

**Jerry Spinelli's**  
***Stargirl:***  
**A Discussion Guide**

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**Dedicated with Love to**

**Carl Eugene Bruce**

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## Preface

The purpose of this book is educational. I enjoy reading Jerry Spinelli's *Stargirl*, and I believe that it is an excellent book for young adults (and for middle-aged adults such as myself) to read.

This book contains many questions about Jerry Spinelli's *Stargirl* and their answers. I hope that teachers of young adults will find it useful as a guide for discussions. It can also be used for short writing assignments. Students can answer selected questions from this little guide orally or in one or more paragraphs.

I hope to encourage teachers to teach Jerry Spinelli's *Stargirl*, and I hope to lessen the time needed for teachers to prepare to teach this book.

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## **Introduction to Jerry Spinelli's *Stargirl***

Jerry Spinelli published *Stargirl* in the year 2000.

The character Stargirl is based in large part on Mr. Spinelli's wife, Eileen, who is also an author.

Stargirl is a free spirit and a nonconformist who does good deeds.

Why would Mr. Spinelli write about a character such as Stargirl? He explains, "If 100 people are running north in a herd and one is running south, which one are you going to want to read about?" (Source: John Micklos, Jr., *Jerry Spinelli: Master Teller of Teen Tales*, p. 79.)

Mr. Spinelli adds, "It's by the misfits among us that we measure ourselves. It's what illuminates us. Anyway, they're more interesting." (Source: John Micklos, Jr., *Jerry Spinelli: Master Teller of Teen Tales*, pp. 79-80.)

The narrator of *Stargirl* is Leo Borlock, who appeared as a minor character in Mr. Spinelli's earlier novel *Who Put That Hair in My Toothbrush?*

We cannot say that Leo Borlock wrote this book. Rather, we are entering Leo's thoughts and seeing things from his point of view.

### **• Is Stargirl Caraway an appropriate name for this character?**

Stargirl is a name that the character creates for herself. We discover in the novel that the name she was born with is Susan (her middle name is Julia), and we discover in the novel that as she was growing up she created other names for herself, including "Pocket Mouse" (33).

The name "Caraway" contains these two words: "care" and "away." Put them together, and you have "care away."



Certainly, Stargirl is often a carefree girl. It is as if her cares have been taken away. But it is also true that Stargirl does have cares — aka problems and concerns — just like all of us do. Stargirl also cares deeply about other people. Their sadness can make her sad.

The name “Caraway” also contains these two words: “car” and “away.” Put them together, and you have “car away.” Our American society is deeply dependent on cars. Take away cars, and our American society would be very different. (The same is true of television, and we learn later that Stargirl has no television in her home.) In addition, a car is a form of transportation to a different place.

**• Is Leo Borlock an appropriate name for this character?**

The name “Borlock” contains three words: “boor,” “bore,” and “lock.”

A boor is a rude person with bad manners.

A bore is a boring person.

The word “lock” can mean to lock something or someone up.

All three of these words are negative.

“Leo” is often used as a name for a lion. The use of “Leo” as the name for Leo Borlock may be ironic.

## Porcupine Necktie

### • What is a narrator?

A narrator is a teller of a story. In this novel, Leo Borlock, a student at Mica Area High School in Arizona, is the narrator.

Apparently, what we are reading in *Stargirl* is Leo Borlock's memories. Apparently, we are not meant to suppose that we are reading a book — a memoir — that Leo Borlock wrote.

In this novel, Leo Borlock is not a writer. Rather, this character is meant to be a human being. In the final section and in the epilogue of the novel, titled "More Than Stars," we learn that Leo Borlock has graduated from high school and college, and that he is an adult now. In the novel, we read his memories of Stargirl.

### • The narrator of *Stargirl* is Leo Borlock. What do we learn about him in this section of the novel?

Leo Borlock is a transplant to Arizona. When he was 12 years old, his family left Pennsylvania and moved to Arizona.

Leo did like one unusual thing when he was a child. His Uncle Pete had an unusual necktie: one with a porcupine on it.

Leo decided to start a porcupine necktie collection, but unfortunately he was unable to find any porcupine neckties, so after two years he still had a collection of exactly one porcupine necktie.

### • What good deeds do we see in this section of the novel?

We see two good deeds, each involving a porcupine necktie.

Uncle Pete gives Leo his porcupine necktie as a going-away present when Leo's family moves him to Arizona.

After the local newspaper mentions that Leo collects porcupine neckties as part of “a regular feature about kids on their birthdays” (2), he receives a porcupine necktie as a gift from an anonymous good-deed doer. The gift comes with a message: “Happy Birthday!” (2). Obviously, the anonymous giver of the porcupine necktie is clever. The anonymous giver was able to obtain a porcupine necktie quickly although Leo was unable to find one after two years of looking for one.

