



TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Space Station Seventh Grade

Jerry Spinelli



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Space Station Seventh Grade

Jerry Spinelli

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NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Attribute webs, research, compare/contrast, pros/cons, brainstorming, problem solving, critical thinking

Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing, cause and effect, inference, summarization

Literary Elements

Story mapping, plot development, setting, characterization, conflict

Listening/Speaking

Dramatizing, interviewing, storytelling, discussion, oral reports, video, taping music

Writing

Journal, picture book, memories, creative writing, headlines, directions, poetry

Vocabulary

Charades, word maps, synonyms, antonyms, definitions, parts of speech, context clues

Across the Curriculum

Social Studies—cultures, careers; Science—space exploration, life science, anatomy; Art—drawing, design and color, collage, costume design, illustrations; History—research, sports; Health—food preparation, first aid; Drama—reenactments

Summary

Space Station Seventh Grade tells the story of Jason, a seventh-grade boy who, as he enters puberty, is forced to make sense of the more complicated parts of life. From stepparents, competing in sports, dealing with little brothers, going crazy over a girl, and experiencing the death of a friend, *Space Station Seventh Grade* explores the up and downs of adolescence and the physical, emotional, and social changes that occur at this age.

About the Author

Jerry Spinelli, a graduate of Gettysburg College, is an award-winning author. He writes contemporary children's literature. Spinelli books include: *Maniac Magee*, *Space Station Seventh Grade*, *Jason and Marceline*, *Who Put That Hair in My Toothbrush?*, *There's a Girl in My Hammerlock*, *Crash*, *Wringer*, and *The Library Card*. He often uses his own experiences as a father of six children to write his novels. Jerry Spinelli's wife, Eileen Spinelli, is also an author.

Introductory Activities

1. **Previewing the Book:** Have students look at the cover and answer the journalist's questions about what they see: Who? Where? What? When? and Why? Based on their answers, students predict what the book will be about.
2. **Character Journal:** List the main characters from *Space Station Seventh Grade* and have students choose one. As they read the book, students write regular entries from that character's point of view. Journal entries should reflect on the events of the story. At various points in their reading, have students share their journals with classmates.
3. **Attribute Web:** Create an attribute web (pages 8-10 of this guide) with students for each of the following ideas: friends, puberty, bravery, love, and seventh grade. Ask students to quickly tell what each word brings to mind. Encourage students to elaborate on particular ideas.
4. **Prediction Chart:** Have students set up a prediction chart (pages 6-7 of this guide) to use as they read the book.
5. **Anticipation Questions:** Have students respond to each of the following statements with a "thumbs up" (I agree) or a "thumbs down" (I disagree) and discuss their responses.
 - You should always do what your friends do.
 - First impressions of people are usually correct.
 - Friends should help and support each other.
 - All stepparents are mean.
 - Love is shown in different ways.
 - Most people have hidden talents and abilities.
 - Changes that occur during adolescence are easy to deal with.

Vocabulary Activities

1. Target Word Charades: Have students act out some of the vocabulary words and have classmates guess the target word. Some suggested words for *Space Station Seventh Grade*: eccentric (10), sniveling (45), looming (64), swooned (96), tantrums (112), titters (142), gawked (156), wheezing (181), shrugged (205), sprawled (227).
2. Target Word Maps: Have students complete word maps for vocabulary words of a certain part of speech. For example, verbs from *Space Station Seventh Grade* would include: twanged (7), nudged (41), suspended (73), plunked (75), wincing (110), lobbed (110), kneaded (144), scowling (173), oozed (204), wailing (211), squirm (219), unraveling (222).

Word Map for a Verb

	What does it mean?
What kind of actions does it describe?	Dictionary:
Focus word: WINCING	In Use:
What are examples of when to use the word?	In Use:

3. Sentences: Have students select five to six vocabulary words and use as many of the words as possible in one sentence.
4. Synonym Match: Have students select vocabulary words from a chapter and list one synonym for each vocabulary word on a small piece of paper. Students mix the pieces of paper and match each synonym to the appropriate vocabulary word.
5. Vocabulary Sort: Have the students sort vocabulary words into categories (e.g., nouns, verbs, and adjectives/adverbs).
6. Odd One Out: Use vocabulary words from one or two chapters. Have the students make a chain of four words. One word in the chain is the vocabulary word, two words are synonyms for the vocabulary word, and one word does not go with the others. (Mix the sequence of the words in the chain.) Students should exchange their chains and underline the word that does not belong with the others and explain why it does not belong.
7. Vocabulary Boxes: Cut a pattern for a cube (pattern on the following page) from construction paper. Before the cube is glued together, each face should contain one of the following: a vocabulary word, the definition of the word, illustration of the word, a synonym of the word, antonym of the word, and a sentence using the word. Display the vocabulary boxes in the room.

