

# Stargirl



By

Jerry Spinelli

A Novel Study  
by Nat and Joel Reed

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**About the author:** Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit [novelstudies.org](http://novelstudies.org).

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## Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Most sections of the novel study focuses on 2 - 5 chapters of *Stargirl*. The unit is comprised of the following activities:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language and Extension Activities

A portfolio cover (page 7) as well as a Checklist (page 6) are included so that students may keep track of their completed work.

**Every activity need not be completed by all students.**

### Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to:

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases... including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story, **and many others.**

**Themes** which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include society and social pressures, individuality versus conformity, kindness, courage, adversity; coming of age.

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## List of Skills

### Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *personification*.
7. Identify *anagrams*
8. Listing compound words
9. Identifying parts of speech
10. Identify/create *similes*
11. Identification of root words

### Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

### Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Complete Five W's Chart
4. Identify *cliffhangers*
5. Identify the climax of the novel.
6. Complete a Story Pyramid

### Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Identify the protagonist/antagonist
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Compare characters

### Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Create a poem
6. Write about personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete a KWS Chart

### Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Create a comic strip

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## Synopsis

**Stargirl.** From the day she arrives at quiet Mica High in a burst of color and sound, the hallways hum with the murmur of “Stargirl, Stargirl.” She captures Leo Borlock’s heart with just one smile. She sparks a school-spirit revolution with just one cheer. The students of Mica High are enchanted. At first.

Then they turn on her. Stargirl is suddenly shunned for everything that makes her different, and Leo, panicked and desperate with love, urges her to become the very thing that can destroy her: normal. In this celebration of nonconformity, Newbery Medalist Jerry Spinelli weaves a tense, emotional tale about the perils of popularity and the thrill and inspiration of first love. [Courtesy of the Publisher]

### Author Biography Jerry Spinelli

Born in 1941 in Norristown, Pennsylvania, Jerry Spinelli discovered his calling in 1957 when his high school football team won a big game. The town celebrated, his fellow students raced through the streets, but Jerry sneaked back home and marked the occasion in his own way. He wrote a poem. Later the town newspaper published it. “And,” he reports, “I’ve been a writer ever since.”

Married to Eileen Spinelli, who is also a writer, Jerry was for many years an editor for the Chilton Company. Now a full-time writer, he lives in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania.

Jerry Spinelli’s immensely popular books include **Space Station Seventh Grade**, **Jason and Marceline, Who Put That Hair in My Toothbrush?** and **Maniac Magee**, which has won more than fifteen state children’s book awards in addition to the Newbery Medal. [The Publisher]





# Stargirl



*By Jerry Spinelli*

Name:

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# Stargirl

## By Jerry Spinelli

### Porcupine Necktie – Chapter 4



#### Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. At the end of this section we have two possible candidates for this role – Leo (the novel’s narrator) or Stargirl. Stargirl is a grade ten student who is now attending a new secondary school. What character traits do you think are important for a person to not only survive attending a new school, but actually enjoy the experience? Why did you choose these particular traits.




#### Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

allegiance	aviary	maroon	marquee	absurdity
nonconformity	perpetual	saguaros	balk	elusive

1. Kevin held up his hands and framed a \_\_\_\_\_ in the air.
2. Mica Area High School was not exactly a hotbed of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. I observed her as if she was a bird in an \_\_\_\_\_.
4. I would have expected a soldier to display more \_\_\_\_\_ to his country.
5. Her caught-in-headlights eyes gave her a look of \_\_\_\_\_ astonishment.
6. The bird of paradise can be most \_\_\_\_\_ when it sets its mind on it.
7. In the gathering dusk, the \_\_\_\_\_ flung shadows of giants across the earth.
8. Do you think Chuck will \_\_\_\_\_ at the idea of throwing her a birthday party?
9. Was the ship’s captain worried that his men might \_\_\_\_\_ him on the island?
10. Hilary wagged her head at the \_\_\_\_\_ of the question.



# Questions



1. Describe the **setting** of the story at the beginning of Chapter One.


2. Most novels have one main character which readers identify as the protagonist. Although Leo Borlock is the novel's narrator, Stargirl would certainly appear to be a significant character to also consider for this role. Who do you think will eventually establish him/herself as the novel's protagonist? Why?


3. After reading to the end of Chapter 4, return to the concluding two paragraphs of *Porcupine Necktie* and suggest a possible solution to this mystery.


4. What was the *Hot Seat* all about?


5. Give 2 reasons as to why the others students considered Stargirl to be outrageous.

1	
2	

6. Why do you think that Leo was reluctant to have her on Hot Seat?


7. How do you think the students in your school would react to having someone like Stargirl join the student body? Why do you think they would react in this way?


8. Why do you think Stargirl had no friends even thou she was the friendliest person in the school?


9. What was Hillari Kimble's assessment of Stargirl?


10. What was unusual about:

Hillari Kimble	
Wayne Parr	

# Language Activities



## A. Anagrams

An **anagram** is a word that is formed by changing the order of the letters of another word. For example, the letters in the word **WAS** can also form the word **SAW**. Follow these directions to form the anagrams:



a) read the clue in the right-hand column.

b) Using the word in the left-hand column move the letters around in any order, but you must use all the letters. All of the words in the left-hand column can be found in our novel.

Word	Anagram	Clue
steam		Pals.
clear		One who does up shoes.
names		Parts of horses.
period		Not the sharpest knife in the drawer.
point		A type of horse with patches.
minute		A dance.
stared		Skilled jobs usually requiring manual training.