• **What is your opinion of the ending of “Porcupine Necktie”?**

The ending of “Porcupine Necktie” is excellent. It will keep the reader reading:

At the time I simply considered the episode a mystery. It did not occur to me that I was being watched. We were all being watched. (2)

## Section 1

### • What kind of an impact does Stargirl make on the students of Mica High School on her first day of school?

She makes an immediate impact. Students start talking about her. They are wondering who she is.

Leo Borlock arrives at school on the first day of 11th grade. We find out later that he is 16 years old. Stargirl is a sophomore, so she is probably 15 years old. Immediately, Leo hears, “Did you see her?” (3). Leo continues to hear that question throughout the day.

Finally, he sees her at lunch. Stargirl makes an impression at lunch.

### • What do we find out about Stargirl Caraway in Section 1?

Stargirl is one grade behind Leo. She is in the 10th grade.

Stargirl brings her lunch to school instead of buying lunch from the school cafeteria.

Stargirl carries a bag that is decorated with art: a painting of “a life-size sunflower” (4).

Stargirl carries a ukulele, which she plays in the cafeteria.

No one sits by Stargirl in the cafeteria on her first day of school. Everybody seems to be talking about her and looking at her.

### • Which song does Stargirl sing on her first day of high school?

Stargirl sings “I’m Looking Over a Four-Leaf Clover” on her ukulele.

I’M LOOKING OVER A FOUR-LEAF CLOVER

Words by Mort Dixon, music by Harry Woods

Written in 1927 — popularized in 1948 by Art Mooney

I'm looking over a four-leaf clover

That I overlooked before.

One leaf is sunshine, the second is rain,

Third is the roses that grow in the lane.

No need explaining, the one remaining

Is somebody I adore.

I'm looking over a four-leaf clover

That I overlooked before

Jerry Spinelli carefully chose that song. What do we learn about Stargirl from that song now? We learn that Stargirl is familiar with and likes old music. This song was written in the Roaring Twenties, and it became popular in the 1940s.

After you have finished reading the novel, look again at these lyrics. Why do you suppose that Jerry Spinelli chose to have Stargirl sing this particular song? We note the references to these things:

“sunshine”: happiness?

“rain”: sadness?

“roses that grow in the lane”: happiness in great quantities?

“somebody I adore”: a loved one, who may or may not reciprocate with love (but note that four-leaf clovers are thought to be lucky)

“looking over a four-leaf clover”: looking at something good

“a four-leaf clover / That I overlooked before”: not noticing something good earlier

Note that some of the lyrics may apply to Stargirl, while other lyrics may apply to Leo. After you read the novel, ask yourself who is looking over something good that the person overlooked before.

**• What is a ukulele? Is it a “cool” musical instrument? What makes an instrument cool or uncool?**

Leo at first thinks that the ukulele is “a miniature guitar” (4).

A ukulele is a lot like a small guitar with (usually) four strings. It comes from Hawaii, where Hawaiians saw guitars and then created their own versions of the instrument.

Chances are, ukuleles are uncool these days, except perhaps in Hawaii.

What makes a musical instrument cool or uncool? Probably majority opinion, and probably opinion makers. If the popular kids in a school dislike something, probably lots of kids will dislike that thing, too. If enough kids think that something is uncool, then it is uncool.

The danger with this is that some things get rejected that ought not to be rejected. A musician named “Lost” John Hutchison lives in Athens, Ohio. (He does not care much for the nickname “Lost,” as he can’t see why such an obviously altogether person as himself ever got that nickname.) For a long time, he did not play the accordion, which is probably an uncool musical instrument these days — whoever heard of a “hard-rock accordion player”? (Of course, Opus the Penguin, a creation of comic-strip artist Berkeley Breathed of *Bloom County* fame, did play tuba in a rock band.) But when Lost John started to learn to play that instrument, he was surprised by — in his words — “the accordion’s immense coolness.”

Sometimes, it is best to go your own way and decide what you like or don't like. If you don't like the accordion, fine. If you do like the accordion, fine. This is personal preference, and the main thing is to make up your mind and not let someone else do that for you.

You will probably note that this Discussion Guide is and will continue to be preachy. One of the good things about *Stargirl* is that it is not preachy. It tells a story and allows the readers to figure out the lessons for themselves.

**• Which kinds of music are cool, and which kinds of music are uncool? What makes music cool or uncool?**

What kind of music in a high school is cool probably depends on the high school. Hip-hop will be popular in some high schools, rock and pop in other high schools, and country music in yet other high schools.

