

Teacher Guide

Grades 5–6

Stargirl

Jerry Spinelli

NOVEL UNITS[®]

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STARGIRL

by
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Teacher Guide

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Note

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Please note: Please assess the appropriateness of this book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading and discussing it with them.

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Research, compare/contrast, pros/cons, analysis, creative thinking, critical thinking, brainstorming, predicting

Comprehension

Cause/effect, summarization

Writing

Poetry, essays, journal entries, speeches, letters

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, oral presentation, public speaking

Vocabulary

Word maps, definitions, parts of speech

Literary Elements

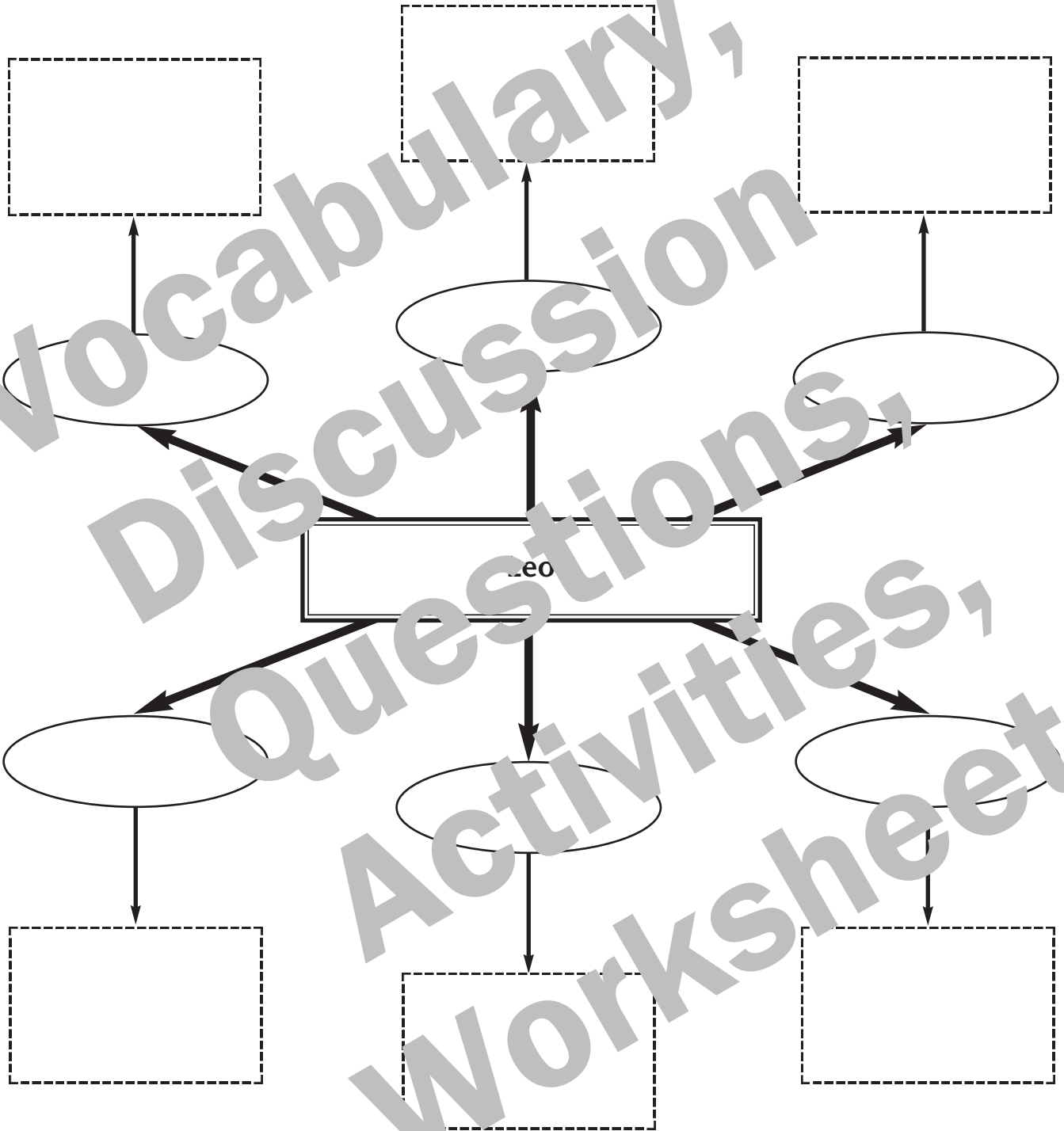
Setting, conflict, simile, metaphor, theme, characterization, foreshadowing, point of view

Across the Curriculum

Art—collage, caricatures, sculptures, painting;
Drama—reenactments;
Music—dance, song lyrics;
Math—manipulatives, songs;
History—research; Science—research, archaeology

Characterization

Directions: In each oval, write an adjective that describes the character's personality. Then fill in each rectangle with a detail about the character that illustrates that part of the character's personality.



