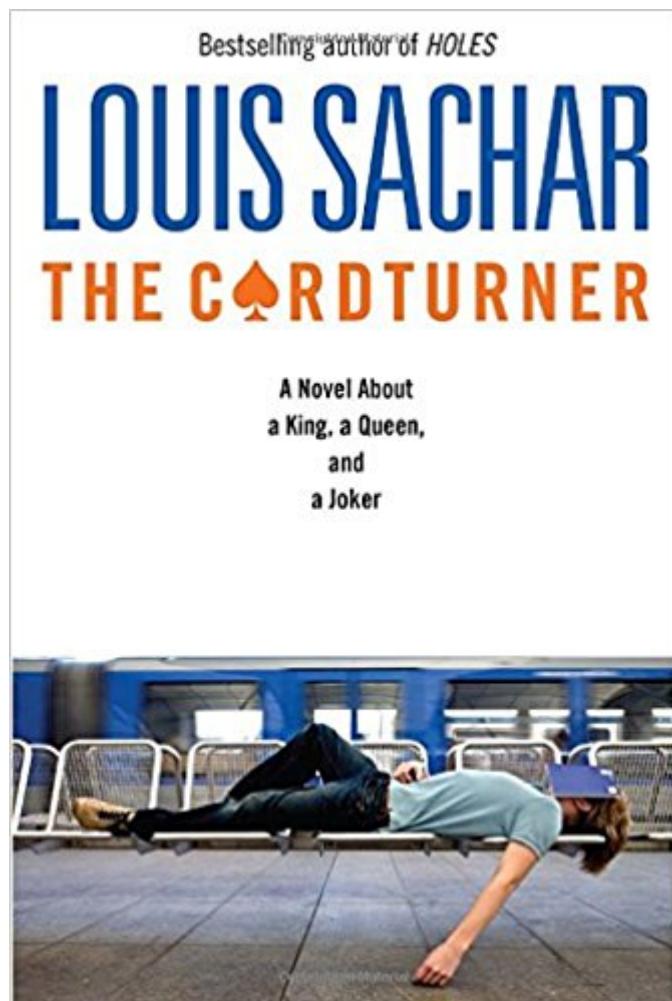


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# The Cardturner



## Synopsis

"The Newbery-winning author of *Holes* fulfills a need the world probably didn't even know it had . . . for smart and puzzle-minded teens . . ." *Booklist* The summer after junior year of high school looks bleak for Alton Richards. His girlfriend has dumped him, he has no money and no job, and his parents insist that he drive his great-uncle Lester, who is old, blind, very sick, and very rich, to his bridge club four times a week and be his cardturner. But Alton's parents aren't the only ones trying to worm their way into Lester Trapp's good graces. There is Trapp's longtime housekeeper, his alluring young nurse, and the crazy Castaneda family. Alton soon finds himself intrigued by his uncle, by the game of bridge, and especially by the pretty and shy Toni Castaneda, as he struggles to figure out what it all means, and ultimately to figure out the meaning of his own life.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 720 (What's this?)

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Best Sellers Rank: #100,958 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #35 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Family > Multigenerational #109 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Sports #172 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Coming of Age

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Grade 8 Up Alton Richards is resigned to spending a slow summer on his own after his girlfriend leaves him for his best friend and he finds himself with no money and no job. Unfortunately, his mother insists that he become his blind great-uncle's chauffeur and cardturner at local bridge tournaments. Though the 17-year-old has only met Lester Trapp on a few occasions,

his mother hopes that this connection will inspire the wealthy old man to write the family into his will. Alton reluctantly agrees, even though he knows nothing about bridge and has no interest in learning the game. He meets Toni Castaneda at the tournaments and soon discovers that he's not the only long-lost relative intent on winning over Trapp and his inheritance. What transpires is an intriguing glimpse into a crazy family full of secrets and unusual quirks. The characters are well limned, and the narrative is laced with Sachar's trademark wry humor. Most teens have very little knowledge about bridge, a fact that Alton acknowledges several times throughout the novel. At times, the story line becomes thick with technical game descriptions, though he does offer an option to skip these sections by providing a symbol to indicate more in-depth card instructions. This well-written novel contains a rewarding intergenerational friendship and a sweetly appealing romance in the making. Nonetheless it may require an additional nudge to hook readers. It's a nudge worth giving for motivated teens and those who enjoy Sachar's novels. •Stephanie Malosh, Donoghue Elementary School, Chicago, IL Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

**\*Starred Review\*** With his latest novel, the Newbery-winning author of *Holes* (1998) fulfills a need the world probably didn't even know it had: the great teen bridge novel. Alton Richard's great-uncle Lester Trapp is rich and ailing, a combo that leads Alton's parents to hatch a plan for the teen to cozy up to the old man and carve out a chunk of inheritance. Though blind, Trapp is a brilliant, world-class bridge player and needs someone to read him his cards and make his plays. Enter Alton, who wouldn't begin to know how to decipher questions like "One banana, pass, pass, two no-trump. Is that unusual?" But he withstands the constant barbs from his irascible uncle and grows more intrigued by the game (in no small part due to the cute, kind-of-crazy girl who also plays). Sachar liberally doles out detailed commentary on the basics and then nuances of the game, and in a nod to the famously dull *Moby-Dick* chapter on the minutiae of whaling, a little whale image appears when the bridge talk is about to get deep so readers can skip right ahead to a pithy wrap-up. But don't be fooled: it is astonishing how Sachar can make blow-by-blow accounts of bridge not only interesting but exciting, treating each play like a clue to unravel the riddle of each hand. An obvious windfall for smart and puzzle-minded teens, this is a great story to boot, with genuine characters (save the scheming parents) and real relationships, balanced by casual, confident storytelling. Grades 9-12. --Ian Chipman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

