



Stargirl

by Jerry Spinelli

Teacher's Guide

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Synopsis

Porcupine Necktie

The story is narrated by Leo Borlock, who is sixteen years old in the main story. The novel opens with a flashback, in which the adult Leo explains his fascination for his Uncle Pete's necktie, which had a porcupine painted on it. When Leo was twelve years old, he and his family moved from Pennsylvania to Arizona. As a going-away gift, Uncle Pete gave Leo the necktie. On his fourteenth birthday, the newspaper ran a brief story on Leo, noting his interest in neckties with porcupines on them. Several days later, Leo received a porcupine necktie, but the package did not have a return address or card. Looking back, Leo realizes that he and his family are being watched.

Chapter 1

As with all the students in Mica Area High School, Leo and his best friend Kevin are fascinated by a new student, Stargirl Caraway. In a sea of conformity, she stands out for her unusual clothing, ukulele, pet rat, and canvas bag with a huge sunflower painted on it. Oblivious to the stares, she walks around the cafeteria strumming her ukulele and singing. The students explain her eccentricity as a by-product of being homeschooled. Leo and Kevin decide to ask Stargirl to be a guest on their TV show, Hot Seat.

Chapter 2

Popular Hillari Kimble believes that Stargirl is a plant, perhaps a narcotic agent. Her theory spreads, because Stargirl seems too odd to be real. Stargirl has found out the names and birthdates of all the students and sings Happy Birthday to them in the cafeteria. Leo realizes that Stargirl is real, and that her kindness is genuine.

Chapter 3

Leo and Kevin argue because Leo won't ask Stargirl to be on their TV show. Leo does not want to risk shattering Stargirl's special qualities. One night Leo follows Stargirl far into the desert, but leaves before they speak.

Chapter 4

Wayne Parr, Hillari's boyfriend, is gorgeous and the unacknowledged school leader for his passive indifference and lack of ability. Not surprisingly, he wants to be a model.

Chapter 5

Stargirl becomes an unofficial cheerleader and electrifies the crowd with her enthusiasm for both teams. Attendance soars and Stargirl joins the cheerleading team.

Chapter 6

Hillari warns Stargirl not to sing happy birthday to her so Stargirl sings to Leo, much to his confusion.

Chapter 7

Elderly Archibald Hapwood Brubaker, a retired paleontologist, runs an unofficial enrichment school for the local children. The members call themselves the "Loyal Order of the Stone Bone." His artifacts include old bones and Señor Saguro, a giant cactus. Leo

learns that Stargirl has been attending Archie's school for six years. She was born "Susan" to conventional parents, but she chooses to change her name every few years.

Chapter 8

Stargirl has become the most popular person in school and everyone but Hillari copies her every move. She wins the school's annual oratorical contest.

Chapter 9

The school's basketball team, the Electrons, is on a winning streak for the first time in memory.



Chapter 10

Students begin to resent Stargirl's habit of spreading good cheer. She is thrown out of a stranger's funeral and jeered for substituting new words in the *Pledge of Allegiance*.

Chapter 11

To show their fury that Stargirl cheers for both teams, the cheerleaders leave her behind after an away game.

Chapter 12

Stargirl's feigned burning while appearing on the "hot seat," combined with her pet rat's antics disrupt the shooting of a popular show produced by students.

Chapter 13

Stargirl's popularity fades. She agrees to appear on *Hot Seat*. The show is never broadcast, however, as the audience turns into a mob and verbally attacks Stargirl.

Chapter 14

At the next basketball game, the team loses, and someone throws a tomato at Stargirl's face, blaming her for their loss. Later, Stargirl gives Leo a valentine.

Chapter 15

Leo avoids Stargirl, although he has a crush on her.

Chapter 16

Leo goes to Stargirl's house and they flirt and have an affectionate talk.

Chapter 17

Leo is madly in love with Stargirl. They spend a happy afternoon meditating in the desert.

Chapter 18

Everyone shuns Stargirl, but she does not notice.

Chapter 19

With Archie's help, Leo realize that he must choose between Stargirl and fitting in with the other students.

Chapter 20

Leo continues to see Stargirl and learns that she sent him the porcupine necktie two years before.

