation roles taken by one teacher and a class and are not all that could be said. Refer to [http://www.nalp.edu.au](http://www.nalp.edu.au) for further information.
hump-backed and bow-legged, with a front and razor-sharp teeth. But unlike all other tunas, he is not very extremely bad temper. He is like to...
Synopsis of the story

This is a very funny story about a lovable loser called Stanley who is falsely imprisoned in a bizarre juvenile detention centre, where inmates must dig holes in order to 'build character'. When Stanley decides to take charge of his own destiny, his luck finally changes.

Stories involving the main characters’ ancestors are woven into the main narrative.

Theme

It’s about destiny bringing people together but it’s also about people taking control of their own destiny. The main characters search for the truth about themselves and their families.

Why use this story?

*Holes* is a very amusing story written for young adults. Like modern fable, it has a moral. This critically acclaimed, award-winning book provides several excellent examples of writers’ techniques, including an action–reaction sequence.

*Holes* is an amusing narrative. Two other stories woven into the main narrative include episodes involving the ancestors of the main characters, shedding light on their linked destinies. The narratives converge at the resolution.

Structure of the text

*Holes* is actually three stories in one. Each story is a narrative with an orientation, complication and resolution structure.

The chart below maps out the complicated structure of the book. This should help teachers to discuss the structure of the stories with students. It could be enlarged and put on display in the classroom.
The parallel stories – Stanley’s story

Orientations

Chapters 1–28
- Setting – Camp Green Lake.
- Stanley’s personality.
- The family curse, fatalistic attitude, ‘wrong place at wrong time’.
- Recount of Stanley’s incarceration.
- Digging holes (building character) and looking for something ‘interesting’.
- Stanley finds object – turns out to belong to Kate Barlow.
- Warden is looking for something specific.
- Description of lizards.
- Stanley is changing – becoming more resourceful, less of a victim, more calculating.
- Begins to teach Zero (who is a maths genius) to read in exchange for help digging.
- Zero is black.

Complications

Chapters 29–42
- Stanley sees ‘God’s thumb’.
- Zero runs away and Stanley later follows.
- Stanley finds Zero underneath (Sam’s) upturned boat.
- Zero’s been surviving on ‘Sploosh’ (KB’s peaches).
- They both nearly die of thirst.
- Zero reveals he stole the sneakers.
- Stanley carries Zero to top of mountain where they recover by eating onions and drinking muddy water.
- Stanley begins to think he can change his destiny.
- Stanley is happy for the first time.

Resolutions

Chapters 43–49
- Boys decide to return and dig for Kate’s treasure.
- Meanwhile, authorities have realised Stanley is innocent.
- Boys find treasure and are safe from lizards.
- Stanley refuses to leave Camp without Zero.
- Stanley’s father has finally invented something viable – a foot odour product.
- Rain begins to fall on the lake.
- Warden’s name is ‘Walker’, a descendent of Charles (Trout) Walker.
### The parallel stories – Elya’s story

#### Orientations

**Chapter 7**
- Elya yearns to marry Myra.
- He is an unusual boy, preferring the company of Mme Zeroni.

#### Complications

**Chapter 7 (cont)**
- Elya needed a fat pig.
- His broken agreement with Madame Zeroni.
- Goes to America and has a **cursed** life which he passes on to descendents.

#### Resolutions

**Chapter 50**
- Stanley breaks the Yelnats’ curse.
- Invention made after a Yelnats carried a Zeroni up the mountain.

### The parallel stories – Kate’s story

#### Orientations

**Chapters 23–24**
- Camp Green Lake 100 years ago.
- Kate Barlow.
- Sam the onion man.

#### Complications

**Chapters 24–26**
- Sam and Kate fall in love.
- Sam is drowned by townspeople.
- Kate becomes an outlaw for 20 years. Kisses the men she kills.

### Tying together/Coda

**Chapter 50**
- Camp Green Lake becomes a Girl Scout Camp!
- ‘Sploosh’ a big financial success.
- Zero's long-lost mother sings a lullaby that her grandmother taught her.
Resolutions

Chapter 28
- Kate returns to dry Green Lake.
- Charles Walker tortures Kate to get her loot.
- Kate bitten by lizard and dies.
- Her last words are ‘Start digging’.

Tying together/Coda (Part Three)

Chapter 49
Sam’s onion juice makes people safe from lizards.

The parallel stories – (Stanley Yelnats The First’s story.)

Complications

Chapter 21
Stanley’s grandfather stranded by Kissin’ Kate in the desert.

Resolutions

Chapter 21
Stanley’s grandfather rescued. Survived thanks to God’s Thumb.

Tying together/Coda

Chapter 50
Kate’s loot is the stock she stole from Stanley’s grandfather.

Language features of the text

Passage one
- The story is narrated by a third person who knows and shares the thoughts and motivations of the main character. Sequences of events and thoughts are often revealed through Stanley’s reflections. Dialogue is often used to reveal aspects of the other characters’ personalities. Therefore, most information about the other characters needs to be inferred by the reader.
- The author frequently uses words, phrases and clauses telling ‘how’, ‘when’, ‘where’, and ‘why’ to elaborate on events or processes. This:
  – makes the writing explicit
  – provides the details readers need to understand the passage of events
  – provides the details readers need to visualise settings and actions.
• Louis Sachar pays special attention to elaborating on where: the lake is almost like another main character. The three parallel stories all occur at the lake. This book is very much about the effect place has on people’s lives. (See Louis Sachar’s website for his own account of the writing of *Holes*.)

• Sachar also uses plenty of colourful verbs (eg *torment, arrested, dropped, retrieved, missed, copy, fell, figure out, provide, holding, thinking, pulled, asked, turned out, stolen, auctioned, expected, delayed*) and varies the conjunctions used to expand clauses (eg *because, that, and, while, when, or, then, who, but, just*).

• The author starts sentences carefully, to stage the story and to emphasise important points. (eg *Back at school, On the day Stanley was arrested, By the time, It was while he was walking home, Stanley took it, They hadn’t exactly, Thinking back now, Stanley couldn’t help but think, Because of the baseball schedule, It wasn’t destiny, It turned out, Stanley told the truth*).

**Passage two**

• In passage two, events are staged using sentence or clause beginnings such as *suddenly, instantly and this time*.

• As this is a fast-paced action–reaction sequence, there is more emphasis on Stanley’s thoughts and reactions. Some sentences start with *He* rather than ‘Stanley’ to give events a greater feeling of urgency.

