

MAKING HOLES

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Connors Emerson School banned Louis Sachar's "inappropriate" novel Holes in 2004, citing thematic material among other concerns.

I.

In the desert, Stanley Yelnats digs big holes one after the other like stitches through the ghost of the lake, piecing together—no, excavating, mining—the semblance of someone else's dream. Someone else holds control. Not Stanley, baking in the sun, pages away from Zero's peach juice, the past hidden in a decimated rowboat somewhere years away from here, reflecting better times back into the dusty desert floor, thrumming its invitation out to Stanley: *I can fix that.*

II.

Sachar's book gets pulled from school shelves. This, they say, is not fit for our young students, not what should reverberate in the canals of the ears of our children, the ear canal itself a kind of hole into which we pour the riches of the past and the promise of the future. Most of this is done in schools, where holes should be made to store away treasure, not mine it, not excavate it, not take it away. With each book stripped from the

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shelves of a school, the lake of human knowledge
is siphoned by one more bucket, until all that's left
is a dusty desert floor where the only direction
to row, to dig, is down.

III.

Teachers reach into their pockets to build a classroom.
They dig these new holes into the lakebed, hoping for
shareable treasure un-dug and not yet taken away.

AUTHOR BIO

Tyler Robert Sheldon has seven poetry collections including *Everything is Ghosts* (Finishing Line Press, 2024) and *When to Ask for Rain* (Spartan Press, 2021), a Birdy Poetry Prize Finalist. He is Editor-in-Chief of *MockingHeart Review* and Poetry Co-Editor of *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pop Culture and Pedagogy*, and his work can be found in *Dialogue*, *The Los Angeles Review*, *Ninth Letter*, *Pleiades*, *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*, and other places. He earned his PhD at LSU and his MFA at McNeese State University, and he lives in Baton Rouge.



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