Again, it is best to go your own way and decide what you like or don't like. If you don't like pop music, fine. If you do like pop music, fine. This is personal preference, and the main thing is to make up your mind and not let someone else do that for you. If a certain kind of music makes you want to be deaf, then avoid that kind of music, but if other people find pleasure in it, then recognize that that is fine, too.

**• Write a short character analysis of Kevin.**

Kevin is interested in having a career in TV. He is the star of the in-school TV series *Hot Seat*, in which he interviews a student each month. (Leo is the producer-director of the TV show.)

Kevin is definitely interested in having *Stargirl* in the program's hot seat.

- **What is *Hot Seat*?**

*Hot Seat* is the name of the in-school TV series created by Kevin and Leo. Kevin interviews a student each month. The TV show does have a problem — the students they interview “are not especially interesting” (5).

- **What does Stargirl look like?**

Stargirl may be unusual, but she not unusual in looks. (She will sometimes wear odd clothing.) She is an adolescent 10th-grade girl, after all.

Leo describes her in this way:

She wasn't gorgeous, wasn't ugly. A sprinkle of freckles crossed the bridge of her nose. Mostly, she looked like a hundred other girls in school, except for two things. She wore no makeup, and her eyes were the biggest I had ever seen, like deer's eyes caught in headlights. (5)



## Section 2

- **The name of the high school is Mica Area High School. What is Mica?**

Mica is a mineral. Mica is found in the desert where the town and the high school is located. It is used in the electrical and electronic industries.

The town named Mica has an electronics business park (16). Mica must be a fairly small town, since the town “was invented a mere fifteen years before” (16). The electronics business park was created first, and then the people who came to work at the park “invented” the town.

- **Write a short character analysis of Hillari Kemble. Which conspiracy theory does she say she believes?**

Hillari Kemble does not like Stargirl from the start. She thinks of Stargirl as a “nutcase” (7) planted by the administration to stir up school spirit.

Hillari is a bit of a nonconformist. She spells her name with an I rather than a Y, which is a little bit different from usual — but is becoming much more common nowadays (causing problems for journalists, who need to spell names correctly).

Hillari is critical of other people rather than accepting of other people.

- **How does Stargirl celebrate other people’s birthdays?**

Stargirl celebrated other people’s birthdays by singing “Happy Birthday” to them, accompanying herself on her ukulele.

She does this to Alan Ferko, making his face turn bright red with embarrassment (9).

**• What other things do we learn about Stargirl in section 2?**

Stargirl is definitely a nonconformist:

- She wears unusual clothing to school. She often wears long dresses. On her second day of school, she looks like Bo-Peep. She also wears such things as a flapper dress from the 1920s, a native American buckskin, and a Japanese kimono (10).
- She says “hello” — even to perfect strangers (10).
- Stargirl’s questions in class are sometimes off the topic; for example, Stargirl asks a question about trolls in a class about United States history.
- Stargirl’s pet, which she carries to class every day, is a rat.
- Stargirl dances in a “rare rainfall” (11) rather than going to class.
- Stargirl cannot be defined by the students at Mica Area High School (11).

**• Stargirl is dismissed from the Mica Area High School cross-country team. Should she be?**

Stargirl messes up here, in my opinion. In a competition with another team, all the other runners turn right but she turns left. She never finishes the race.

The rules for competing in cross-country are well set. It is a team sport and not an individual sport. To be a member of the team, the individual needs to play by the rules. Stargirl doesn’t do that, so yes, she should be dismissed from the team.

Sports involve the pursuit of excellence. Because of the nature of sports, the excellence is that of the human body. Stargirl should respect the competitive drive of the other

members of the team. By not doing that, Stargirl comes perilously close to being like Hillari Kemble when Hillari puts on her hoax. (See section 4.)

To Stargirl's credit, she does not complain about being dismissed from the team. Chances are, she tried it, she discovered that it is not right for her, and so she knows that of course she ought not to be on the team. Trying something new and discovering that it is not right for you is not a bad thing. Never trying anything new is a bad thing because many new things will be right for you.

• **Does Stargirl always do the right thing?**

Stargirl is not perfect. She is certainly an original, and she is someone it would be a pleasure to know. However, she does a few things wrong. We have already talked about cross-country.

As a teacher, I would prefer that Stargirl be in class rather than dancing in the rain during class. However, rain showers are rare in Arizona, so dancing in the rain is something that would not happen very often, so it need not be a big deal. If I were a United States history teacher, I would prefer that Stargirl's questions in class be on topic rather than about trolls.