• The author adds plenty of colourful verbs (eg *lurched, jerked, gripped, accelerated, pressed, bounced, slammed, exploded, staring, stuck, sighed, blame, managed, glanced, staring, strapped, reminded*).

• The author uses shorter sentences (and consequently fewer conjunctions) in order maintain a sense of pace and urgency.

**Books with similar themes**

*A bridge to Wiseman’s Cove* and *Rowan of Rin* could be used to extend discussion about writing techniques and the stance the authors take towards their main characters.
Accelerated Literacy teaching
Teaching the sequence

The National Accelerated Literacy Program consists of a cycle of interrelated activities based on a sequence beginning with literate orientation and focused on one selected text. The text may vary from a short, illustrated story written for early childhood students to several carefully selected passages from a longer book intended for older students.

Teachers spend, on average, an hour and a half a day teaching Accelerated Literacy. The total number of weeks spent on a text across a sequence of consecutive lessons will vary according to the age of the students and the complexity of the text.

Low and high order literate orientation are carried out before reading. The other strategies use the students’ fluent reading of and common knowledge about a text as teaching resources for extending their literacy competence.

Further information on the teaching sequence can be found at http://www.nalp.edu.au.
In the classroom
The teaching sequence on *Holes* aims to teach:

- how to read the study passages at 90 per cent accuracy or above
- how to discuss the story, including the meaning and inferences contained in the author’s language choices
- how to spell fluently and write clearly the words taught as part of the teaching sequence
- how to write, with appropriate teacher support, about a character who acts in unexpected ways because he or she thinks differently from others
- how to write, with appropriate teacher support about a character who acts and thinks in an unexpected way or, an action–reaction sequence that includes a character’s thoughts.

**Literate orientation**

Literate orientation is a pre-reading strategy that prepares students to read the study text fluently, accurately and independently. The teacher models a literate orientation to the text and discusses why the author made certain language choices. Literate orientation consists of two components: low order literate orientation and high order literate orientation. Both are equally important.

In low order literate orientation the teacher starts the process of ‘pointing the students’ brains’ at the text by modelling a literate interpretation of the text, including its illustrations when necessary.

In high order literate orientation the teacher shifts the students’ focus from general considerations to a close examination of the author’s wording in the text. The teacher systematically models how to attend closely to the language features of the text and how they construct meaning.

**Low order literate orientation – Whole book**

**Overview**

The story chronicles the trials and tribulations of Stanley Yelnats, a boy falsely accused of theft and sent to a Camp as an alternative to prison. Camp Green Lake is like no other Camp. There is no lake, there is nothing green and the inmates dig useless holes every day. As Stanley develops relationships and gradually suspects the truth about the Camp activities, he also grows more independent and less passive. He finally takes control of his life and so sets off a chain of events that see the evil Camp transformed and the dry lake filled with water once again. Stanley, his family and his friend Zero finally put their lives back on track.
Teaching focus

- Camp Green Lake almost feels like a character and dominates the story.
- Stanley’s attitude to life is initially fatalistic but later he accepts that he can control his own destiny.
- If the boys are just digging holes to build character, why do they get time off if they find something interesting?
- Does Stanley, or indeed any of the boys, deserve such a severe punishment?
- Two other stories, related to Stanley’s ancestors, influence his destiny and are very important parts of Stanley’s story.

Teaching focus

- We learn about a place called Camp Green Lake. Far from being a happy kids’ camp, it sounds forbidding and dangerous. The lake is dry. There is a Warden. There are rattlesnakes, scorpions and yellow-spotted lizards.

Teaching focus

- Now we are told what Camp Green Lake really is. Stanley is introduced. We learn that he has been incarcerated.

Teaching focus

- This chapter begins to fill in the details. Stanley's father is trying to invent a way to recycle sneakers. Stanley has been convicted of a crime he didn’t commit. He is not a happy kid, and his family seem to be afflicted with bad luck too. They all blame the curse of Stanley’s no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather, the first Stanley Yelnats, who was rich until his stagecoach was robbed by Kissin’ Kate Barlow.

Teaching focus

- Stanley’s first impressions of Camp Green Lake. It’s hot, dry and desolate. The boys must dig a big hole every morning and report anything they find.

Teaching focus

- Stanley is assigned to Mr Pendanski’s tent and meets some of his fellow inmates: Squid, X-Ray, Zero, Magnet, Armpit and Zigzag. Mr Pendanski’s nickname is ‘Mom’.

Teaching focus

- We learn what Stanley did to get sent to Camp Green Lake. Through a series of unfortunate events, he was falsely accused and convicted of stealing his hero baseball player’s sneakers, which were to be auctioned for charity.
As Stanley digs his first hole, we learn the sad story of Elya Yelnats, Stanley’s famous great-great-grandfather.

In the story, Elya strikes a deal with Madame Zeroni to win the heart of a girl he loves. His part of the bargain is to carry Zeroni up a particular mountain. If he doesn’t, he and his ancestors will be doomed forever.

Elya eventually realises that his love is empty-headed and gives up his idea of marrying her. Sailing away to America, he realises he’s forgotten to fulfil his part of the bargain, but tells himself he doesn’t believe in curses.

Later he marries a good woman in America and they have a son (the first Stanley Yelnats), but bad luck seems to follow them around. Elya looks for Madame Zeroni’s son, who is also in America, to beg forgiveness.

Teaching focus

Back to the present. The region’s deadly yellow-spotted lizards are described. They like to live in deep holes.

Teaching focus

Stanley has a strange conversation with Zero. Zero asks him if the shoes he was accused of stealing had red Xs on them.

Sore and aching, Stanley begins his second hole. He finds a fossilised fish and hopes he will get the rest of the day off, but alas it seems the elusive Warden is not interested in fossils.

Teaching focus

X-Ray (the leader of the group) asks Stanley to hand over anything else he finds because his eyesight is poor. Stanley agrees so as to keep in favour with X-Ray.

Teaching focus

Stanley arrives back at Camp for a therapy session run by Mr Pendanski (Mom). Mom tries to encourage the boys to accept responsibility for their plight. Stanley still feels that it is his great-great-grandfather who has got him into this mess.