Supplementary Activities

1. Evaluation/Critical Thinking: Have the students evaluate the year they've had so far using the activity Jason did with his mother. Let them give each good and bad thing on the list its own value and calculate the numbers (final score) themselves.
2. Home Economics/Cooking: Have the students brainstorm what they would make for a farewell party. Divide the students into groups and have them prepare their assigned food for a party at school.
3. Role-playing: Have the students research etiquette rules. Divide students into groups and have them act out a particular situation where etiquette is required.

"Spring," "Mothers," and "Miles"

Vocabulary

spongy (165)	geranium (166)	rammed (167)	bureau (167)
shortstop (168)	whiff (169)	desperate (169)	shriek (169)
bashed (170)	gaping (170)	scowling (173)	pestering (173)
convertible (174)	collapse (176)	disguised (179)	wheezing (181)
rhythm (183)	asthmatics (184)	chute (184)	Centigrade (184)

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss some of the reasons the air feels like baseball to Jason. *(Answers will vary, but may include: It's light out after dinner, worms come out after it rains, there is new stuff in the gutters and sewer grates, the Rocksalt Lady now has a shopping bag, the ground is spongy and smells like onions, etc.)*
2. Why do you think Jason writes letters to Debbie Breen that he never mails? *(Answers will vary.)*
3. Why does Jason assume Timmy stole his baseball glove? *(He can't find the glove, so he assumes Timmy took it because Timmy is always stealing his dinosaurs.)*
4. Why is it so important to Jason to find his glove and show it to his friends? *(He wants to show them that he is serious about baseball and knows how to take care of a glove.)*
5. Why does it make Jason mad when Calvin asks what position he is going out for in baseball? *(Everyone is supposed to know that Jason is a shortstop and Calvin should not have to ask. It's the only position Jason ever plays.)*
6. Why do you think Jason's mother gets upset when she finds that Jason has thrown her crown against the wall? Why do you think she saved it after all this time? *(Answers will vary.)*
7. Why does Jason expect to find Calvin's mother making "soul food"? *(Calvin is black and Jason is biased by the stereotype that all black people eat soul food.)*

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8. What happened to Calvin's mother during the parade when she was May Queen? Why do you think this happened? Why do you think she saved the rock? *(Someone threw a rock at her and hit her in the head; Answers will vary.)*
 9. Why does Jason run track? *(He doesn't make the baseball team and the coach wants him to run track to keep in shape.)*
 10. Why does Jason want to quit track after the first timed trials? *(He comes in dead last. He throws up, and Marceline McAllister, a girl, beats him.)*
 11. How does Peter convince Jason to stay on the team? *(He tells him that a lot of girls are faster because they mature faster, and in a few years he'll probably easily beat her. He also reminds Jason that the baseball coach has his eye on Jason.)*
 12. Why does Jason dread his first track meet? Why doesn't he want his parents to come? *(He knows he will have to compete for a place, unlike in practice. He is afraid he will come in last and be embarrassed.)*
 13. Why does the coach tell Jason he needs to try harder? *(Jason convinces himself that he is only in track to keep in shape, so it doesn't matter if he comes in last. The coach can tell he isn't trying and threatens to kick him off the team if he doesn't start trying harder.)*
 14. Who is "Pain"? *(Answers will vary; the personification of how Jason feels when he runs hard)*
 15. How do Jason's feelings about Marceline change by the time they finish their last meet? *(He starts to admire her.)*

Supplementary Activities

1. Critical Thinking: Have the students list common stereotypes. Have the students discuss why stereotyping can be hurtful.
2. Social Studies: Have students list the types of food their families eat that comes from a particular culture. Have a "Cultural Day" where the students bring samples of their families' favorite foods to share with the class.
3. Oral Reports: Have students interview family members to see if they saved any mementos from earlier years. What did the family member save and why? Students should prepare an oral report about the significance of the item.
4. Discussion: As a class, discuss motivation. What motivates the students in your class to academic, physical, or other achievements? How important are mentors such as coaches, teachers, parents, sports idols, etc.?