2. Art: Have students review some of the poetic language the author uses to communicate how Leo feels about Stargirl. Then have students write a poem or make a collage that expresses what it feels like to be loved.
3. Literary Devices: Students should continue to analyze and interpret the analogies they locate in the text. **Similes**—“tension rising like fizz in a soda bottle” (p. 78); “her multicolored skirt looked like a pinwheel taffy” (p. 88) **Personification**—“the earth will touch us;” “universe will speak;” “stars will whisper” (p. 91) **Metaphors**—“the beacon of her smile” (p. 95); “the sea of tables and eaters” (p. 95)

Chapters 19–21, pp. 100–118

Leo discusses his conflicting emotions about Stargirl with Archie. Stargirl continues to advance in her oratorical competition. Señor Saguar teaches Leo how to “see” and shares with him some of her secret ways of figuring out what people might need, as Leo becomes Stargirl’s pupil while observing people at a local market.

Note: Following is a translation for the Spanish text found on page 104 of the novel: “It seems Mr. Borlock is a victim of a ‘shunning’ by his classmates at the high school. The main reason for the ‘shunning’ is Mr. Borlock’s love interest, our very own Ms. Stargirl. He is in search of questions.”

Vocabulary	
excommunicate (100)	
amble (100)	
mahogany (102)	
derelict (104)	
revel (107)	
snit (108)	
blotter (112)	
facetiously (112)	

Discussion Questions

1. Why isn’t Leo satisfied with Archie’s advice about Stargirl? *(Archie advises Leo to ignore Stargirl if he’s only concerned with being popular, but Leo wants to be with Stargirl and still have friends. pp. 100–102)*
2. Why do Archie and Señor Saguar ask questions rather than give answers? What does this say about Leo and his own problems in life? Should you be asking for questions or answers? *(Answers will vary. p. 104)*
3. After consulting Señor Saguar, Archie tells Leo that there is really only one question at stake: “Whose affection do you value more, hers or the others’?” Do you agree or disagree that this is the main question at hand? If you were in Leo’s place, how would you answer this question? *(Answers will vary. p. 104)*
4. Discuss the types of conflict characters often face in literature: person vs. self; person vs. society; person vs. nature; person vs. person, etc. Then discuss the type(s) of conflict Leo is currently facing. *(Answers will vary. Students should discuss Leo’s internal conflict and how external pressures, such as popularity and friendship with Stargirl, are affecting the conflict.)*
5. Describe some of the ways that Stargirl affects Leo and the way he views life. *(He laughs out loud for the first time, he begins to see the world in different ways, etc. Discussions will vary. pp. 106–111)*
6. If getting credit isn’t Stargirl’s motivation for doing kind things for others, what is her motivation? Would you do kind things for others if you knew you would never be recognized or thanked in any way? *(Answers will vary. p. 111)*

7. Contrast the ways that Leo and Stargirl view the world around them. Whose perspective on life would you rather have? (*While Stargirl sees the little things around her—notices on bulletin boards, people who rent romantic movies alone, ants, etc.—and does things for people without being thanked, Leo sees the things that are meant to be noticed—like the newspaper articles rather than fillers—and has a hard time comprehending why Stargirl wouldn't sign her name to a card or gift she left for someone. Answers will vary. pp. 106–118; throughout book*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Creative Thinking/Journalism: Stargirl shares with Leo how she would make decisions if she were editor of the *Mica Times*. Have students pretend that they are the editor of a local newspaper. Ask them what kinds of decisions they would make and what types of stories would appear on the front page. Then have students submit a page of potential headlines for their newspaper.
2. Art: Have students draw caricatures of the woman (Clarissa) Stargirl and Leo follow while at the mall.
3. Literary Devices: **Similes**—“words...burrow like tiny eggs awaiting the rain of my maturity” (p. 103); “voice...natural as a raven’s caw or a coyote’s howl at midnight” (p. 106); “as proud as a first grader with a star on his paper” (p. 106); “search...like a prospector digging for gold” (p. 113) **Metaphors**—“the spirit of a lone creature’s voice in the wild” (p. 106); “Stargirl’s bendable light” (p. 107); “he was the Johnny Appleseed of loose change” (p. 117)

Chapters 22–25 | pp. 119–158

Leo visits Stargirl’s house and they kiss for the first time. Stargirl makes a banner proclaiming her love for Leo and posts it on the school’s major bulletin board for all to see. The shunning intensifies for Leo, and he begins to treat Stargirl differently. They have a long conversation regarding his desire for her to be more like everyone else.

Vocabulary	
coasting (122)	
cooed (125)	
morale (127)	
extravagance (130)	
stoking (130)	
torrent (131)	
gumption (133)	
hermit (136)	

Discussion Questions

1. Leo is intrigued to see a bowl of hair and a wagon filled with pebbles in Stargirl’s room. What do these objects say about Stargirl’s personality? What items do you have in your own bedroom that say something about your personality? *Answers will vary, but should suggest that Stargirl has emotions for herself as well as others. pp. 120–121*
2. Although Leo continues to fall for Stargirl, he also continues to be bothered by the shunning at school: “I had never realized how much I needed the attention of others to confirm my own presence” (p. 126). Do you think that this statement is true for you? for most people? for a few people? Explain your opinion. *(Answers will vary.)*
3. On pages 127–128 of the novel, Leo summarizes some of the statements the students make about Stargirl. Do you agree or disagree with the students’ opinions? Why do you think they hold these opinions? *(Answers will vary, but can refer to students who may feel guilty for being unkind. Rather than seeing her as selfless and themselves as selfish, they prefer to make her into someone who desires credit, the spotlight, glory, etc.)*