Teaching focus

Stanley finds something in his hole. It is a small gold tube with KB etched on one end. He gives it to X-Ray, as promised.
Teaching focus

- X-Ray pretends to find the gold tube in his hole, and Mom goes to fetch the Warden, a rather frightening, authoritarian woman. She is very interested in the find and instructs the boys to dig around where X-Ray said he found the gold tube. Stanley realises that they are not digging holes to build character, but are really looking for something. He commits to memory the position of the hole, where he actually found the object.

Teaching focus

- The Warden continues to make the boys dig around X-Ray’s hole. Stanley receives a letter from his mother. She thinks Stanley’s father is close to a breakthrough with his invention. Zero is interested in Stanley’s letter and reveals more about himself.

Teaching focus

- After more than a week of digging around X-Ray’s hole, life gets back to ‘normal’ when the Warden gives up on finding anything else. Zero reveals he can’t read or write and asks Stanley to teach him. Stanley refuses.

Teaching focus

- When Magnet steals Mr Sir’s sack of sunflower seeds, Stanley gets the blame but doesn’t implicate any of the other boys. He is taken to the Warden who is annoyed with Mr Sir for bothering her with this incident and scratches him on the face. The Warden’s nail polish is made from rattlesnake venom.

Teaching focus

- As Stanley walks back to his hole, he thinks about his ancestor and Kissin’ Kate Barlow. His great-grandfather survived for 17 days in the desert and claimed he found refuge on God’s Thumb. Afterwards he couldn’t explain what he had meant.

Teaching focus

- Stanley’s hole has been dug in his absence; he realises that Zero has done this.

Teaching focus

- When Stanley thanks Zero, he says something strange. He says that Stanley didn’t steal the sneakers. Stanley offers to teach him to read, and they make a deal whereby Zero helps Stanley dig, so they have more time for reading lessons.

- Stanley realises that the tube he found is from a lipstick and that the initials ‘KB’ could very well belong to Kissin’ Kate Barlow.
Teaching focus

- Back to the ancestors. We learn that, 110 years ago, Green Lake was large, cool and beautiful. Katherine Barlow was the town’s only schoolteacher. She refused to marry the rich, loud and stupid Trout Walker, a man not used to hearing the word ‘No’.

Teaching focus

- Back to the present. Mr Sir pays Stanley back for the Warden’s poisonous scratches by pouring his water onto the ground. Stanley must go thirsty.

Teaching focus

- Back to the ancestors. We meet Sam the onion man, whose onion remedies work miracles. Kate Barlow and Sam fall in love, but are condemned by the bigoted townsfolk because Sam is black. Led by Trout Walker, they destroy the schoolhouse and murder Sam. Ever since then not a drop of rain has fallen on Green Lake. Kate Barlow shot the sheriff (leaving a lipstick imprint on his face) and spends the next 20 years as an outlaw.

Teaching focus

- Back to the present. Zero reveals his real name is Hector Zeroni. It’s the same name as the old Egyptian woman, Madame Zeroni, from Elya’s story.

Teaching focus

- Back to the ancestors. Kate is confronted by Trout Walker and his wife, who demand she hand over her loot. Kate refuses to reveal where the treasure is. She is bitten by a yellow spotted lizard, and dies telling them to ‘start digging’.

Teaching focus

- Back to the present. When lightning flashes far away, Stanley glimpses a rock formation that looks a little like a fist and a thumb. He thinks about his great-grandfather who survived the desert, and attributed this to ‘God’s Thumb’.

Teaching focus

- The boys become very angry about Zero helping Stanley dig. The Warden finds out about it, insults Zero and forbids Stanley to teach him. Zero loses control completely, attacks Mom and then escapes into the desert. Nobody chases him because they know he can’t get far without water.
Teaching focus

- Stanley wonders whether he should after Zero. The Warden and Mom erase all Zero’s records so they won't get into trouble. This Camp is beginning to look very suspect.

Teaching focus

- Stanley spontaneously escapes the camp to try to find Zero. He has no water.

Teaching focus

- Stanley heads towards God’s Thumb.

Teaching focus

- Stanley finds a very weak Zero beneath a boat. He has been surviving on what he calls Sploosh: jars of old preserves. Stanley realises that he can’t take him back and so looks towards God’s Thumb, hoping there may be water there.

Teaching focus

- They head towards the mountain, Zero is experiencing crippling stomach pain from the Sploosh.

Teaching focus

- They get to the bottom of the mountain and Zero collapses.
- Stanley carries him up the mountain and, digging a hole, finds them an onion and some muddy water.
- Zero confesses to Stanley he was the one who stole Clyde Livingston’s shoes.

Teaching focus

- Back to the ancestors. We are reminded of the medicinal qualities of Sam the onion man’s onions.
- Back in the present, Stanley finds more wild onions. The boys sleep, eat onions, drink the dirty water and begin to get their strength back. Stanley is amazed at how far up the steep mountain he has been able to carry Zero.

Teaching focus

- As the boys rest and recuperate, they share details of their lives. Zero stole the sneakers because he thought they were old and had no value. When the fuss started, he panicked and put them on a car. Then he was arrested the next day for stealing a new pair of shoes.
- If he had kept Clyde Livingston’s shoes, neither of them would have been sent to Camp Green Lake.
Teaching focus

- The boys become strong and explore God’s Thumb. There is desert all around them and they have no option but to eventually return to the Camp. A crazy idea to do with Kate Barlow and buried loot grows in Stanley’s mind. He asks Zero if he will dig one more hole.
- Stanley is beginning to view destiny in a positive light.

Teaching focus

- The boys head back to search for buried treasure in the hole where the lipstick tube was really found.

Teaching focus

- When night falls, they start digging. Finally they hit something hard. It’s a metal suitcase. The Warden appears at the top of the hole and sarcastically thanks them for their efforts.
- A change in the weather signals a change in the boys’ fate.

Teaching focus

- As the Warden starts to gloat, yellow-spotted lizards appear and begin to climb all over Stanley and Zero; they are standing in a lizard nest! The Camp staff callously wait for the boys to be bitten and die. The Warden reveals that the hole-digging started with her ancestors, Trout Walker and his wife. She has been looking for this suitcase ever since she was a child.

Teaching focus

- The Camp staff discuss their strategy for dealing with Stanley and Zero’s imminent deaths. It emerges that, while he was away, Stanley’s innocence has been established.
- Amazingly, the boys are not bitten by the lizards.

