Year 9 Revision Checklist: Holes by Louis Sachar

1. Learn the Key Events

Make sure you can explain:

- Why Stanley Yelnats IV is sent to Camp Green Lake (accused of stealing Clyde "Sweet Feet" Livingston's sneakers).
- The history and physical setting of Camp Green Lake (how a vast lake became a dry, flat wasteland).
- Stanley's arrival at camp and how he receives his nickname, "The Caveman."
- How the boys dig holes every day in the extreme heat as a punishment.
- The relationship between Stanley and Zero (Hector Zeroni) and how Zero reveals he cannot read or write.
- The family curse and why Stanley blames his "no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather."
- Stanley's encounter with the Warden in her air-conditioned cabin in Chapter 20.
- The Warden's sudden attack on Mr. Sir using her rattlesnake venom nail polish.

2. Know the Important Characters

Revise:

- **Stanley Yelnats IV ("The Caveman")**
    - Why he believes he is cursed with bad luck.
    - How he demonstrates **perseverance** through harsh physical labour and extreme conditions.
    - His changing relationship with the other boys and his bond with Zero.
- **Hector Zeroni ("Zero")**
    - Why the camp counsellors and boys misjudge him as "stupid" because he is quiet.
    - His true intelligence and dignity ("I just don't like answering their questions").
- **The Warden**
    - Her power, authority, and control over both campers and staff (like Mr. Sir)

- Her luxurious cabin (air-conditioning, TV) contrasted with the boys' brutal working conditions.
- Her unpredictable violence, lack of sympathy, and use of rattlesnake venom nail polish.

- **Mr. Pendanski ("Mom") & Mr. Sir & Rex ("X-Ray")**
  - Their roles, nicknames, and authority dynamics at Camp Green Lake.

3. Key Vocabulary

Be able to define and use:

- **Wasteland**
- **Perseverance**
- **Barren**
- **Desolate**
- **Unforgiving**
- **Toxic**

You may be asked to define these words or explain their meanings in context.

4. Important Quotations & Language Techniques

Revise these quotes and their literary devices:

- *"The sun was an unforgiving eye staring down at the boy who dug."*
  - **Technique:** Metaphor / Personification
  - **Meaning:** Presents the sun as a harsh, hostile force constantly watching and punishing the boys.
- *"Heat beat down like a hammer on an anvil."*
  - **Technique:** Simile
  - **Meaning:** Conveys the relentless physical pain, heavy punishment, and repetitive violence of digging in the heat.
- *"I'm not stupid... I know everybody thinks I am. I just don't like answering their questions."*

    - **Significance:** Shows Zero's awareness of how others view him and challenges public perception.
- *"He's not going to die... Unfortunately for you."*
    - **Significance:** Highlights the Warden's dangerous, unpredictable nature and complete lack of sympathy.

5. Themes to Revise

- **Perseverance and Resilience**
    - How Stanley keeps going despite bad luck and harsh conditions.
- **Power, Authority, and Cruelty**
    - How the Warden and counsellors abuse their power over the boys.
- **Judgement and Misconceptions**
    - How characters like Zero are incorrectly judged based on silence or appearance.
- **Fate, Luck, and Curses**
    - How Stanley views his family history and the belief in his great-great-grandfather's curse.
- **Friendship and Loyalty**
    - The developing bond and mutual support between Stanley and Zero.

6. Inference Questions Practice

Be prepared to explain:

- How Zero's statement about not answering questions challenges what other characters assume about him.
- How Louis Sachar uses the Warden's actions and her comfortable, air-conditioned cabin to demonstrate her power and authority over Stanley and Mr. Sir.
- Why Stanley blames his "no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather" for his bad luck.

- How the environment of Camp Green Lake affects the boys mentally and physically.

7. Language Analysis Practice (PEE Structure)

When writing a Point-Evidence-Explanation (PEE) response, ask:

- **WHAT? (Point)**
    - What idea or character trait are you showing? (e.g., *The Warden is presented as a dangerous and unpredictable character.*)
- **HOW? (Evidence & Technique)**
    - What quote supports your point? (e.g., *"Rattlesnake venom... It's only toxic while it's wet."*)
    - Identify language devices like similes, metaphors, or verbs.
- **WHY? (Explanation)**
    - Why did Sachar choose this detail? What effect does sudden physical violence or calm dialogue (*"He's not going to die... Unfortunately for you"*) have on the reader and characters?

Night Before the Test: Quick 10-Minute Revision

- ✅ Learn all character nicknames: Stanley (**The Caveman**), Hector (**Zero**), Rex (**X-Ray**), Mr. Pendanski (**Mom**).
- ✅ Memorise definitions for **perseverance** and **wasteland**.
- ✅ Memorise the metaphor (*"The sun was an unforgiving eye"*) and simile (*"heat beat down like a hammer on an anvil"*).
- ✅ Practice explaining why the Warden's cabin environment shows her power compared to the rest of the camp.
- ✅ Review the **PEE (Point, Evidence, Explanation)** structure for the 6-mark Warden question.
- ✅ Remember the **WHAT-HOW-WHY** method when analysing quote details.

Top Tip: High marks come from explaining **how** language techniques (like metaphors and similes) convey character power or environmental hardship and using precise quotations to support your inferences!