When Stargirl sings "Happy Birthday" to students, she embarrasses them. Most of us would prefer not to be embarrassed, so perhaps Stargirl should take into account the other students' feelings. At the least, if she knows that a student prefers that Stargirl not sing "Happy Birthday" on the student's birthday, then Stargirl should respect that student's preference. However, this need not be a big deal, either. A little embarrassment is not going to kill anybody, and some students will enjoy this. In my opinion, it is better to suffer a little embarrassment than to have your birthday be ignored. And yes, we do find out later that many students are pleased

that Stargirl sings “Happy Birthday” to them although they are also embarrassed.

• **On p. 9, Kevin says, “How long do you think somebody who’s really like that is going to last around here?” This is foreshadowing. Define “foreshadowing.”**

The 6th edition of *A Handbook to Literature* by C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon defines “foreshadowing” in this way: “The presentation of material in a work in such a way that later events are prepared for” (201).

Here are a couple of other definitions:

Foreshadowing is the use of hints or clues to suggest what will happen later in literature.

Source: <[http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/lit\\_terms/foreshadowing.html](http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/lit_terms/foreshadowing.html)>.

Definition: A literary device used to hint at events that will follow later in the story, sometimes generating feelings of anxiety or suspense. Anton Chekhov once said that “if there is a gun hanging on the wall in the first act, it must fire in the last.” That remark captures the essence of foreshadowing.

Source: <<http://contemporarylit.about.com/library/bldef-foreshadowing>>.

Kevin says, “How long do you think somebody who’s really like that is going to last around here?” (9). Anyone who is unusual takes a chance of being rejected by other people — or of being widely and wildly popular.

Both of these things will happen to Stargirl.

• **What are the students at Mica Area High School like?**

We read that

[...] Mica Area High School — MAHS — was not exactly a hotbed of nonconformity. There were individual variants here and there, of course, but within pretty narrow limits we all wore the same clothes, talked the same way, ate the same food, listened to the same music. Even our dorks and nerds had a MAHS stamp to them. If we happened to somehow distinguish ourselves, we quickly snapped back into place, like rubber bands. (10)

- **What would a hotbed of conformity look like?**

Students' answers will vary.

### Section 3

- **Write a short character analysis of Kevin Quinlan based on what you read in section 3. What do he and Leo fight about?**

Like Leo, Kevin is a transplant to Arizona. Both arrived in Arizona four years previously — during the same week (13). For four years, they have been best friends.

Kevin and Leo show some signs of creativity. They came up with the idea of *Hot Seat* together. Both can be persuasive — they convinced the school to let them do *Hot Seat*, which became popular at the high school.

Kevin and Leo fight daily about Stargirl.

Kevin wants Stargirl to appear on *Hot Seat*.

Leo is resistant about Stargirl appearing on *Hot Seat*. This indicates some sensitivity on Leo's part. He is wondering why he is balking at Stargirl appearing on the TV show. We read,

So why was I balking?

I didn't know. I had some vague feelings, but the only one I could identify was a warning: Leave her alone. (14)

- **What do we learn about Stargirl in section 3?**

Students keep trying to explain Stargirl, and they come up with a number of explanations, including the explanation that she is an example of “homeschooling gone amuck” (14).

The explanations do have a few things in common:

- Students think that Stargirl's parents must be unusual in some way. They must be “circus acrobats,” “witches,” or “brain-dead vegetables in a hospital in Yuma” (14).

- Students think that Stargirl's home must be unusual. She must live in a "ghost town" or "in a bus" (14).

- **What makes a person be like Stargirl?**

In trying to explain Stargirl, students are assuming a cause-and-effect relationship: They assume that Stargirl has unusual parents and/or an unusual home that caused her to be unusual.

Another explanation is that Stargirl chooses to be the kind of person she is. This explanation assumes freedom rather than determinism. According to determinism, we are who we are because of our heredity and environment. But if you assume that people have free will, then people can choose their actions. People can choose the kind of person they will be.

- **Does free will have limits?**

Of course, free will does have limits. We are free in a situation. I can't simply choose to be the starting center for the Boston Celtics, but I can choose to develop whatever skill I have in basketball by playing basketball and practicing shooting baskets.

We will see that Stargirl chooses the kind of person she wants to act like. If she chooses to be a conformist, then she acts like a conformist. However, choosing to be a conformist does not make her happy.

To some extent, we have freedom. We can use our free will to choose to be good or choose to be evil.

I once knew a man who was fascinated by the Amish ever since he was a little boy. When he grew up, he became Amish.

**• How do you suppose that Stargirl knows everybody's name and birthday?**

We find out later that Stargirl reads the newspaper, and she learns people's birthdays from it.

Apparently, once she learns that a person has a birthday coming soon, she asks around and learns to recognize that person. Teachers are probably willing to help her learn who students are. Probably, Mica Area High School is a small school because the town of Mica is only 15 years old.