Chapter 21

Stargirl spends her free time doing random acts of kindness, such as sending plants to sick people and cards to lonely people. She also drops coins for little kids to find.

Chapter 22

Leo has dinner with Stargirl's parents, who are conventional, unlike their daughter. Stargirl is compiling a biography of Peter Sinkowitz, a little kid in the neighborhood.

Chapter 23

Leo and Stargirl continue to have fun.

Chapter 24

Their happy times end when Stargirl posts a notice "Stargirl Loves Leo." Embarrassed, Leo gives in to the shunning.

Chapter 25

He continues to shun Stargirl.

Chapter 26

Stargirl remakes herself as a conventional teenager, renaming herself "Susan," but the shunning continues.

Chapter 27

Stargirl goes off to the state speech contest, convinced that she will win. Leo and her parents come along.

Chapter 28

She does indeed win, becoming the top student speaker in the state.

Chapter 29

When she returns to the school, however, only her loyal friend Dori Dilson is there to cheer her.

Chapter 30

Susan remakes herself as Stargirl, having given up on being "popular and normal." She tries to form a musical group, but only Dori joins. Leo once again shuns her.

Chapter 31

Stargirl makes a sensational entrance, alone, to the Ocotillo Ball. Only Raymond Studemacher dances with her. Undeterred, she starts a bunny-hop line that everyone but Hillari and Wayne join. This breaks up the dance. At the novel's climax, Hillari slaps Stargirl, who returns her insult with a kiss.

CHAPTER 32

Stargirl moves away, and Archie shows Leo all the files she kept on them all.

Chapter 33

Fifteen years later, Leo has become a set designer and lost touch with Archie, whose home has been sold.

More than Stars

Many of Stargirl's eccentricities have become part of the high school. Last month, Leo received another porcupine tie and realizes that Stargirl is still watching out for him.

Author Sketch

Born February 1, 1941, in Norristown, PA, Jerry Spinelli earned his B.A. from Gettysburg College in 1963 and his M.A. from Johns Hopkins University the following year. Spinelli had a twenty-three year career as a writer and editor with the Chilton Company, a magazine publisher, in Radnor, PA, before becoming a full-time freelance writer. Spinelli's young adult novels cover such controversial topics as racism and sex.



Spinelli published *Space Station Seventh Grade*, his first young adult novel, when he was forty-one years old. The main character, thirteen-year-old Jason Herkimer, has many common teenage experiences: he falls in love with a cheerleader, struggles with pimples, and tries to get along with his parents and stepfather. However, the issue of racism enters the story through Jason's friend, Peter Kim, a Korean-American, and through an episode that takes place in an African-American neighborhood.

Maniac Magee, published in 1990, grapples with the topic of racism. The novel received the top award for young adult fiction, the Newbery Medal. It was also awarded the *Boston Globe/Horn Book* Award, the D. C. Fisher Award, the Pacific Northwest Readers' Choice Award and the Carolyn Field Award. Spinelli describes the novel as "a blending of tall tale and actuality," in which truth and fiction merge "to the point where it makes no difference which is which." This novel centers around Jeffrey Lionel Magee, an orphan who earns the name "Maniac" through his extraordinary running speed, abrupt appearances, and talent for hitting baseballs.

In *There's a Girl in My Hammerlock*, Spinelli takes on another social issue—gender bias. Eighth-grader Maisie Potter, one of the school's best athletes, joins the wrestling team in an effort to get closer to Eric Delong, on whom she has a crush. Once on the team, she faces opposition from both teammates and friends.

Spinelli and his wife Eileen Mesi, also a writer, have six children and live in Phoenixville, PA.

Critic's Corner

Jerry Spinelli is "a master of those embarrassing, gloppy, painful and suddenly wonderful things that happen on the razor's edge between childhood and full-fledged adolescence," according to Deborah Churchman in the *Washington Post Book World*. Many critics have noted that Spinelli presents adolescents as they are, suffering from acne and filled with pubescent curiosity. John Keller, writing in *Horn Book*, remarked: "Jerry has listened and observed, and, in language that is never self-consciously literary, he illuminates that rough magic children carry around with them."

