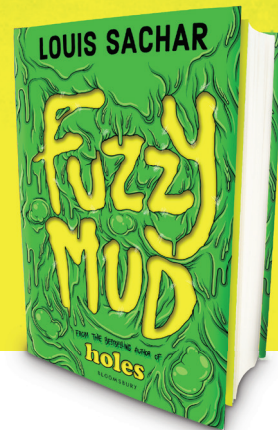


MUD PACK – READING GUIDE

FUZZY MUD BY LOUIS SACHAR

#FUZZYMUD



IN BRIEF:

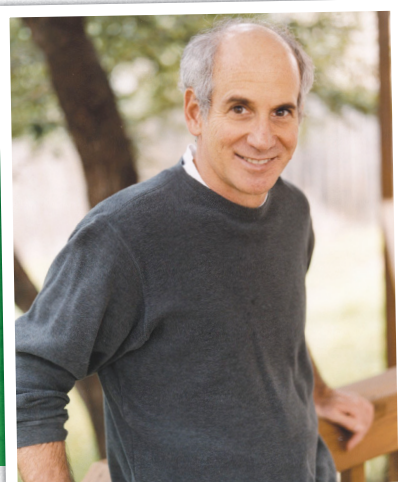
A thrilling, funny and thought-provoking novel about friendship, fears, bullying and ecology, from the internationally renowned author of multimillion-copy bestseller *Holes*.

IN DETAIL:

Fifth-grader Tamaya Dhilwaddi is on a scholarship to the prestigious Woodridge Academy. Every day she and seventh-grader Marshall walk to school together, always taking the long way round to avoid the woods, which are rumoured to be occupied by a 'deranged hermit' (p.2). At school, where Tamaya tries to come to terms with her 'Goody Two-shoes' (p.5) reputation and Marshall must deal with Chad the bully, the two friends don't talk to each other. Marshall can't be seen with a little kid like Tamaya, especially not with Chad around.

When Chad's violence escalates and Marshall and Tamaya walk home through the woods to avoid him, they find far greater dangers than anyone could have imagined, first in the form of Chad, and secondly in the form of the peculiar fuzzy mud Tamaya throws at Chad's face while defending Marshall.

When Chad doesn't turn up at school the next day, and a bizarre bloody rash spreads over Tamaya's arm, she ventures back into the woods – if the mud did this to her arm, what might it have done to Chad's face? Tamaya's fears are confirmed when she finds him blind, blistered and struggling to breathe. And then an epidemic breaks out ... Will the experimental treatment work on Tamaya, or is the entire population of the world at risk from the fast-multiplying toxic bacteria that breeds in the mysterious fuzzy mud?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LOUIS SACHAR lives in Austin, Texas, where he writes and plays quite a lot of bridge. Louis is the recipient of many of the world's best-regarded literary awards, including the National Book Award and the Newbery Award. His novel *Holes* has sold over 1.5 million copies in the Bloomsbury edition alone.

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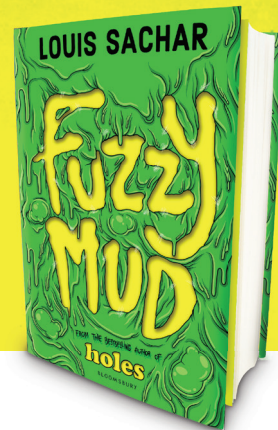


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PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Ask students what they think *Fuzzy Mud* is about, based on their response to the title and cover. What kind of book do they think this is going to be? What do they think the 'fuzzy mud' could be?

FOR DISCUSSION

1 *'You are kind of a goody-goody' (p.5)*

Do you agree that Tamaya is a 'goody-goody'? Did your opinion of her change as you read more of the book?

2 *'If you actually tried to be good ... everyone acted like you were some kind of freak!' (Tamaya, p.12)*

Why do you think that is? Why is trying to be good considered odd? Can you think of any examples from your own experiences?

3 Why do you think the author included the excerpts from the inquiry into SunRay Farm and Biolene?

4 How did you feel when Chad accused Marshall of lying (p.18)?

5 *'Why had they let Chad make his life so miserable, day after day after day?' (p.126)*

Why do you think Marshall's classmates let this happen? Why didn't anyone stick up for him? Why do you think 'everyone else seemed to turn against him too' (p.18)? Do you agree with Marshall that it was because he was 'a thumb-sucking coward' (p.126)? Do you think he's a coward?