**• What does Leo learn about Stargirl when he follows her?**

Stargirl does not take a bus. Mica must be a small town because she is able to walk all over it.

Leo witnesses Stargirl performing a good deed. She looks for a certain house, then she places in the mailbox an unsigned note saying "CONGRATULATIONS!" (17). Leo is snoopy; he looks in the mailbox.

Stargirl goes out of town — west. She turns off the highway and goes into the desert. She plays her ukulele and sings. Leo stifles a desire to "warn her ... of what?" (18), and then he leaves and goes home, leaving Stargirl, whom he suspects knows of his presence.

Later, Stargirl will take Leo to this place. Some places are said to be enchanted, and to Stargirl, this is one of those places.

The Cherokee believe in having a secret place. This is a place to go to be alone — especially when you need to restore your spirit. Stargirl's enchanted place is something she shares with Leo later.

In chapter 9, "The Secret Place," of Forrest Carter's *The Education of Little Tree*, Little Tree finds his secret place in the



woods. All Cherokees have a secret place. (Both Granpa and Granma have one.) Little Tree's is a little ways up the mountain, and there is an old sweet gum tree there. The secret place is where a Cherokee can go to be alone. At times, Little Tree spends time in his secret place — this helps him to restore his spirit after a bad time:

Through that short winter day, I lay in my secret place. And my spirit didn't hurt anymore. I was washed clean by the feeling song of the wind and the trees and the spring branch and the birds. (203)

## Section 4

### • **What are the three things that Hillari Kimble is known for? Are these things worth being known for?**

Hillari Kemble is known for three things:

#### 1) *Her Mouth*

Hillari Kemble has a mouth that she frequently uses — especially to complain.

#### 2) *The Hoax*

The Hoax occurred in Hillari’s sophomore year — Stargirl is now in her sophomore year.

Hillari tried out for the cheerleading squad, made it, and then turned down the offer to join the squad: “She said she had no intention of yammering and bouncing in front of empty bleachers (which was usually the case). And anyway she hated sports” (19).

#### 3) *Wayne Parr*

Wayne Parr is Hillari’s boyfriend.

### • **Compare and contrast Hillari Kimble and Stargirl. What is the difference between good nonconformity and bad nonconformity?**

Good nonconformity does not hurt anyone — at least not intentionally. All of us make mistakes, of course, so we consider motive when we evaluate whether a person is good or bad. A person who deliberately sets out to do evil is evil. A person who sets out to do good, but who makes a mistake that has bad consequences is still a good person, but a person who made a bad mistake.

Bad nonconformity hurts people.

Hillari's rejection of the offer to be on the cheerleading squad hurts people. She makes it clear that she does not care to be on the cheerleading squad because of the lack of fans at sports events. Hillari is rejecting both the cheerleading squad and the athletes. Going out to make the cheerleading squad, and then rejecting the offer to join the cheerleading squad can be construed as a way of showing contempt for the cheerleaders and for the athletes. (By the way, cheerleaders need not be evil, although much popular culture such as TV shows and movies depict them as being stuck-up but popular mean girls.)

Stargirl made a mistake when she joined the cross-country team and then did not compete the way the other athletes on the team did. However, there is no indication that she is showing contempt for the cross-country athletes.

Hillari uses her mouth to criticize.

Stargirl uses her mouth to sing "Happy Birthday" to people.

One other way that Hillari and Stargirl are different is that Hillari has a boyfriend, and Stargirl does not have a boyfriend — yet.

One bad kind of nonconformist is a dangerous criminal — someone who does not obey laws against hurting other people. Fortunately, Stargirl is a good kind of nonconformist.

• **Write a short character analysis of Wayne Parr.**

Wayne Parr is cool in a couple of senses of the word.

"Cool" can mean popular, and Wayne is popular at Mica Area High School.

"Cool" can also mean being aloof, and Wayne is aloof. He does not care about much — except *GQ*. *GQ* is *Gentleman's Quarterly*, a magazine that focuses on fashion for males. Wayne Parr would like to be a male model someday.

Wayne actually has little to make him special, other than his looks. We read that he is “gorgeous” (19). However,

In terms of achievement, Wayne Parr seemed to be nobody. He played on no sports team, joined no organization, won no awards, earned no A’s. He was elected to nothing, honored for nothing — and yet, though I did not realize this until years later, he was grand marshal of our daily parade.