Spinelli's style and content have drawn a loyal following of readers—young adults facing social, moral, and personal problems and full of questions, just like his characters. A family man who draws on real-life events to both teach and entertain, Spinelli, as Keller wrote, "is a man who shines forth with the desire to be a writer, a man whose great drive is to share his vision of the world with his readers. As he creates the honest and accurate worlds reflected in so many of the passages of his novels, he is also a man whose enthusiasm for what he does is infectious."

A reviewer on Amazon.com had this praise for *Stargirl*: "Jerry Spinelli has yet again masterfully created a realistic fiction story with which all young adults should identify while seeing themselves in the characters. Spinelli's easy writing style and use of teen-friendly dialogue make this selection an easy read for almost any young adult no matter what their reading level or ability."

Spinelli's Other Works

Space Station Seventh Grade (1982)
Who Put That Hair in My Toothbrush? (1984)
Night of the Whale (1985)
Jason and Marceline (1986)
Dump Days (1988)
Maniac Magee (1990)
The Bathwater Gang (1990)
There's a Girl in My Hammerlock (1990)
School Daze: Report to the Principal's Office (1991)
Fourth Grade Rats (1991)
The Bathwater Gang Gets Down to Business (1992)
Who Ran My Underwear Up the Flagpole? (1992)
Do the Funky Pickle (1992)
Picklemania (1993)
Tooter Pepperday (1995)

Crash (1996)
The Library Card (1997)
Wringer (1997)
Blue Ribbon Blues (1997)
Knots In My Yo-Yo String: The Autobiography of a Kid (1998)
Loser (2002)
Milkweed (2003)

Bibliography

Booklist, June 1, 1990, p. 192.
Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, July, 1984, p. 213;
September, 1988, p. 21; September, 1990, p. 16.
Horn Book, June, 1984, pp. 343-344; March, 1987, p. 217;
May, 1988, p. 355; July/August, 1991, pp. 433-436;
September, 1991, pp. 594, 599.
Kirkus Reviews, May 1, 1984, pp. 51-52.
New York Times Book Review, April 21, 1991, p. 33.
Publishers Weekly, November 28, 1986, p. 78; April 29, 1988,
p. 77; September 27, 1991, p. 58.
Washington Post Book World, January 13, 1985, p. 8.

General Objectives

1. To assess the importance of individuality
2. To understand the power of peer pressure in a high school
3. To recognize the significance of setting
4. To assess each character's personality
5. To recognize the novel's theme
6. To probe how teenagers create their identity
7. To see how kindness can be misinterpreted, feared, and even hated
8. To find examples of friendship
9. To sympathize with the narrator's plight
10. To describe the novel's mood or atmosphere

Specific Objectives

1. To explore the tension between individuality and conformity
2. To trace the main character's journey from adolescence to maturity
3. To identify with Leo's dilemmas
4. To understand why Leo falls in love with Stargirl
5. To understand Stargirl's essential goodness
6. To probe the relationship between Archie and Leo
7. To see the effect of setting on a person's life
8. To understand the plot structure
9. To grasp why people often fear someone who is different
10. To explore the consequences of not fitting in with your peers

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Jerry Spinelli's style, present the following terms and applications to the novel:

Theme: the main idea in a literary work, the author's general statement about life. The theme of *Stargirl* concerns the struggle between conformity and individuality. The author explores the results of being your own person in a high school devoted to conformity. While Stargirl seems impervious to being shunned, Leo is not made of such strong stuff: "I became angry. I resented having to choose. I refused to choose. I imagined my life without her and without them, and I didn't like it either way."

Point of View: the position from which a story is told. In *Stargirl*, Spinelli uses the first-person point of view to help readers identify with Leo's plight. We share Leo's emotions, including his love for Stargirl and his fear of not fitting in.

Style: the author's unique way of writing. Style is comprised of diction (word choice), sentence variety, sentence length, and figures of speech. Spinelli uses a conversational style to capture the rhythms of teenage speech. This enables readers to put themselves in Leo's place, even though they may no longer be teenagers.