Teaching focus

- The next morning, a lawyer arrives and argues with the Warden about Stanley’s release. The Warden concocts a story to protect herself, accusing Stanley and Zero of stealing the suitcase from her cabin. As they argue back and forth, the two boys carefully climb out of the hole. The suitcase has the name ‘Stanley Yelnats’ inscribed on it. It is the loot stolen from his great-grandfather.
Stanley is free to leave the Camp, but refuses to leave Zero. However, when the lawyer and Attorney General look for Zero’s file they find no records anywhere, so they are able to take him away too.

As the boys leave the camp, it rains for the first time in 100 years. We learn that the onions protected Stanley and Zero from the lizards.

We learn that Stanley’s father has finally invented a new product, a foot deodorant that smells like peaches. Coincidentally or not, he invented it the day after Stanley (the great-great-grandson of Elya Yelnats) carried Zero (the great-great-great-grandson of Madame Zeroni) up the mountain. The curse has been broken.

Tying up loose ends, the author tells us that Camp Green Lake becomes a Girl Guide Camp, Stanley and Zero become millionaires from the treasure in the suitcase, and Zero finds his mother. Everyone is content.

Read the story aloud

Having read the whole book, sections at a time, you may choose to read the whole book or parts of it again, particularly the sections that include the study passages. This rereading will help keep the study passages in context.

Refine the focus to the study passages

Once you have made a start on reading the book and have read at least the first six chapters, return to passage one to start looking at the author’s language choices in detail.

Low order literate orientation – Passage one

In the orientation to this story the author’s strategy is to provide little bits of information about the setting and character while withholding vital information. Readers, therefore, have to keep reading to find out what is going on. The author:

- describes the setting: Camp Green Lake – which was not a green lake at all but a desolate and dangerous place. The author makes it sound quite sinister. This description raises the question, ‘Who would go there?’
- introduces the main character: the author introduces Stanley by name and provides some interesting information about him – he is at the camp which is a camp for bad boys. Stanley comes from a poor family and has never been to camp. This information is all very tantalising.
The author then:

- relates how Stanley gets to the camp – the author does this in a way that aligns readers on Stanley’s side. He is innocent. Early in the story then, readers identify with Stanley and feel sorry for him.
- introduces other characters – on Stanley’s arrival at camp the author describes the staff and some of the students as he describes what happens to Stanley.

After all this information, most of which describes the present, the author takes readers back into the past and describes what Stanley did that led to him being in a camp for bad boys.

The passage chosen for study leaves readers in no doubt that Stanley Yelnats was a ‘loser’. It is important to understand Stanley and why he behaves the way he does. At the beginning of the book the author portrays Stanley as someone who doesn’t question the things that happen to him. He accepts his fate with good humour because he believes his family is cursed and there is nothing he can do about a curse.

**Complete the teaching sequence, high order literate orientation, transformations, spelling and writing on passage one before beginning work on passage two.**

**Low order literate orientation – Passage two**

**Teaching focus**

Stanley has been fretting about Zero’s disappearance for days. He finally takes advantage of the opportunity to steal the water truck in order to drive onto the Lake and rescue Zero. Of course, Stanley’s youth and inexperience cause him immediately to crash the truck into one of the many holes. But even though he fears failure, he continues after Zero and into a place with which he is beginning to feel he has, through his ancestors, some strong connection. This passage shows Stanley taking responsibility for his actions for the first time, instead of blaming the family curse.

This passage is a good example of an action/reaction sequence that includes a character’s thoughts. The clauses are short and denote fast action.
High order literate orientation – Passage one

Text (pages 23-25)

Teaching focus

This passage explains how Stanley Yelnats came to be at Camp Green Lake. How does the author portray Stanley as a likeable loser?

### Structure of text and wording

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stanley was bullied by a much smaller boy</th>
<th>Why language choices were made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>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.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Only a real loser would allow himself to be bullied by a much smaller child. But perhaps, if Stanley had retaliated, he would have been perceived as a bully? What looks to be weakness on Stanley’s part could also be seen as fairness.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Recount of the day Stanley was arrested: a specific example of bullying

| **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.** | **If it was a long game of come-and-get-it, Stanley must have been tormented for some time. He must have felt terrible, but he didn’t hurt Derrick.** |

### Consequences

| **By the time Stanley retrieved it, he had missed his bus and had to walk home.** | **Readers don’t know exactly how far away Stanley lived from his school but if he usually caught a bus then it was probably quite a long way. Stanley was ‘big’ so he would have found walking quite tiring.** |

### What happened next

| **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.** | **Stanley must have felt miserable enough as he walked home after a day at school but the knowledge that his notebook was wet and he would have to copy it all out again (indicated by the words the prospect of) must have been very depressing.** |
Literate orientation – High order

Expansion that brings readers back to the courtroom: Stanley restates his version of the event in speech

“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.

Having Stanley talk about the event in this naively honest way really identifies him as a loser. He didn’t think about how the judge would see his explanation.

Expansion that qualifies Stanley’s explanation

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.

Why didn’t Stanley explain this event in a more reasonable way? Stanley is someone who states things as they appear to him, without attempting to make them sound reasonable.

Stanley’s thoughts about the shoes

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.

Stanley is clearly lacking in commonsense. He does not seem equipped to live in the real world.

Comment

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.

In making this comment the author addresses readers to remind them of something. He refers back to Clyde Livingston (nicknamed Sweet Feet) and lightens Stanley’s sad tale with a joke.

Return to Stanley’s thoughts

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 felt like he was holding destiny’s shoes.

Once again, we learn that Stanley thinks quite differently from the average person. He seems preoccupied with the idea of fate or destiny.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The next action</th>
<th>Stanley is at Camp Green Lake reflecting on the events leading to his arrest. He wasn’t sure why he ran tells the reader that Stanley acted without thinking of the consequences, just as he spoke without thinking of the consequences. He may have run because he felt he held the key to his family’s destiny. He may have run to banish thoughts of his painful day at school.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stanley’s thoughts</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The next action</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment</td>
<td>The police made the assumption that anyone running from the scene of a crime, and without a reasonable explanation for having the shoes, was guilty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comment</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The next action</td>
<td>These shoes were no ordinary sneakers. The law would come down hard on someone who was stealing from such a good cause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The next action</strong></td>
<td>Because of the baseball schedule, Stanley’s trial was delayed several months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clyde Livingston’s thoughts</strong></td>
<td>Clyde Livingston is so important and famous that the trial is held up until it is convenient for him to attend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>His mother’s thoughts</strong></td>
<td>His parents couldn’t afford a lawyer. “You don’t need a lawyer,” his mother had said. “Just tell the truth.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stanley’s parents sound as naive as him.</strong></td>
<td>Stanley’s parents sound as naive as him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Stanley’s upbringing has conditioned him to believe in destiny. He is unprepared to cope with unusual events and to understand that his story would sound silly and false to strangers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Stanley’s thoughts** |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| It wasn’t destiny, he realized. It was his no-good-dirty-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather! | Stanley is not taking responsibility for his life. To him, everything is controlled by either good luck (destiny) or bad luck (the curse from his no-good-dirty-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather). |