We did not awake up in the morning and ask ourselves, “What will Wayne Parr wear today?” or “How will Wayne Parr act today?” At least, not consciously. But on some level below awareness, that is exactly what we did. Wayne Parr did not go to football and basketball games, and by and large, neither did we. Wayne Parr did not ask questions in class or get worked up over teachers or pep rallies, and neither did we. Wayne Parr did not much care. Neither did we. (19-20)

Wayne Parr is enough of a notability to appear on *Hot Seat*, but the most interesting thing he says is that his ambition is to appear on the cover of *GQ*. He poses for *Hot Seat*, and Leo notes that Wayne “had that disdainful model look down pat” (21).

As ambitions go, this one depends on style rather than substance.

• **Is Wayne Parr a good name for this character?**

In golf, “par” is an average number of strokes for a hole on the golf course. A par-five hole means it would normally take an average golfer five strokes to put the golf ball in the hole.

“Par” is also a state of equality.

The main thing that “par” means is not standing out. It means not being outstandingly good or outstandingly bad. It means being one of the crowd, being average.

• **Compare and contrast Wayne Parr and Stargirl.**

The two have a couple of major differences:

*1) Looks*

Wayne Parr is gorgeous, according to both males and females.

Stargirl actually looks like an ordinary sophomore girl, which is in large part what she is. She does not wear makeup, and she is neither ugly nor gorgeous.

*2) Caring vs. Lack of Caring*

Wayne Parr does not care.

Stargirl cares a lot. Stargirl is the one who does good deeds for other people and cares about them. To Stargirl, a birthday is a special event, and it ought to be celebrated.

• **Wayne Parr is a foil for Stargirl. What is a foil?**

This is a definition of foil:

**Foil:** A character in a work of literature whose physical or psychological qualities contrast strongly with, and therefore highlight, the corresponding qualities of another character. In his Sherlock Holmes stories, Arthur Conan Doyle portrayed Dr. Watson as a man of normal habits and intelligence, making him a foil for the eccentric and wonderfully perceptive Sherlock Holmes.

Source: <[http://www.iacnet.com/free\\_resources/glossary/glossary\\_fh.htm](http://www.iacnet.com/free_resources/glossary/glossary_fh.htm)>.

- **What are the three things that you would like to be known for?**

Students' answers will vary, but hopefully will be interesting.

## Section 5

### • What does Stargirl do at the football game?

Few people attend the football games because Mica Area High School does not have a winning football team.

In fact, few people are in the band, which probably cannot be called a marching band because so few people are in it. (See the anecdote about the Ghoulardi All-Stars in Appendix E.)

Kevin is one of the few students who go to games, and when he sees Stargirl there and what she is doing, he immediately telephones Leo and tells him to come right over.

So what is Stargirl doing? She is having fun and performing for a very small crowd of fans and for the football teams and referees at halftime:

- Stargirl prances, roams, and swirls as the band is on the playing field.
- Stargirl marches like a soldier, and she pretends to play a flute.
- Stargirl pogoes, and she kicks her heels together.
- Stargirl warms up with the football players. They do jumping jacks; she does jumping jacks.
- When the football game is supposed to start again after halftime, Stargirl does not move off the field. She grabs the football, punts it, and then runs out of the football stadium.

Unlike Hillari Kimble, Stargirl does not mind that few people are present to watch her cheer.

• **How do the people at the football game react to Stargirl's antics?**

The reaction of the few people in the stands is very positive. They are entertained by Stargirl's antics. They are delighted by Stargirl.

The cheerleaders are also positively affected by Stargirl's antics. The cheerleaders are happy to hear a reaction by the people in the stands.

Everyone is entertained by Stargirl, including the football players and the other referees:

Everyone cheered: the spectators, the cheerleaders, the band, the players, the officials, the parents running the hot dog stand, the policeman, me. We whistled and stomped our feet on the aluminum bleachers. The cheerleaders stared up in delighted surprise. (23)

• **What happens at the next football game?**

Lots of people have heard about Stargirl, and so lots of people show up at the next football game.

The cheerleaders are happy because of all the fans who are showing team spirit — when the cheerleaders say, “Gimme an E!” they actually hear “E” shouted in reply. The Mica Area High School teams are known as the Electrons because electronics is such an important part of the town.

Only a few people don't show up at the game. Two of them are Hillari Kimble and Wayne Parr.

The third is Stargirl. Everyone is disappointed that Stargirl does not show up and perform at halftime.



- **How do the cheerleaders react to Stargirl's nonappearance at halftime?**

The cheerleaders know a good thing when they see it. Stargirl can make lots of people show up for games. Stargirl can get fans excited at games. Stargirl can get the students of Mica Area High School filled with team spirit.

However, Stargirl can do these things only if she shows up and performs at the games. Therefore, Mallory Stillwell, the captain of the cheerleaders, invites Stargirl to become a cheerleader. Stargirl accepts. Suddenly, 100 people attend cheerleader practice to watch Stargirl practice.

