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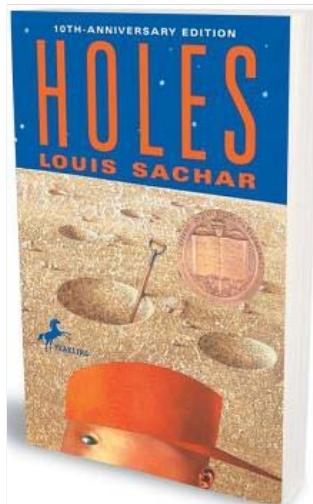
Kids

Time Out Chicago / Issue 190 : Oct 16-22, 2008

Q&A

Louis Sachar

Author Louis Sachar has been writing kids' books since 1976, but he's best known for *Holes*, a dark story about a boy wrongfully convicted of stealing who is sentenced to spend 18 months in a juvenile-detention center where everyone is forced to dig holes. The book, which won both the Newbery Medal and the National Book Award for Young People's Literature when it was published in 1998, has since been adapted by Sachar for both stage and screen. Sachar is touring the country to celebrate the release of the book's 10th anniversary edition and visits Chicago Sunday 19 through Tuesday 21 to promote the upcoming Adventure Stage Chicago production of his work and sign copies of the new book, which contains excerpts from his *Holes* screenplay. We recently spoke with him by phone.



Time Out Chicago: You have an economics degree and finished law school, but didn't you also work as a teaching assistant at an elementary school?

Louis Sachar: In my last year [at University of California-Berkeley], for easy credits, I was a teacher's aide for about an hour every day. The kids were happy and eager and wanting to learn, and I had a lot of fun with them. Then I got a job helping out on the playground, and that became my first book. *Sideways Stories from Wayside School* was based on those kids I knew. They all called me "Louis the Yard Teacher" [a character in that book].

TOC: Sounds as if it wound up being a life-shaping experience.

Louis Sachar: Absolutely—though at the time, I didn't know it. I had a great time helping out at the school, and when I was waiting for a job after graduation, I thought, I think I'll try writing a kids' book, too. Throughout law school, I kept trying to decide [whether] this was something I should stick with.

TOC: How do you feel about the term kid lit?

Louis Sachar: It sounds kind of demeaning. I write books that I enjoy and try to make them accessible to young people.

TOC: In your novel *Holes*, the main character, Stanley, is overweight. Obviously, that wasn't the case when Shia LaBeouf portrayed him in the film. Was that a case of Hollywood trumping your original intention?

Louis Sachar: Yeah. When I worked on the movie, my thought wasn't that it had to be exactly like the book. I wanted it to be a good movie that told the same story.

TOC: What will kids and parents see if they come to the stage version of *Holes*? Any teasers?

Louis Sachar: People are always wondering, "How can you possibly dig a hole on stage?" That will be a surprise.

Louis Sachar answers audience questions during a free reading from Holes at 7pm on Sunday 19 at Adventure Stage Chicago (Vittum Theater, 1012 N Noble St; call 773-342-4141 for reservations). He'll also appear at Anderson's Bookshop (123 Jefferson Ave, Naperville; 630-355-2665) at 7pm on Monday 20 and Barnes & Noble (55 Old Orchard Center, Skokie; 847-676-2230) at 7pm on Tuesday 21.

— Web Behrens

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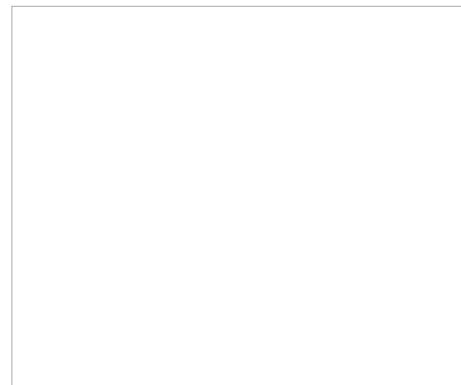
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