| **Comment** |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------|
| The judge called Stanley’s crime despicable. | The judge completely misreads the sort of person Stanley is and readers know Stanley was preoccupied with his own misery at the time the shoes appeared. |

| **What the judge believed** |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| “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.” |  |

| **What happened next** |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 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.” | At face value, a Camp doesn’t sound too dreadful. The judge sounds as if he cares about Stanley’s future. Stanley’s parents don’t have much choice. If they take the time to investigate the Camp, Stanley will lose his spot and go to jail. The fact that vacancies don’t last long makes the Camp sound rather attractive. |
## High order literate orientation – Passage two

Text (page 148)

Teaching focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure of text and wording</th>
<th>Why language choices were made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The truck lurched forward.</em></td>
<td>Stanley is not really in control, as the truck assumes a life of its own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reactions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanley jerked back against the seat and tightly gripped the wheel as the truck accelerated. His foot was pressed to the floor.</td>
<td>It sounds as if Stanley is panicking, and completely unable to drive. Stanley’s first reaction is involuntary as his body responds to the truck’s violent movement forward. His second reaction is controlled, as he holds onto the steering wheel as tight as he can. We learned that the truck is accelerating, now we learn why. Stanley is driving in a very dangerous fashion because his foot (on the accelerator) is actually pressed to the floor, so the truck will keep accelerating. The faster the truck goes, the tighter Stanley will have to hold onto the steering wheel and the less control he will have over the direction the truck is going.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The truck went faster and faster across the dry lake bed. It bounced over a pile of dirt.</em></td>
<td>If the reader is hoping that Stanley has finally done something clever, they will be disappointed here. We know that if there’s a pile of dirt, a hole isn’t too far away.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reactions/Expansions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suddenly Stanley was slammed forward, then instantly backward.</td>
<td>We find out about Stanley’s involuntary physical reactions before we find out the reason for them. The information is withheld to build suspense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as an airbag exploded in his face.</td>
<td>We find out what caused Stanley to be slammed instantly backward: the force of an airbag exploding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He fell out of the open door and onto the ground.</td>
<td>A door has been open the whole time! Stanley really didn’t know how to drive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explanation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He had driven straight into a hole.</td>
<td>Now we finally find out why Stanley was suddenly slammed forward and the airbag was activated: the truck had driven into a hole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reactions: Physical and mental</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He lay on the dirt staring at the truck, which stuck lopsided into the ground.</td>
<td><em>Staring at the truck</em> implies he is finally thinking about what just happened. Stanley appears to be OK, though he realises that he has blown it as far as being able to drive across the lake goes. Stanley sighs because he is about to admit to himself that this whole debacle was his fault and no-one else’s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He couldn’t blame his no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather this time. This time it was his own fault, one hundred percent. He had probably just done the stupidest thing he had ever done in his short and miserable life.</td>
<td>Stanley could have blamed the family curse, but he has changed since his experiences at the camp. Accepting responsibility for his actions is probably the smartest thing he has ever done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He managed to get to his feet. He was sore</td>
<td>After an accident like that, it is hard for Stanley to get himself up off the ground.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>but didn’t think he had broken any bones.</td>
<td>Stanley’s luck is changing already!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He glanced back at Mr Sir,</td>
<td>A glance is not much of a look. Stanley just wants to see what Mr Sir was doing. Mr Sir probably isn’t very far away, Stanley hasn’t got very far before the crash.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
who remained where he was, staring at Stanley.

Mr Sir didn’t chase Stanley and we all know why: the same reason the staff didn’t chase Zero. They didn’t think that anyone could survive in the desert without water. Mr Sir was just watching what Stanley did without any expression on his face. He was probably thinking that Stanley would give up now and come back to Camp.

He ran.

Stanley probably surprised himself by running. Remember this was his reaction after the sneakers fell on his head. He certainly didn’t think about it first; if he had, he would have got some water from the truck before he left.

His canteen was strapped around his neck.

To make sure the reader starts to think about the problem of water outside the camp, the author tells us about Stanley’s canteen, which was still strapped around his neck.

It banged against his chest as he ran, and every time it hit against him, it reminded him that it was empty, empty, empty.

This is an ominous reminder of just how much trouble Stanley is now in. You can’t survive in the desert without water. We want to read on and find out how Stanley survives without water and if he finds Zero.

Transformations

Transformations is an activity designed to change students’ orientation to the text under consideration, from that of a reader looking for meaning to that of a writer learning how the author used various literary techniques to achieve a particular effect or purpose.

In addition, transformations provides a key opportunity for ‘handover’ of understanding about the language choices in the text. The questioning techniques in this part of the teaching sequence reflect the growing common knowledge shared between class members, and between class members and the teacher. A successful handover might mean, for example, that there is less need for preformation.
Transformations – Passage one

Purpose

Students will learn about and then use the writing techniques exemplified in this passage. To do this, they will need to understand that the author:

- helps the reader empathise with 'lovable loser' Stanley and his family by using Stanley's reflections
- includes information which has particular relevance for the development of the story (eg the family's perception of destiny)
- skilfully foreshadows future events (eg the importance of Clyde Livingston, foot odour, the bullying, and Stanley’s development).

Teaching focus

This passage describes the events leading up to Stanley's undeserved incarceration at Camp Green Lake, while at the same time giving the reader a very clear insight into Stanley’s character. Stanley is dominated by a fatalistic attitude to life, and so becomes powerless when his situation requires constructive thought or action.

The reader already has sympathy for Stanley. We already know that he is innocent and that Camp life is going to be horrendous, and now we learn that he was being bullied at school. However, later, the judge, the Camp authorities and even his parents all also fail to protect him. Stanley is a victim.

Note: Teachers need to decide where to cut in these transformations, as appropriate to their lesson goals.

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.