- **How does Stargirl celebrate Halloween?**

Stargirl celebrates Halloween by putting a candy pumpkin on the desks of her classmates in homeroom. No one asks who did this; everyone knows that Stargirl did this. This is the kind of thing that she does for many holidays.

- **What is your opinion of the ending of Section 5?**

Section 5 ends with a reference to the upcoming birthday of Hillari Kimble. Hillari has provided evidence that she does not like Stargirl. We know that from Hillari's conspiracy theory about Stargirl when Stargirl first arrived at the high school and from Hillari's nonattendance at the recent football game.

This is an ending that will keep the reader reading.

## Section 6

### • In your opinion, why doesn't Hillari Kimble want Stargirl to sing to her on her birthday?

Hillari tells Stargirl, "Don't try singing to me, I'm warning you" (27).

Stargirl responds, "I won't sing to you" (27), and Hillari walks away with "a satisfied smirk" (27).

This seems to be a power play on Hillari's part. She can assert power over Stargirl by telling her not to do something.

A different action would be simply to let Stargirl sing and to enjoy it. By now, Stargirl has sung many times to celebrate people's birthdays. The first time it happened, the birthday boy's face grew bright red with embarrassment, probably in part because the song was so unexpected. By now, students know what Stargirl will do. What would be embarrassing now would be if Stargirl would *not* sing to someone on his or her birthday. (Of course, some people are still likely to be embarrassed by the attention.)

Stargirl's singing "Happy Birthday" should be an accepted part of the school by now.

### • Stargirl promises not to sing "Happy Birthday" to Hillari Kimble on Hillari's birthday. What does Stargirl do instead? How does Hillari react?

Stargirl compromises.

Stargirl does not sing "Happy Birthday" to Hillari; instead, she sings "Happy Birthday" to Leo, but she uses Hillari's name instead of Leo's in the song.

Hillari reacts by stomping out of the lunchroom (29).

Leo's face is burning, so Stargirl's singing to people embarrasses some of them.

• **Why does Stargirl sing to Leo?**

Like other students, Kevin wonders why Stargirl sang to Leo. Unlike other students, he asks her directly why she sang to Leo.

Stargirl has a good answer: She tugs on Leo's earlobe and says, "He's cute" (29).

• **What is your opinion of the ending of Section 6?**

This is another section ending that will keep the reader reading.

Kevin says, "This keeps getting more interesting. I think it's time to go see Archie" (29).

The reader will wonder who Archie is.

## Section 7

### • Write a short character analysis of A.H. (Archibald Hapwood) Brubaker.

Archie is A.H. (Archibald Hapwood) Brubaker, a retired paleontologist.

Archie is a bone collector. Like Stargirl, he is an original, a nonconformist. Archie shows that originals and nonconformists can fit into society. Originals and nonconformists can be found in creative occupations and in education.

Archie used to be a professor in the American East before he retired, but his bone-collecting expeditions were in the American West.

Archie became a widower at age 66, and at age 67, he moved to Arizona.

Even though Archie is retired, he still teaches, informally. His home is a gathering place for high-school and other students. We find out that he tutored Stargirl when she was younger, but that she already had her originality and nonconformity before he began to tutor her.

Archie chose carefully where he lives. He wanted to be near to the high school so that he could be near to young people. (He is not a weirdo, just an educator.) His home is near Señor Saguaro. (A saguaro is a large cactus that has a trunk and one or more branches.) Señor Saguaro has two branches, making it look like a human being who is waving “adios” or good-bye.

### • Write a description of Señor Saguaro.

Jerry Spinelli has a good description of Señor Saguaro:

- “Señor Saguaro was a cactus, a thirty-foot-tall giant that towered over the toolshed in the backyard” (30).

- “It had two arms high on the trunk” (30).
- “One stuck straight out; the other made a right turn upward, as if waving ‘adios!’” (30-31).
- “The waving arm was green from the elbow up; all else was brown, dead” (31).
- “Much of the thick, leathery skin along the trunk had come loose and crumpled in a heap about the massive foot: Señor Saguaro had lost his pants” (31).
- “Only his ribs, thumb-thick vertical timbers, held him up” (31).
- Elf owls nested in his chest” (31).

• **Which contrasts or oppositions do we see in the description of Señor Saguaro?**

One contrast is life versus death. Much of Señor Saguaro is dead, although it does have one green branch — apparently, some of the roots and ribs are still alive in order to support the branch.

We also see a contrast of life versus death in the fact that Señor Saguaro is mostly dead, and yet a family of elf owls live in its chest.

Señor Saguaro seems both vegetable and human. It is a cactus, yet it looks like a human being and it has been given a human title (Señor) to go with its vegetative name (Saguaro).