Cross-Curricular Sources

Novels

Joan Bauer, *Hope Was Here*
Meg Cabot, *The Princess Diaries*
Jenny Carroll, *Shadowland*
Sarah Dessen, *Dreamland*
Laurie Halse Anderson, *Speak*
David Wills Hurwin, *A Time for Dancing*
E. L. Konigsburg, *Silent to the Bone*
Gail Carson Levine, *Ella Enchanted*
Lois Lowry, *Gathering Blue*
Louise Rennison, *Angus, Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging*
Jacqueline Woodson, *If You Come Softly*

Videos/DVDs

The Breakfast Club
Fast Times at Ridgemont High
Ferris Bueller's Day Off
Revenge of the Nerds
Sixteen Candles

Audiocassettes

Stargirl, read by John Ritter (Books on Tape)
Maniac Magee, read by S. Epatha Merkerson (Books on Tape)

Internet

<http://www.edupaperback.org/authorbios/Spinel>
 Educational Paperback Association information on Jerry Spinelli
<http://teacher.scholastic.com/authorsandbooks>
 Authors Online Biography: Jerry Spinelli
<http://www.twbookmark.com/authors/23/1607>
 Jerry Spinelli biographical information
http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers/rc/rc_ab_
 Jerry Spinelli biographical information
<http://www.talkcity.com/educenter/trans/12-15>
 Transcript from December 15, 1998 Children's Author Interview
<http://library.thinkquest.org/J001776/spinell>
 Jerry Spinelli biography

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Jerry Spinelli's *Stargirl* should include these aspects:

Themes

- appreciation of nature, especially the desert
- confusion
- conformity
- individuality
- fear
- maturity
- displacement
- random acts of kindness
- peer pressure
- self-realization

Motifs

- dealing with being different
- expressing your individuality
- being kind to others
- coping with cultural dislocation
- the importance of courage
- accepting others for who they are
- showing compassion for those who are less fortunate
- self-awareness and maturity
- growth and change
- probing different ways of living

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning of each. Chapter and page numbers indicate the context from which the item is taken.

1. She wore no makeup, and her eyes were the biggest I had ever seen, like deer's eyes caught in headlights. (Ch. 1, p. 5)
(Leo's first impression of Stargirl is prophetic, as she will indeed become like "a deer caught in the headlights" as she grapples with the cruelty of her peers, led by Hillari. A true innocent, Stargirl is totally unprepared to deal with the level of savagery she encounters.)
2. Mica Area High School —MAHS — was not exactly a hotbed of nonconformity. (Chap. 2, p. 10)
(The students in MAHS, as with virtually every other American high school, are terrified of individuality. As a result, they dress, speak, and walk alike. Leo is very aware of the pressure to fit in, and eventually gives into it.)
3. He went on to say that he wanted to become a male model, his ultimate ambition was to be on the cover of *GQ*. (Chap. 4, p. 20)
(Wayne Parr symbolizes our attraction to emptiness, all style but no substance. He provides a counterpoint to Stargirl, who is all substance, a genuinely good person.)
4. "On the contrary, she is one of us. Most decidedly. She is us more than we are us. She is, I think, who we really are. Or were." (Chap. 7, p. 32)
(Archie, the wise old paleontologist/teacher, understands Stargirl's essence: she is the best of humankind, all our consideration and kindness wrapped together.)
5. The answer was yes. Each member of Homeroom 17 found a candy heart on his or her desk that morning. (Chap. 14, p. 68)
(After the mob attack on the TV show Hot Seat, Leo and the other students did not know how Stargirl would react. Her reaction is in character: since it is Valentine's Day, Stargirl gives each student a candy heart. In so doing, she becomes a Christ-like symbol, returning hate with love.)
6. "Whose affection do you value more, hers or the others?" (Chap. 20, p. 104)
(Archie gets to the heart of Leo's dilemma: will he choose Stargirl or his classmates? If he chooses Stargirl, he will be shunned and rejected. If he chooses his classmates, he loses the girl he loves. Archie also understands that making the choice will be a defining moment in Leo's maturation.)