## B. Cliffhanger

Chapter Four contains an important literary device called a **cliffhanger**. A cliffhanger usually occurs at the end of a chapter when the author leaves the reader in suspense. How is this true in Chapter Four? What do you make of this mysterious conclusion?




**C. Personification** is giving human qualities to something that is not human. Here's an example taken from Chapter 3: *The sun lay down behind the mountain.*

Describe how the sun is personified in this example.


Create your own example of personification.


Find another example of personification two paragraphs later.


**D.** A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter 2 is: *I like the feeling the moonlight gave me, as if it wasn't the opposite of day, but its underside, its private side, when the fabulous purred on my snow-white sheet like some dark cat come in from the desert.*



What is being compared in this example?

--	--

Invent your own **similes** comparing the following items with something from your own imagination:

a) a school cafeteria


b) a porcupine


## E. The Diamante Poem.

There are many forms of poetry available to the aspiring poet other than the rhyming poem. One of the forms of poetry that is the most fun to tackle is the **Diamante** poem.



### The Diamante Poem

The diamante poem has a distinct form and a distinct shape. Directions for creating one is as follows:

**Line 1** - Noun or subject – one word.

**Line 2** - Two adjectives that describe Line 1.

**Line 3** - Three *'ing* words that describe line 1 (i.e. *playing*).

**Line 4** - Four nouns – the first two are connected with Line 1, the last two are connected with Line 7.

**Line 5** - Three *'ing* words that describe Line 7.

**Line 6** - Two adjectives that describe Line 7.

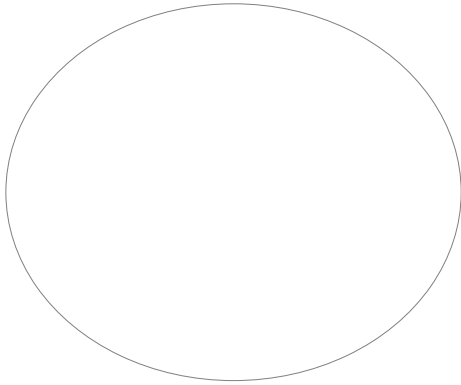
**Line 7** - One noun synonym for the subject.

Following the above instructions, try your hand at writing a diamante poem using an idea, event or character from the first four chapters as your inspiration.

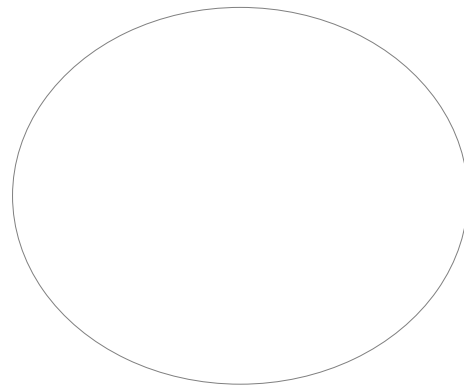
**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_


## F. 5 Ws and an H.

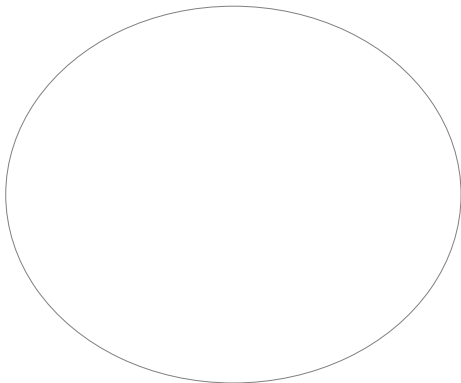
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



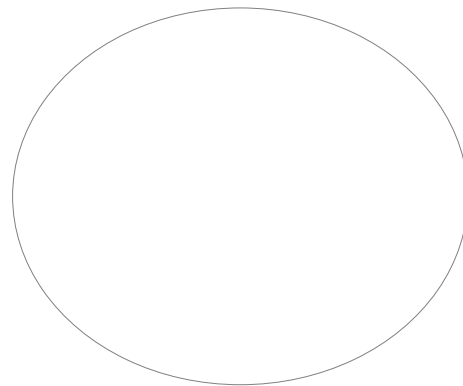
***WHO?***



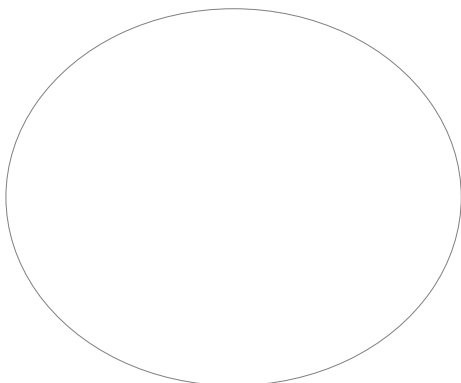
***WHAT?***



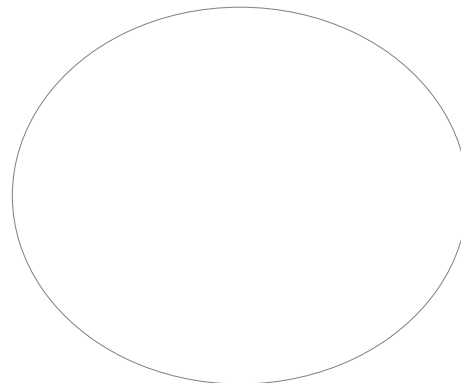
***WHEN?***



***WHERE?***



***WHY?***



***HOW?***

## Extension Activity

### Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A storyboard can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel. Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in this section of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6