6 *'DR. MARC HUMBARD: SunRay Farm is creating life for the sole purpose of destroying it.'*

SENATOR WRIGHT: But isn't that what all farmers do?' (p.10)

What do you think Senator Wright means by the statement above? In what way do farmers create life 'for the sole purpose of destroying it'?

7 Would you have taken the shortcut through the woods with Marshall? Why/why not?

8 Did you suspect there was something strange about the fuzzy mud when Tamaya first notices it? Does the author give any clues that it might be hazardous?

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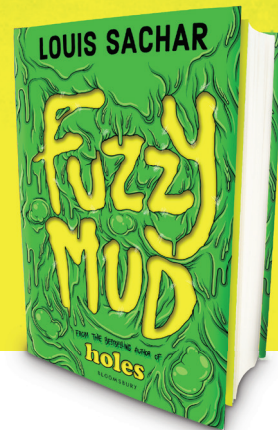


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- 9 What did you think when the multiplication sums first appeared on the page (p.42)? What did you think they meant?
- 10 Why do you think Marshall kept quiet about having been in the woods with Chad (chapter 15)? Do you think he should have said something? Do you think not saying anything makes him a 'bad person' (p.93)?
- 11 How did you feel when Mrs Latherly showed 'no interest in the mud' (p.78)? Do you think she should have paid more attention to Tamaya?
- 12 Were you surprised when Tamaya returned to the woods alone to look for Chad? Why do you think she did it? Would you have done the same?
- 13 How did you feel when Chad explains why he 'hated Marshall' (p.143)?
Did you feel any sympathy for him? Do you think bullies ever deserve sympathy?
- 14 *'Well, if you know you're mean,' she said, 'then why don't you just stop being that way?'*
'I don't know.' (p.130)
Why do you think Chad doesn't 'just stop being that way'? Do you think he really doesn't know why he's mean? Can a person not know why he or she behaves a certain way?
- 15 *'No one's all bad'* (Tamaya, p.131)
Do you agree with this statement? Can someone who does bad things still be a good person?
- 16 *'But everyone got the rash because of me'* (Tamaya, p.177)
Why do you think Tamaya blames herself for the spread of the infection? Who do you think is responsible?
- 17 *'I wasn't brave. I was scared. Marshall's the brave one'* (Tamaya, p.178)
Do you think Tamaya is brave? Why/why not? Do you think Marshall is brave?
- 18 How would you feel if you had a disease named after you? Would it feel like a 'great honour' (p.178)? Why/why not?
- 19 What do you think *Fuzzy Mud* is about? What are its themes? Did you learn anything new from reading it? Did you find any parts funny, or sad?
- 20 Do you think *Fuzzy Mud* is a good title for this book? Think of three alternative titles.

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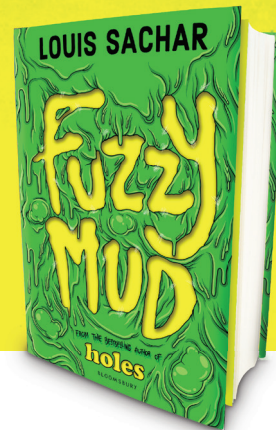


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BEYOND THE BOOK

Writing activities

Write a newspaper report about the epidemic caused by the fuzzy mud. Include quotes from interviews with Tamaya, Marshall and Chad about their experiences. You could also incorporate information from the inquiry, and a statement from makers of Biolene.

Ms Filbert asks her class to write 'How to blow up a balloon' instructions (chapter 14). Think about the purpose of this exercise before writing your own instructions for blowing up a balloon and testing them out on your teacher!

Research and debate

Fuzzy Mud raises important questions about scientific ethics. After doing some research into scientific ethics and the following topics, hold a classroom debate about one of them:

- GM (genetically modified) crops
- Cloning animals

Further reading by the same author:

Marvin Redpost series
Wayside School series
Pig City
There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom
Someday Angeline
The Boy Who Lost His Face
Dogs Don't Tell Jokes
Holes
Small Steps
Stanley Yelnats' Survival Guide to Camp Greenlake
The Cardturner

By other authors:

Blubber, Judy Blume
Seven Days, Eve Ainsworth
A Monster Calls, Patrick Ness
Exodus, Julia Bertagna
Ravenwood, Andrew Peters
Secret Heart, David Almond
Liar and Spy, Rebecca Stead
The Apple Tart of Hope, Sarah Moore Fitzgerald

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