7. "Two years ago. My birthday. I found a package on my front step. A porcupine necktie. I never found out who gave it to me." (Chap. 20, p. 111)
(Leo suddenly realizes that he has been the recipient of Stargirl's random acts of kindness for several years. When Stargirl read in the newspaper that he collects porcupine neckties, she had her mother create one for him. This is yet another example of her kind nature.)
8. Hillari Kimble walked up to Stargirl and said, "You ruin everything." And she slapped her. (Chap. 31, p. 175)
(Furious that Stargirl has taken over the dance by starting the bunny line, Hillari slaps her. Instead of hitting her back—which Hillari expects—Stargirl gently kisses her. This incident symbolizes the Christ-like act of "turning the other cheek" and returning hate with love. As such, the author once again aligns Stargirl with Christ.)
9. "Gave up her self, for a while there. She loved you that much. What an incredibly lucky kid you were." (Chap. 32, p. 178)
(Archie realizes how deeply Stargirl loved Leo. Here, he is alluding to her willingness to transform herself into a "regular" girl to make Leo more comfortable with her. The transformation did not work, however, because the students were still not willing to accept her.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. When and where does the story take place? Why is the setting significant to the plot?
(The story is set fifteen years in the past in Mica, Arizona. The new development represents all the "instant" towns and cities springing up across America. People in these towns lack roots and a feeling of connection to their place.)
 2. Who is Stargirl?
(Born Susan Caraway, she is a newly-enrolled 10th grade student in the high school. This is her first encounter with public school because she had been home-schooled.)
 3. How is Stargirl different from the other students?
("She was homeschooling gone amok." "She was an alien." "Her parents were circus acrobats." These are only a few of the theories concocted to explain Stargirl's habit of wearing odd clothing, strumming a ukulele in the cafeteria, laughing when there are no jokes, and dancing when there is no music. She has wide-eyed charm, pure-spirited friendliness, and a penchant for celebrating the achievements of others.)
4. How does Leo change as the novel progresses?
(Leo first falls in love with Stargirl, then shuns her when she is no longer popular, then comes to appreciate her kindness and free spirit. By then, however, both he and Stargirl have moved on with their lives, so he can only look back with regret.)
 5. Why do the neighborhood kids like going to Archie's house?
(A retired paleontologist, Archie has filled his house with bones and other interesting artifacts. The kids like learning everything from "toothpaste to tapeworms" and seeing how it all fits together. They also welcome the advice that Archie gives them. Leo in particular comes to rely on Archie for understanding Stargirl and his relationship to her.)

Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)

6. How does this novel show the conflict between the individual and society?
(Both Stargirl and Leo are in conflict with society and face the choice whether or not to conform. While Stargirl chooses non-conformity, Leo eventually conforms. Because Stargirl chooses not to conform, the group makes her an outcast, a fate many teens fear. The novel also touches on the cruel nature of popularity and how quickly popularity can fade and make the student's school life a living hell.)
7. Who is the main character in this novel?
(Although the novel is called "Stargirl," Leo is the main character because the novel traces his maturation. The novel is told through his eyes as it traces his experiences with a truly kind and giving person — Stargirl.)
8. What is the novel's theme?
(The story's theme is be true to yourself. Spinelli shows how tempting it can be to try to fit in with others to avoid the pain of standing out. Nonetheless, he also shows that we must be true to ourselves if we are to survive.)

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. What does Stargirl symbolize?
(Stargirl can be seen as a Christ-like symbol because she is filled with love that brings redemption to others. As with Christ, she is rejected and shunned by her peers. Where Christ is stoned, Stargirl has a tomato thrown at her. Stargirl is symbolically "resurrected" in Leo's memory.)

10. What makes this novel suspenseful?
(First, the novel is suspenseful because we want to find out if Stargirl is real, or a narcotics agent, as Hillari suspects. Then we want to find out Stargirl's real name and her background. Finally, the novel is suspenseful because we want to see if Stargirl will become accepted by the other students.)

Questions 11-12 (Creative Level)

11. Write a story for the school newspaper describing the Mica Area High School basketball team's exciting season.
12. Working with a small group of classmates, discuss some ways that you might have coped with Leo's situation had you been in his place.

Across the Curriculum

Language Arts

1. Look on the web for information about home-schooling and share your findings in a written report. How many students in the US are home-schooled? How do their scores on standardized tests compare to those of students educated in school?
2. Rename yourself, as Stargirl does, with three alternative names. Explain how each name suits an aspect of your personality.
3. Analyze what Stargirl's mouse symbolizes in the story. What function does it serve?
4. Write a brief sequel to the novel in which you explain what has happened to Stargirl and Leo fifteen years later.
5. Recast one chapter from Stargirl's point of view.