\*\*Warning: spoilers\*\* Alton is a teenager who is living a difficult life. His parents don't trust him, even though he doesn't do anything wrong. His girlfriend ditched him for Cliff, his so-called best friend. And he also has no job-- so his parents make him call his uncle Lester Trapp, who they only like because of his money. He has to drive his blind uncle to bridge club four times a week. This book was written in first person perspective and it felt like a casual conversation, which I liked. It's not a challenging read, but it is full of "bridge gibberish". Although it isn't part of a series, I wish it was, so I could find out how Alton's bridge career turns out! I learned a lot about the game of bridge, and even some about philosophical change. It was cool how the character Alton learned bridge, just like the reader did. I liked this book because it was filled with funny and weird scenes, like going to a national bridge tournament without getting parent permission. My favorite part was how at the tournament, no one recognized the names on the leadership board. However, it was very unexpected when Trapp died suddenly partway through the book, and Alton's greedy parents still keep trying to get his money (it didn't work). Also, it was hard to believe that Trapp could memorize all those different hands of cards! This book would be good for 8th graders and up, due to some swear words and mature content. Don't be afraid to read it even if you don't like bridge, or are a new learner-- but if you're a novice and want to learn more, this can be a good book for you.

First heard about this book from a visiting friend; it sounded like a good read. After just a few pages, I thought, this book is for teens. I kept reading because I do share ideas for books with my teen grandchildren and besides I was really enjoying the story and the banter between the sister and the story teller, her brother. Then I forgot it was for teens because it was such fun to keep reading; I laughed out loud a few times. The bridge was fun too, even though I am a weekly bridge player and often play duplicate bridge. I passed this book on to my granddaughters and they too liked reading it. When the family was flying home from a vacation, my son picked up the book, curious to see why the girls were laughing and what they were discussing. He is not a bridge player but he also found the story fun and a good read. Although I still can't recruit this group to take up the wonderful game of bridge at least now they are getting curious. The author has won many awards for his children's books. Now I know why!

Louis Sachar is quite simply a genius. I remember reading the *Wayside School* series when I was a child, and now I use them for my youngest students. Over two decades later, they are still funny! And who can forget *Holes*? Stanley Yelnats was a hero to so many of us. So it only seemed appropriate for *The Cardturner* to be just as amazing. If you agree, I promise you won't be

Sorry! Alton has a rich uncle. Uncle Lester Trapp. Alton's family have been trying to ingratiate themselves to Trapp for years, but he ignores all their pleas for visits and dinners. Instead he spends all his time with his ex-wife's "crazy" niece Sophie and her daughter Toni (well, Alton's parents swear they are crazy, but he isn't completely convinced). When Trapp starts to get sicker from his diabetes, Alton's parents actually seem anxious for him to die in hopes of inheriting all his wealth. When Trapp needs a "cardturner" for his bridge games because his diabetes left him blind, they are quick to volunteer Alton. Alton doesn't mind spending time with Trapp. In fact, he grows to really love the cantankerous old bird. He even starts to understand bridge, which seemed impossible at first. The more time he spends with Trapp, the more he learns his mother's information about Sophie, Toni and Annabelle (Sophie's mother) is just plain wrong (and quite frankly, mean spirited). His mother never knew the real story behind the King women, or perhaps she wouldn't have been so quick to dismiss them as gold diggers. In fact, Alton has really gotten to like Toni. When Trapp passes away suddenly before the national bridge championship, Alton and Toni feel they have to go anyway- as Trapp and Annabelle. Since Trapp and Annabelle were partners and cared very deeply for one another, it only seems right that Alton and Toni would enter the contest as Trapp and Annabelle. They sneak off to Chicago and take on some of the best bridge players in the world. But it seems Trapp and Annabelle are with them more than just in memory- they seem to be playing through Alton and Toni, taking one last shot at the championship like they couldn't so many years ago. This was such an interesting story. I will admit, my family are gin and rummy players, so bridge is totally lost on me, as I imagine it would be on most young kids and adults as well. But the cool thing Sachar does is explain the rules as though Alton were explaining them- as simple as such a complicated game could be. It made me actually want to start playing bridge! I think the challenge of figuring the game out with these simple and exciting lessons straight from Alton would interest those students who love a puzzle or are good at math. The game is all about strategy and thinking multiple steps ahead of the hand you are on, so it would definitely keep that kind of student a puzzle to crack! This is a perfect book for any middle school through high school student. As I said, it would be great for that kid who likes to solve puzzles and figure things out. The characters are typical Sachar characters- unpredictable, deep, and lovable. The story about Alton really caring for Trapp and learning about his parents' faults is a difficult lesson for him to learn, but it is handled well. I can't explain how much I loved this book, and I am sure you will too!

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The Cardturner

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