Characterization of Stanley Yelnats (“Holes”)

Stanley Yelnats is the main character of the novel “Holes”, written by Louis Sachar in 1998. Stanley has to go to Camp Green Lake, a juvenile correctional facility in the desert of Texas, because he is wrongly accused for stealing the sneakers of the famous baseball player Clyde “Sweet Feet” Livingston.

Stanley is an obese, 14-year-old boy who is not very self-confident. His skin-color is white. He is very tall and big.

Stanley is an only child. He lives in a poor family. His father is a failed inventor. They live in a small apartment where his father recycles old sneakers. Despite their bad luck, they always remain hopeful. His parents really love him and they always stick to him, also when he got arrested. Stanley has a very good relationship, especially to his mother. He even lies in his letters so that she does not worry about him.

Stanley does not have any friends at school (p. 10 l. 21). He is often threatened by his classmates in school and the school bully Derrick Dunne who is much smaller than Stanley (p. 10 l. 22). In the camp, Stanley becomes closer friends with Hector Zeroni (Zero), the great-great-grandson of Madame Zeroni, the woman who put a curse on his family.

Stanley is very shy, as you can see on page 20 line 32 when he looks on the ground when Mr. Pendanski is talking about him. As seen on page 40 in line 16, Stanley does not want any trouble with the other boys. This also shows that he is a respectful person. He does not contradict when the warden speaks to him although he does not believe in what she has told him. Stanley is also a really smart boy. For example, you can see this character trait when Stanley gives X-Ray the hint that he could wait until the next day to show Mr. Pendanski the tube (p. 54 ll. 8-12). Every time Stanley does something nice for X-Ray, X-Ray is nice to Stanley. So it is really clever to be friendly to the leader of the group. Another example for his cleverness is that Stanley is the only one of the boys who has noticed that they were not digging to build their character rather they were digging to find something for the warden that belonged to Kate Barlow (p. 51 ll. 61-63). Stanley is also a caring person. He cares for his friend Zero and rescues him when he ran away from the camp without water. He even steals the water truck of Mr. Sir for rescuing Zero (p. 118). This also shows that he is pretty brave. The author pictures Stanley as a kind person. He teaches Zero how to read and write (p. 80 ll. 11-44) and he takes the blame for stealing the sunflower seeds of Mr. Sir, although he did not steal them. He teaches Zero reading and writing, that also shows that he is very helpful. Stanley is also a bit clumsy. You can see this when Stanley did not catch the sack of sunflower seeds on page 71 lines 51-54.

Stanley believes that his family is cursed with bad luck. His great-great-grandfather put a curse on his family. Elya Yelnats has broken a contract between him and an old gypsy who was called Madame Zeroni. So the gypsy put a curse on the Yelnat family. Although his family is cursed and they do not have much money, Stanley and his family always try to remain hopeful and look for the good side of things.

Stanley's problem is that he believes in this curse. Every time he does something he has to remind that he is cursed and that it might go wrong. This does not make Stanley's life easier, especially because he does not have a lot of self-confidence. Stanley still has that doubt in the back of his mind, telling him that despite everything he tries, failure is just out there waiting for him. Before Stanley went to the camp, he had also problems with his size and with the fact that he had no friends.

At the beginning of the story, Stanley is a shy, not very self-confident and overweight boy, a kind of person you would not really notice much. While the book progresses, Stanley develops mental and physical strength. He gets tougher and he also becomes more self-confident. Digging holes every day made him loose weight and his muscles growing, so he is not overweight anymore. Stanley gets used to the strong conditions at Camp Green Lake and he becomes friends with Zero.
He stands up for his rights and the rights of his friend. Stanley lifts the curse when carrying Hector Zeroni up a mountain and singing the pig lullaby to him. He further reveals the secret of Camp Green Lake and the warden. At the end of the novel, Stanley lives with his parents in a house with a laboratory for his father. His family is not any longer cursed and they are happy with the invention of Stanley's father, Stanley Yelnats III. For the reader, Stanley becomes the hero of the novel “Holes”, although he is not exactly the type of a typical hero.

I personally think that Stanley is a character whom most people will like. I think, it is easy to identify with Stanley because the author portrays him very well. He describes Stanley's feelings and his thoughts. This makes you able to empathize with Stanley. Another reason for what I said before is that I think that almost everybody has ever been in a situation where nothing goes right and you were pursued by bad luck. The character Stanley is a good example for always staying positive. He shows how you can make the best of your life, regardless of whether everything goes right or wrong. Stanley makes the best of his situation and I think that is what makes him get used to the strong and exhausting life at Camp Green Lake. That is why I really like him.