Art/Music

1. Sew another porcupine necktie for Leo's collection.
2. Make a model of the desert setting in which Leo and Stargirl meditate. Establish a scale to show the actual dimensions.
3. Create a new cover for the novel. Explain how your cover art fits the novel's tone, theme, and characters.

4. Design the cover of *GQ*, showing Wayne Parr as the model.
5. Draw or paint a birthday card for a parent or friend.

History/Social Studies

1. Map a route that Leo and his family could have driven on their move from Pennsylvania to Arizona.
2. Find out if Mica, Arizona, the setting of this novel, is a real place.
3. Learn who created the game of basketball and when. As you share your findings in an oral report, explain the rules of the game.
4. List five qualities that you believe make a person popular. Then explain why most people want to be part of the "in-crowd."

Speech/Drama

1. Tape your own episode of *Hot Seat*, the TV show that Leo and Kevin run. Invite several prominent students or teachers to be interviewed. Screen the tape for the class.
2. With a partner, role-play a scene between Leo and Stargirl in the present, in which they explain their feelings for each other and reasons for acting as they did in high school.
3. Stargirl wins the state oratorical contest. Write and deliver her winning speech.
4. Working with a partner, improvise a dialogue in which Hillari and Wayne explain their feelings for Stargirl.

Mathematics/Science

1. Archie is a paleontologist. Explain what a paleontologist does and the training you need to become one. Include information on two famous paleontologists and their discoveries.
2. The school basketball team is the "Electrons." Make a model of an atom, including electrons, and show their function.
3. What is "mica"? Find out and report on this substance.

4. Report on cacti, especially the giant saguaro cactus that figures so prominently in this novel.
5. Leo learns that passenger pigeons and moas are extinct. Find out how these birds vanished.

Student Involvement Activities

1. Perform at least three random acts of kindness, as Stargirl does.
2. Homeschooling has sparked a great deal of debate. Create two teams to debate whether or not people should be homeschooled.
3. In your own words, state the novel's theme or message.
4. Using scenes from the novel, create a mural that shows its main events.
5. Analyze Jerry Spinelli's writing style in this novel, focusing on word choice, sentence structure, and figurative language.

Alternate Assessment

1. List examples of difficulties that Stargirl faced. Then rank these hardships on a scale from most to least difficult. Be ready to justify your rankings.
2. Compile a list of actions that demonstrate how Stargirl is kind.
3. Compose a scene in which Leo explains his feelings for Stargirl.
4. Make a character list and describe each character.

Teacher's Notes

Vocabulary

Match each word to its meaning. Write the letter of your choice in the space provided.

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| _____ 1. craned | A. stretched |
| _____ 2. ukulele | B. persecution |
| _____ 3. scam | C. continual |
| _____ 4. absurdity | D. concern for self |
| _____ 5. perpetual | E. praise |
| _____ 6. elusive | F. musical conductor |
| _____ 7. dormant | G. bird sanctuary |
| _____ 8. elated | H. sarcastic grin |
| _____ 9. mortified | I. obsessed with death |
| _____ 10. ego | J. nonsense |
| _____ 11. inquisition | K. evasive |
| _____ 12. maestro | L. hesitating |
| _____ 13. spiel | M. speech |
| _____ 14. rabid | N. carefree |
| _____ 15. acclimation | O. exhilarated |
| _____ 16. morbid | P. fraud |
| _____ 17. blithe | Q. sleeping |
| _____ 18. smirk | R. very embarrassed |
| _____ 19. aviary | S. guitar-like musical instrument |
| _____ 20. balking | T. extremely violent |

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left.