Background information

This incident is pivotal. If Stanley hadn’t been bullied and missed his bus, he would never have been sentenced to Camp Green Lake. (In fact, an alternative title that Louis Sachar considered was ‘Wrong place, wrong time, wrong kid’.)
Stanley’s unexpected explanation of events
The reader now knows that Stanley was the sort of person who took whatever life dished up without reflection or complaint. So if his first impression was that the sneakers fell from the sky, that’s what he would believe.

Contrast this with what a reader might say: for example, the sneakers came from ‘out of the blue’ and that they don’t exactly know where the shoes came from.

Author’s comment
The author then explains what really happened, so we know the truth behind Stanley's wacky version of events, and the connection with Clyde Livingston and foot odour problems.

Stanley’s unexpected explanation of events (continued)
The author explains why Stanley thinks like this. His family is predisposed to judge events as either good or bad luck.

Author’s comment
The author continues to position Stanley as an innocent. He is also foreshadowing future events.

Stanley’s unexpected explanation of events (cont)
The author emphasises the way that Stanley and his family look for signs of fate or destiny in their lives. They don’t believe in coincidences. Finding a pair of sneakers in this unusual way would seem like good luck rather than coincidence to a family that blamed a curse for everything bad that happened to them.

Stanley’s reaction: Physical and mental
The author is using Stanley’s reflections to continue the account of his arrest and to allow the reader to empathise with Stanley’s plight. The details of Stanley’s questioning and arrest are left to the reader to infer. The reader now has even more sympathy for Stanley. We’ve all been in the position where we couldn’t explain something properly or just weren’t believed.

“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 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. It had hurt, too.

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.”

**Why include the bit about the homeless shelter and the auction?**
The reader needs to know why these sneakers are worth a lot of money and why the judge was so disgusted with Stanley. The sneakers belonged to a famous sportsman who had once been homeless and had made something of his life. This is a contrast with Stanley, the loser, and his family.

This contrast emphasises Stanley’s powerlessness. Clyde is so famous and important that the trial date is arranged around his baseball schedule. Stanley is not even represented by a lawyer, which should be everyone’s right.

**Stanley’s action**
The author wants us to think about these issues. Would it have been better for Stanley to lie and escape prison? Or is it better to be true to yourself?

An intriguing reference. Sachar will explain this later, but for the moment he just leaves it dangling.

**The consequences**
This part justifies the judge’s sentence. The reader knows that the judge is wrong about Stanley wanting a souvenir, although Stanley is a big fan of Clyde. Stanley is not despicable, he is just a victim who obviously didn’t have the opportunity to appeal against the judgement or sentence.

Now the reader is fully up to speed with where Stanley is and why. The harsh verdict of the judge is tempered a little by his suggestion that a disciplined camp life would benefit Stanley. The reader is completely on Stanley’s side.
Transformations – Passage two

Purpose

Students will learn about and then use the writing techniques exemplified in this passage. To do this, they will need to understand that:

- authors write action/reaction sequences to create fast-paced suspense and excitement
- Stanley’s thoughts, along with comments from the author, fill out details of the action and enhance our visual images
- writing as if the truck has a mind of its own is a way of emphasising Stanley’s powerlessness.

Teaching focus

Points for discussion

Action
The author is writing about the truck as if it is alive and controlling its own movement. By using the word *lurched* the author implies its movement is not smooth like a machine but rough and unsteady like an animal pouncing.

Reaction
Short, snappy clauses match the pace of the action.
Again, it is the truck, and not Stanley, that is doing the accelerating. The author writes as if Stanley is not consciously driving, but just managing to hold on.

The author uses the word *He* rather than *Stanley* to increase the pace.
He hadn’t been able to avoid the hole because he wasn’t in control of the truck at any time. We weren’t told whether he was even looking out the windscreen. It almost seems that Stanley aimed for the hole. When you have had bad luck all your life and you steal a truck, you would probably wreck it in the first few minutes. This is typical of Stanley’s luck.

Continue with transformations on the remainder of passage two.

**Explanation**

Here is the explanation for what has been happening to Stanley. He hadn’t been able to avoid the hole because he wasn’t in control of the truck at any time. We weren’t told whether he was even looking out the windscreen. It almost seems that Stanley aimed for the hole. When you have had bad luck all your life and you steal a truck, you would probably wreck it in the first few minutes. This is typical of Stanley’s luck.

Spelling

The spelling segment of the Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence follows transformations once the teacher is reasonably sure that students are able to recognise many of the words from the text out of context. Teachers are then able to use the students’ ability to hold a stable image of a word in their memory to show how that word can be broken into letter pattern chunks. Spelling activities include joint reconstructed writing.

**How to choose spelling words**

Keep the following points in mind when choosing words to work on in spelling:

- Are there any words that have patterns (or letters) that students have worked on before?
- Are there any new patterns that occur more than once or are commonly occurring?
- Are there any words that have interesting origins or roots that will help students develop an understanding of English?
- Which words will help students with joint reconstructed writing?
- Which words that students have already been taught need revision?
- Consider students’ age and stage of spelling development.

**Suggestions for spelling**

Passage one includes words that contain the –ie– pattern (eg retrieved, believed). There are many compound words in the first passage; these are listed below. The suffix –ed could be taught from both passages. Orthographic rules such as when to double the last consonant, and when to add –d or –ed will need to be pointed out to students.
Examples from passage one

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>–ie–</th>
<th>–ea–</th>
<th>–ee–</th>
<th>–oo–</th>
<th>–ou–</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>re/tr</td>
<td>t/ea</td>
<td>s/ee</td>
<td>sch/oo</td>
<td>ou/t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i/e</td>
<td>ch/er</td>
<td>m/ing/ly</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ve/d</td>
<td>ea/k</td>
<td>ea/t</td>
<td>ea/t</td>
<td>ea/t</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compound words
note/book, some/how, rest/room, along/side, free/way, police/man, over/pass, there/after, any/thing, base/ball

When working on passage two, the –ie– pattern could be revised and extended with the words retrieving, pieces and lied. The suffix –ed could also be taught from this passage. Orthographic rules such as when to double the last consonant, and when to add –ed or –d, will need to be pointed out to students.

