

Parents' Guide to *Stargirl* by Jerry Spinelli

Grade Levels: 9–12

Lexile Level: 590L

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Publisher: Alfred A. Knopf

ISBN: 978-0375822339

Page Count: ~186 pages

About the Book

Stargirl tells the story of a unique and free-spirited high school student, Stargirl Caraway, through the eyes of her classmate Leo Borlock. When Stargirl arrives at Mica High, her nonconformity and kindness initially enchant her peers—but as social pressure mounts, she becomes a target of ridicule. The novel explores what happens when a community is challenged by someone who refuses to blend in.

Educational Value

This novel supports key literacy and social-emotional learning goals:

- **Literary Analysis:** Students study point of view, character development, symbolism, and theme.
- **Critical Thinking:** The story encourages reflection on conformity, identity, courage, and empathy.
- **Social & Emotional Growth:** *Stargirl* fosters conversations about kindness, individuality, compassion, and how we treat those who are different.
- **Cross-Curricular Engagement:** The novel connects to history (social movements), science (psychology, astronomy), religion (selflessness and compassion), math (data interpretation), and fine arts (expression and creativity).

Discussion Topics for Home

- What does it mean to be true to yourself? When does it feel hard to be yourself?
- How do we define popularity? Can popularity and kindness coexist?
- How does peer pressure affect our decisions? What is the cost of conformity?
- What does courage look like in everyday life?
- How do we treat people who are different? How would Stargirl be treated in your class today?
- Read [1 Samuel 16:7](#). Everyone judges Stargirl by her eccentric behavior, but who truly sees her heart?
- How does Stargirl embody Jesus' teaching in [Luke 6:27-36](#) and [Matthew 25:35-40](#)? How can we follow her example, especially with our peers and classmates?

Why We're Reading *Stargirl*

As part of a schoolwide initiative, *Stargirl* was selected for its universal themes, accessibility across grade levels, and its power to spark meaningful dialogue among students of all backgrounds. Through collaborative, cross-curricular projects and activities, students will deepen their understanding of literature while building empathy and community.