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| ___ 1. Leo's best friend, he becomes an insurance salesman when he grows up | A. Wayne Parr |
| ___ 2. Stargirl's real first name | B. Leo Borlock |
| ___ 3. the free-spirited tenth grade cheerleader who cheers for both sides | C. Stargirl Caraway |
| ___ 4. the student famous for her three things: mouth, the Hoax, and Wayne Parr | D. Archie Brubaker |
| ___ 5. the novel's narrator, an 11th grade student at Mica Area High School | E. Kevin |
| ___ 6. the man who gives Leo his first porcupine necktie | F. Uncle Pete |
| ___ 7. Stargirl's best friend, the only friend who stays loyal to her | G. Hillari Kimble |
| ___ 8. Hillari's boyfriend, handsome but totally without substance | H. Raymond Studemacher |
| ___ 9. the boy who dances with Stargirl at the Ocotillo Ball | I. Susan |
| ___ 10. the retired paleontologist who runs an informal school | J. Dori |

Part II: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Circle the correct word or phrase to complete each of the following statements.

1. Stargirl has a pet (**cat, rat**) named Cinnamon.
2. Stargirl walks around the cafeteria, playing her (**drum, ukulele**), and singing "Happy Birthday" to people.
3. Leo and Kevin decide to get Stargirl to be a guest on their TV show, (**Hot Stuff, Hot Seat**).
4. One night Leo follows Stargirl far into the (**forest, desert**), but leaves before they speak.
5. Leo learns that Wayne Parr wants to be a (**model, set designer**).
6. Stargirl reaches the height of her popularity when she is chosen to be (**a cheerleader, prom queen**).
7. Students who attend Archie's unofficial school call themselves the ("**Loyal Order of the Stone Bone,**" "**Mica Area Electrons**").
8. Students begin to avoid Stargirl for many reasons, but some are especially upset when she makes up her own words for the (**school song, Pledge of Allegiance**).
9. When the school team loses a basketball game, the spectators blame Stargirl and someone (**beats her up, throws a tomato at her face**).
10. Stargirl breaks up the Ocotillo Ball when she leads almost everyone in a (**school cheer that lasts an hour, bunny-hop into the desert**).

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- 1. The entire story is told as a flashback, fifteen years in the past.
- 2. Popular Dori Dilson believes that Stargirl is a spy planted in the student body by the administration to catch drug abusers.
- 3. Kevin, Hillari's boyfriend, is gorgeous and the unacknowledged school leader for his passive indifference and lack of ability.
- 4. Stargirl is a brilliant public speaker and wins the state competition with a speech that she seems to make up on the spot.
- 5. Stargirl's disastrous appearance in TV is broadcast to over 10,000 people in the immediate area, which causes her parents a great deal of embarrassment.
- 6. Leo continues to see Stargirl and learns that she sent him the stuffed porcupine two years before.
- 7. Stargirl spends her free time doing random acts of kindness, such as sending plants to sick people and cards to lonely people.
- 8. Stargirl regains her popularity by forming a musical group, the "Ukee Dooks," which everyone joins.
- 9. At the novel's climax, Hillari slaps Stargirl, who returns her insult with a kiss.
- 10. At the end of the novel, Leo realizes that Stargirl is still looking out for him and doing things to make him happy.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain how Stargirl is different from the other girls at school.
2. Which character in *Stargirl* do you find most admirable? Why?
3. Compare and contrast Stargirl and Leo.
4. What is the author's message about individuality and conformity in this novel?

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Fill in the Blank (20 points)

Supply a term to complete each of the following statements. Place your answers in the blanks provided in the sentences.

1. The story is narrated by _____ who is sixteen years old in the main story.
2. When Leo and his family moved to Arizona, his uncle gave him a _____. as a going-away gift.
3. Students become angry with Stargirl when she cheers for _____.
4. Archibald Hapwood Brubaker, a retired professor, runs an unofficial _____ for the local children.
5. Señor Saguaro is a _____.
6. Much to Leo's surprise, Stargirl's parents can best be described as _____.
7. Stargirl wins the school's annual _____ contest.
8. Stargirl becomes less popular when she is thrown out of a stranger's _____ and jeered for substituting new words in the *Pledge of Allegiance*.
9. Much to his confusion and embarrassment, Stargirl gives Leo a _____ card.
10. In one of her random acts of kindness, Stargirl drops _____ for little kids to find.

Part II: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left.