Examples from passage two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>–ea–</th>
<th>–ee–</th>
<th>–ai–</th>
<th>–ain–</th>
<th>–ou–</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>s/ea</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>a/g</td>
<td>a/g</td>
<td>b/ou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ea/</td>
<td>/ing</td>
<td>/n/st</td>
<td>/n/ed</td>
<td>/nce/d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gr/ea/t</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Etymology

Etymological information on selected words is always interesting for students. Many websites, as well as dictionaries and other books, provide etymological information. Two informative websites are http://www.etymonline.com and http://www.thefreedictionary.com.

Examples from passage one

retrieve: c.1650 from Old French, re– = again, trouver = to find

believe: Spelt beleeve until 1880 – changed possibly to conform with other words like retrieve, sieve

note/book – first used in 1579

over/pass –1929 American English
Examples from passage two

canteen: c.1710, from It. cantina ‘wine cellar, vault’. Meaning ‘small tin for water or liquor, carried by solders or campers, etc’ is from 1744

ground: O.E. grund ‘foundation, ground, surface of the earth’, especially ‘bottom of the sea’ (a sense preserved in run aground)

Joint reconstructed writing

Joint reconstructed writing provides a transition from spelling activities to writing activities and works best when taken from transformations. Joint reconstructed writing involves the teacher and students working together to reconstruct the text using the same words as the author. It successfully reduces the stress associated with working out what to write about, what to write and how to write it. Stress associated with spelling is greatly reduced, giving students the mental space to think about subject matter and language choices.

The teacher ‘thinks aloud’ to reconstruct a passage with the students, using the writer’s language choices. This is a culmination of all the shared knowledge built up so far about language choices used in the construction and positioning of particular phrases and includes the dimensions of letter formation, the role of initial consonants and blends, and visual patterns.

Examples

● Reconstruct the paragraph from passage one in which the author describes Stanley’s experiences of being bullied at school.
● In another lesson/s, reconstruct the parts where the author shares Stanley’s very idiosyncratic and revealing reflections about past events. These parts construct Stanley as an unusual person and a bit of a loser.
● Reconstruct paragraphs where the author uses the action/reaction sequence to create fast-faced excitement. These parts create a feeling of suspense and tension.

What you could say

Today we are going to be thinking and writing like Louis Sachar. Remember, it’s not until Chapter 6 that we are finally told why Stanley has been sent to this terrible place. We are going to write the bit where the author sets the scene for that fateful day. Remember, Stanley was being bullied again. The bullying is really important because if Stanley hadn’t missed his bus he wouldn’t have been under the overpass at exactly the moment the shoes were thrown over.
So what will I (Louis Sachar) say first about the bullying? Remember, I need to tell readers where it happened. That’s right. It was at school. And Stanley thinks about these events while he is trying to sleep on his first night at the Camp, far away, so he wrote *Back at school*. We need a capital letter *B* to start and then *ack*. Remember the *c* and the *k* go together as a pattern. We need a comma because next we introduce the bully and then say his name.

**Writing**

Writing activities should not be based only on patterning, but on a principled understanding of why writers use specific techniques. For example, it is not much use substituting words to write a ‘new’ sentence or paragraph if students do not know what the skill they are learning is about or when to use it.

Writing goals consist of goals for the whole teaching sequence (overall goals), as well as goals for individual lessons (short-term goals).

Goals for *Holes* would include:

- overall goals such as writing a story that includes a character constructed as a ‘loser’ providing an unusual explanation for events, an action/reaction sequence and a resolution
- short-term goals such as writing a passage in which a character provides an explanation for behaviour that is unexpected or unusual, but which nevertheless is the truth as the character sees it, or writing a passage detailing an action and reaction sequence, including a character’s thought processes.

**Workshops**

When introducing writing workshops, ensure that students understand how these techniques fit into the overall structure of the text and the passages studied, and why the author would choose to use them.

**Workshop one**

Discuss and list possible characters and events, and let the characters interpret those events in unexpected ways, which instead reveal things about the character. Think about Louis Sachar’s alternative title for this book, *Wrong place, wrong time, wrong kid*. 
Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
<th>How character constructed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teenager with a fancy watch.</td>
<td>Running from a jeweller’s shop which has just been vandalised.</td>
<td>‘It just jumped into my hand as I was running.’</td>
<td>As a thief running from the scene of the crime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man.</td>
<td>Man is in a parking lot where lots of cars have been stolen recently.</td>
<td>‘I wasn’t going to steal it.’ Forgets to say he didn’t want the battery to go flat.</td>
<td>Judged as car thief and blamed for all other thefts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Workshop two

Discuss and list some scenarios in which a character is reflecting upon past events. This technique is used by authors to fill in important details of the plot while creating empathy for the character.

Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Current situation</th>
<th>Reflections on past events</th>
<th>Readers’ attitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young girl.</td>
<td>Stuck at shopping centre with no money to get bus home. Will have to walk home in rain.</td>
<td>Maybe shouldn’t have given all her money to person asking for donations for survivors of tsunami.</td>
<td>Admire girl’s generosity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young boy.</td>
<td>No lunch at school and very hungry.</td>
<td>Maybe shouldn’t have rushed out the door without saying goodbye this morning, because mum would have reminded him to take lunch.</td>
<td>Feel sorry for boy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Workshop three

Write about machinery as if it is alive with a mind of its own. In the scenarios, the personification should contrast mechanical power and the characters' lack of power as shown in the following examples.

Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Machine</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Contrast with character</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Washing machine</td>
<td><em>Throwing out</em> wet clothes, <em>aiming</em> for the mud out the door.</td>
<td>Each time person puts clothes back, they are <em>sadistically heaved</em> back out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floor polisher</td>
<td><em>Gouging out</em> deep holes in lino and <em>dancing away</em> when character reaching for off switch.</td>
<td>Character can only hang on as machine <em>creates furrows</em> this way and that.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Workshop four

Passage two was studied to highlight the technique of a fast-paced action/reaction sequence in which the character is either running away from something or running towards something. The technique of action/reaction and revealing a character’s thoughts is useful to illustrate some fast action and create empathy for the character and it is very exciting to read.

Construct action/reaction sequences that include character/s’ thoughts or feelings in a way which matches the fast paced suspenseful action of what is being recounted.

Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action/Reaction</th>
<th>A person jumps on a horse to hurry towards some destination. The saddle slips one way and then another and eventually the horse throws its rider.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action/Reaction: explanation</td>
<td>The character thinks that maybe jumping on a horse when he or she can’t actually ride wasn’t very smart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action/Reaction: continuation.</td>
<td>However, the person keeps going in the same direction because of the urgency of the situation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Workshop five

The intention of looking at passage two for writing was to highlight the technique of a fast-paced action/reaction sequence in which the character is either running away from something or running towards something. Revealing that character’s thoughts during the sequence helps create empathy and excitement.

Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Reaction</th>
<th>Mental Process</th>
<th>Reaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A fox suddenly appeared in front of me with a squawking hen in its mouth.</td>
<td>I yelled and started to bang on the metal roof of the chook pen with my shovel.</td>
<td>The fox dropped the terrified hen and started to run round in circles.</td>
<td>I thought all this commotion would scare the hens half to death. So instead I opened the gate and quietly tried to hunt the fox out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A rider jumped onto a horse that was standing idly next to a tree so he could chase something.</td>
<td>The rider started to slip to the right then to the left, almost falling off.</td>
<td>The horse started to go faster as he realised that the rider was not in control.</td>
<td>Rider thinks that he shouldn't have even got on this animal that he didn't know how to ride. Rider falls off, stands up shakily but still runs in same direction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendices
Sample weekly plan

The following week’s plan is included as a guide only to the way teachers could move through the teaching sequence over a period of time. Parts of the session not finished can be picked up the next lesson. Teachers will need to introduce the subsequent lesson/s carefully so students know what to expect, what the purpose of the lesson is, and where they are within the teaching sequence.

As this sample weekly planner was used for authentic lessons, it shows links to previous lessons. Links to other activities are also included, but are suggestions only.
### Sample weekly plan

**Class:** Year 8  
**Text:** *Holes* by Louis Sachar  
**Week:** 1  
**Term:** 1

#### Teaching focus:
How Stanley's attitude to destiny changes over time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Low order literate orientation** | Introduce Stanley. Overview of stories and the connections between them.  
Purpose for using this text.  
Read Ch 1-6 | Brief recap and discussion.  
Read Ch 7-12 | Briefly revise story so far, foreshadow that life is about to change for Stanley. Remind students of the importance of the other stories. Discuss the character of Zero.  
Read Ch 13-22 | Brief recap and discussion.  
Introduce Kate and Sam's story. Read Ch 23-28 | Brief recap and discussion.  
Then Chapters 29–38. |

**Read story with the class. Students join in when they can.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High order literate orientation</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Back at school, a bully named Derrick Dunne used to torment Stanley... to... that the sneakers fell from the sky.  
Introduce the recount of the day Stanley was arrested.  
Focus on Stanley's character and empathise with his feelings. Discuss his unlikely explanation and his attitude towards destiny at the start of the story. The family 'curse'. | Nothing in Stanley's experience so far has made him doubt the 'curse'.  
"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.
Inferences needed to understand Stanley's attitude to destiny or fate. How could these events be described by a more sensible person? |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transformsions</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Back at school, a bully named Derrick Dunne used to torment Stanley... to... that the sneakers fell from the sky.  
Why background info needed.  
Author has set up Stanley to be 'in the wrong place at the wrong time'. | Continue from last lesson.  
Emphasise this event and Stanley's interpretation of it as pivotal.  
"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.
Stanley's unexpected explanation. His attitude to destiny. Author makes clear the influence of destiny on Stanley's behaviour. | 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.
Comments which refer to fatalistic way of looking at life |

|----------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Back at school, a bully named Derrick Dunne used to torment Stanley... to... that the sneakers fell from the sky.  
Why background info needed.  
Author has set up Stanley to be 'in the wrong place at the wrong time'. | Continue from last lesson.  
Emphasise this event and Stanley's interpretation of it as pivotal.  
"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.
Stanley's unexpected explanation. His attitude to destiny. Author makes clear the influence of destiny on Stanley's behaviour. | 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.  
The author provides the 'real' explanation. This will be contrasted with Stanley's. |

A 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 odour. Clyde Livingstone has already been introduced as "Sweet Feet". All this information is important. Stanely 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 felt like he was holding destiny's shoes. Stanley and his family do not believe in co-incidence, so their reactions will reflect this. | 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. Stanley's contrasting interpretation. This reveals much about his character. |
### Sample weekly plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Spelling** | School  
Treach/ler/s  
Sneeker/s | Revise last lesson’s words:  
r/est/r/born  
n/oeb/oar/k.  
| free/w ay  
ov/en/p/ass  
Reconstruct appropriate amount of text starting with Back at school… | any/th/ing  
some/thing | some/how  
some/thing  
Reconstruct text starting with He ran. |
| **Writing** | | | | Discuss, plan then write about a character caught running who gives implausible explanation. |
Holes – Study passage one (633 words)

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.”
The truck lurched forward.

Stanley jerked back against the seat

and tightly gripped the wheel

as the truck accelerated.

His foot was pressed to the floor.

The truck went faster and faster across the dry lake bed.

It bounced over a pile of dirt.

Suddenly Stanley was slammed forward, then instantly backward

as an airbag exploded in his face.

He fell out of the open door and onto the ground.

He had driven straight into a hole.

He lay on the dirt

staring at the truck,

which stuck lopsided into the ground.
He sighed.

He couldn’t blame his no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather this time.

This time it was his own fault, one hundred percent.

He had probably just done the stupidest thing he had ever done in his short and miserable life.

He managed to get to his feet.

He was sore

but didn't think

he had broken any bones.

He glanced back at Mr. Sir,

who remained where he was,

staring at Stanley.
He ran.

His canteen was strapped around his neck.

It banged against his chest as he ran,

and every time it hit against him,

it reminded him

that it was empty, empty, empty.
These notes have been written to help teachers use the Accelerated Literacy teaching strategies in Years 7 and 8.

Outcomes of the teaching sequence

At the end of this teaching sequence, students should be able to:

- read the passages studied fluently and with a high level of inferential comprehension
- discuss the story; give opinions about the author’s language choices; identify the story’s structure, theme and ideology
- spell chosen words and understand related spelling strategies
- use the story as a model for writing.

Notes

- The following notes have been written for teachers who have attended professional development workshops in teaching Accelerated Literacy. The notes presume some understanding about how to teach the program.
- For a detailed explanation of how to implement the teaching sequence, please refer to the teachers’ handouts from the first professional development workshop. Additionally, you could refer to http://www.nalp.edu.au.
- It is also assumed that teachers have read the text on which these notes are based and have a detailed understanding of the text before beginning a teaching sequence.
- Teachers are responsible for ensuring the suitability of the text on which these notes are based for their particular teaching context.