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Book review

'Holes' boy looks for direction

By KAREN MACPEARSON
PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

The last time we saw Armpit, one of several secondary characters in the Newbery Medal-winning novel "Holes," he was still at Camp Green Lake.

Like the other young inmates of that wretched juvenile correctional facility, Armpit spent his days digging large holes.

Now, two years later, Armpit is the star of author Louis Sachar's newest book, the interesting but uneven "Small Steps" (Delacorte, \$16.95).

Released from Camp Green Lake, Armpit is still digging holes, but he's finally getting paid for it, in his job with Raincreek Irrigation and Landscaping of Austin, Texas (Sachar's hometown).

Armpit is working mightily to turn around his life. He's saving as much money as possible while he goes to summer school to finish his high-school education.

But Armpit just can't resist the pleas by X-Ray, another former Camp Green Lake inmate, to participate in a ticket-scalping operation.

By the end of the book, Armpit has learned how hard it can sometimes be to keep your balance when life comes rushing at you.

Armpit is a highly likable character who seems to attract trouble — despite his best efforts — and readers will readily identify with him as they root for him to somehow succeed.



"Small Steps" by Louis Sachar (Delacorte, \$16.95)

TAKE NOTES

Center Grove expansion information available

Community members can learn the progress of the expansion task force at 7 p.m.

Thursday in the Center Grove High School cafeteria, 2717 S. Morgantown Road.

The agenda includes a progress report, outline of plans for the year and public input.

Information: Janet Boyle, 881-9326 or boylej@centergrove.k12.in.us

Parents needed to assist with post-prom festivities

Roncalli High School needs parent volunteers from all four grade levels to help plan after-prom activities.

An informational meeting will be at 7 p.m. Wednesday in the school cafeteria, 3300

Prague Road in Indianapolis. Information: Bessie Davey, 782-1198

Stoyteller to visit school for reading activities

Whiteland Elementary School is bringing storyteller Celestine Bloomfield for family reading night at 7 p.m. Tuesday in the school gym, 120 Center St.

Refreshments will be served.

Franklin's winter guard contests begin Saturday

Franklin Community High School's winter guard will begin competing this month.

The first contest will be Saturday at Pike High School in Indianapolis.

Driver education courses available through school

Roncalli High School will offer a driver-education program for students.

Information on dates, times, cost and registration is available in the school office.

Information: Donna Smith, 787-8277

Educators' pet peeves aired

By MICHAEL W. HOSKINS
DAILY JOURNAL STAFF WRITER
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A high school teacher wants a clone to do her never-ending paperwork. Gerbils can get on the last nerve of an elementary school instructor.

Other teachers just wish they could pop into the grocery store in their pajama pants once in a while. Educators have issues that drive them up the wall. Some irritations are part of their jobs, and others follow them outside school.

"Where do I start?" said Amy Grady, who teaches second grade at Break-O-Day Elementary School in New Whiteland. "I wish I'd been writing them down."

Class pets peeve off Grady. "That drives me crazy because I hate taking care of them," she said. "But sometimes (students) beg, and I cave in."

One class pet was a brunette gerbil the children named Brownie. The rodent was something of an escape artist.

Once as Brownie moved across the classroom floor in a round ball, he hit a wall. When the lid popped loose, he made a break for it, but Grady was finally able to corner him, she said.

Another time, students stopped a lesson to tell Grady the gerbil was eating his paw, she said.

A salesman told Grady the gerbil would live for two years.

"He ended up living for four," she said. Her peeves outside the classroom include running into students in public places when she's looking less than her best, Grady said.

"They get so embarrassed," she said. "They just don't think you do things like ... wear pajama pants to the grocery store."

Clark-Pleasant Middle School teacher Randy Phipps compares his teaching role to celebrity status, except without the high-figure salary.

Phipps wants to be able to stop in a store without running into students, their parents or former pupils. Last week he bumped into former students while he was renewing his driver's license.

"Kids are amazed to see you in public," the seventh-grade social studies teacher said. "They see you as a teacher, and you have to wear that hat out in the community. You wish you could let loose, but it's hard for teachers to act as regular human beings."

In the classroom, gum-chewing and pen-tapping are two distractions that bother Center Grove High School teacher Karen Agnew.

"It's my own self-diagnosed attention deficient disorder," said Agnew, who has been teaching Spanish and other courses at the school for four years. "I just find it distracting and bothersome. Some might not even notice, but I do."

Other teachers say administrative tasks make their peeve lists.

Teachers document everything, Whiteland Community High School teacher Kim Kite said. Part of her job is organizing and recording everything from insurance forms to class homework and lesson plans.

Paperwork leaves less time for her 150 students, said Kite, who is in her first year of teaching in the Clark-Pleasant district.

"I'd need either to make another me or have an assistant, someone to do all the paperwork so I can teach the kids," Kite said.

Center Grove Elementary School principal Bruce Haddix says he can get bogged down by administrative work too.

Staff members also expect him to solve all their problems because he is the principal, Haddix said.

"People joke that I should have all the answers to our school problems," he said. "Certainly, I don't."

Singular set of problems irritate faculty



Amy Grady

Assignment: Second-grade teacher at Break-O-Day Elementary School in New Whiteland

Peeve: Class animals with longevity

Job-hazard beef: "That drives me crazy because I hate taking care of them. But sometimes (students) beg, and I cave in."



Karen Agnew

Assignment: Spanish teacher at Center Grove High School

Peeve: Gum-chewing and pen-tapping in the classroom

Job-hazard beef: "I just find it distracting and bothersome. Some might not even notice, but I do."



Bruce Haddix

Assignment: Principal at Center Grove Elementary School

Peeve: Lofty expectations of others

Job-hazard beef: "People joke that I should have all the answers to our school problems. Certainly, I don't."

Whiteland Community High School teacher Kim Kite's pet peeve is paperwork. "I'd need either to make another me or have an assistant, someone to do all the paperwork so I can teach the kids," she says.

STAFF PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MATT OOLEY/mooley@thejournalnet.com



"A dolphin. Because I love dolphins. They are the friendliest animal in the whole world."

Molly Barger, 7, daughter of Tim and Cristy Barger of Franklin, second grade, Northwood Elementary School



"I would be a flying fish. Because they can fly."

Brad Nally, 7, son of Tony and Deb Nally of Franklin, first grade, Northwood Elementary School



"A lion. I could bite my brother's head off when he is mean."

Jaclyn James, 10, daughter of Linda James of Franklin, fourth grade, Northwood Elementary School



"An alligator. I could hit people with my long tail."

Joey Skiles, 8, son of Donna Skiles of Franklin, second grade, Northwood Elementary School



"A deer. Because I hunt those animals and I would like to see how they live."

Alex Bramlett, 11, fifth grade, son of Jim and Shelley Bramlett of Franklin, fifth grade, Northwood Elementary School



"A rhino. One, they are hunters. Two, they have two horns on their head and I could charge into my little brother."

Brandon Dale, 10, son of Brian and Lisa Dale of Franklin, fourth grade, Northwood Elementary School



"A domestic house cat. So in the winter I could have a warm home and food."

Sarah Jepsen, 10, daughter of Daniel and Amy Jepsen of Franklin, fifth grade, Northwood Elementary School



"An iguana. Because I have one."

Baily Stout, 6, son of Holly Stout of Franklin, first grade, Northwood Elementary School



"A tie between a tiger and a fox. I would be a fox to see how they live."

Brion Brooks, 9, son of Sharon Brooks of Franklin, third grade, Northwood Elementary School