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| ____ 1. a true individual, kind and sweet | A. Wayne Parr |
| ____ 2. Leo's best friend | B. Leo Borlock |
| ____ 3. a young boy in Stargirl's neighborhood | C. Stargirl Caraway |
| ____ 4. Stargirl's driver to the Ocotillo Ball | D. Archie Brubaker |
| ____ 5. Leo's unofficial teacher and mentor | E. Kevin |
| ____ 6. the nickname for the close-up camera and its operator | F. Chico |
| ____ 7. the young man who loves Stargirl | G. Hillari Kimble |
| ____ 8. Stargirl's pet rat | H. Peter Sinkowitz |
| ____ 9. Hillari's handsome boyfriend | I. Cinnamon |
| ____ 10. Stargirl's most vocal enemy | J. Dori Dilson |

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Motivation (20 points)

Complete each phrase below with a reason or justification.

1. Everyone in Mica Area High School is fascinated by Stargirl because
2. Stargirl finds out the names and birthdates of all the students so she can
3. Leo won't to ask Stargirl to be on his TV show because
4. To show their fury that Stargirl cheers for both teams, the cheerleaders
5. Stargirl's appearance on *Hot Seat* is never broadcast because
6. After everyone turns on Stargirl and she becomes unpopular, Leo avoids Stargirl because
7. Leo stops seeing Stargirl when she posts a notice that says
8. Stargirl tries to become popular again by
9. Stargirl is shocked and upset when she returns from the state oratorical contest to find that
10. Stargirl breaks up the Ocotillo Ball when she

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain the motifs of television, cheerleading, and sports in the novel.
2. Analyze what you learned about the power of kindness and individuality from this novel.
3. Describe the novel's setting and explain its importance to the story.
4. Trace the novel's plot. Include the rising action, climax, and resolution.

Answer Key

VOCABULARY

- | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. A | 6. K | 11. B | 16. I |
| 2. S | 7. Q | 12. F | 17. N |
| 3. P | 8. O | 13. M | 18. H |
| 4. J | 9. R | 14. T | 19. G |
| 5. C | 10. D | 15. E | 20. L |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. E | 6. F |
| 2. I | 7. J |
| 3. C | 8. A |
| 4. G | 9. H |
| 5. B | 10. D |

Part II: Sentence Completion (20 points)

- | | |
|-------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. rat | 6. cheerleader |
| 2. ukulele | 7. "Loyal Order of the Stone Bone" |
| 3. Hot Seat | 8. Pledge of Allegiance |
| 4. desert | 9. throws a tomato at her face |
| 5. model | 10. bunny-hop into the desert |

Part III: True/False (20 points)

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. T | 2. F | 3. F | 4. T | 5. F |
| 6. F | 7. T | 8. F | 9. T | 10. T |

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Fill in the Blank (20 points)

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Leo Borlock | 6. conventional |
| 2. porcupine necktie | 7. oratorical or speech |
| 3. the opposition | 8. funeral |
| 4. school | 9. valentine |
| 5. a giant cactus | 10. coins |

Part II: Matching (20 points)

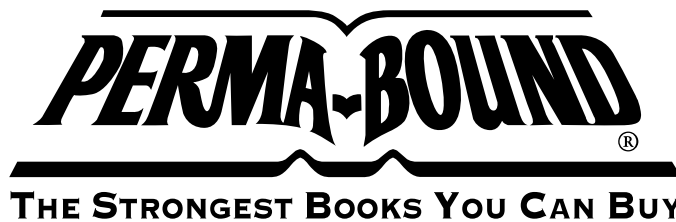
- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. F |
| 2. E | 7. B |
| 3. H | 8. I |
| 4. J | 9. A |
| 5. D | 10. G |

Part III: Motivation (20 points)

- she is so totally different
- sing happy birthday to them on their birthdays
- he does not want to risk shattering Stargirl's special qualities
- leave her behind after an away game
- the audience turns into a mob and verbally attacks Stargirl.
- he does not want to become unpopular himself
- "Stargirl Loves Leo"
- becoming a conventional teenager, wearing name-brand clothing and using her real name, "Susan"
- she is not greeted by screaming crowds; only Dori welcomes her
- she starts a bunny-hop line that everyone but Hillari and Wayne join

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.



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