Señor Saguaro is both imposing and unimposing. It is 30 feet tall, and yet it looks like a human who has lost its pants. And yes, saguaro cacti can grow 30 feet high — and higher.

Of course, in *Stargirl* we also see contrasts and oppositions: conformity versus nonconformity, popularity versus unpopularity, originality versus unoriginality, caring versus uncaring.

• **Does A.H. (Archibald Hapwood) Brubaker always act ethically?**

Not always.

Once in a while, a fossil that he is supposed to be finding for a museum ends up in his pocket. He justifies this by saying, “Better to sit in my refrigerator than disappear in a drawer in some museum basement” (30). Quite possibly, the museum would disagree.

• **Is A.H. (Archibald Hapwood) Brubaker a nonconformist?**

In some ways, Archie is a nonconformist:

- He is an older man who tells the kids to call him “Archie,” and they do (31).
- He teaches, apparently for free, on Saturday mornings, but kids are welcome to visit him everyday. He says, “My school is everywhere and always in session” (31).
- He is someone whom kids can talk to.
- He has fossils in his refrigerator — and elsewhere.
- Once in a while, a fossil that he is supposed to be finding for a museum ends up in his pocket.
- He is a nonconformist who has found a way to fit into society.

• **Did A.H. (Archibald Hapwood) Brubaker create Stargirl?**

He says that he did not create Stargirl — that she was created long before he started teaching her (one day a week for the past five years). Of course, Stargirl has been homeschooled.

• **What riddles does A.H. (Archibald Hapwood) Brubaker state in Section 7? Can you explain any of those riddles?**

These are the riddles:

- “[...] 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” (32). “She,” of course, is Stargirl.
- Asked whether Stargirl is putting on an act, Archie says, “An act? No. If anyone’s acting, it’s us” (33).
- Archie tells Leo, “You’ll know her more by your questions than her answers. Keep looking at her long enough. One day you might see someone you know” (35).

Are we less ourselves than we could be? Possibly, yes. Civilized society requires certain rules. Many of these rules — both formal (as in laws) and informal (as in customs) — are good and justified. The rules are to help people get along together.

Many of our rules restrict bad behavior. Fortunately, Stargirl is a good person, and when she acts like Stargirl, she does good deeds and cares about people.

Some informal rules that people have are not good rules. Some kinds of peer pressure are very negative.

Some formal rules that people have are not good rules. Martin Luther King, Jr., resisted — nonviolently — unjust laws.

• **What do we learn about Stargirl in section 7?**

We learn that Stargirl’s mother “makes costumes for movies” (34). Apparently, that is where Stargirl’s clothing comes from. Stargirl’s mother has a creative job.

Stargirl's father works at MicaTronics, like so many other people in Mica. This is not an especially exotic job.

Stargirl has been coming to Archie for tutoring for five years.

Stargirl's self-given name has changed over time. When she first came to be tutored by Archie (when she was 10 years old), she called herself Pocket Mouse. She has also called herself Mudpie and Hullygully (33).

**• Stargirl gave herself her own name, so this question does not apply to her, but is giving a child an unusual name a good thing to do?**

Currently, some celebrities are giving their children very unusual names. Magician Penn Jillette has named his first child Moxie CrimeFighter. He explains why,

I think it's pretty cruel to give a kid a name that others are going to have. I think it's very important to have a unique name within any group you're likely to be in. It's more friendly to go to school being the only "Penn" than to have to be called by your full name, "Mike Jones" or whatever. I always felt sorry for the Mikes and Bobs. There's just so many, how do you know when they're talking to you?

I love the name Moxie, I love that's it's a purely American word, and those are rare, and I love that it stands for old-fashioned spunk and energy. EZ [Penn's wife] pushed for her middle name, "Crime-Fighter" because EZ doesn't have a middle name and thinks middle names are stupid. So, it's just a joke. When she gets pulled over by the police she can show her license and say, 'We're on the same side, officer, my middle name is CrimeFighter.'



Source: [http://www.celebrity-babies.com/2007/06/cbb\\_exclusive\\_p.html](http://www.celebrity-babies.com/2007/06/cbb_exclusive_p.html).

Arguments against giving your children odd names are that they will be teased and that now it is almost a fad for celebrities to give their children odd names.

In 2008, Pete Wentz and Ashlee Simpson named their newborn boy Bronx Mowgli. Other odd names for the children of celebrities are Kal-el Coppola Cage (Nicolas Cage's son — Kal-el is Superman's birth name), Zuma Nesta Rock (one of Gwen Stefani's children) and Pilot Inspektor (whose father is Jason Lee, star of the TV series *My Name is Earl*).

## Section 8

### • **How is Stargirl as a cheerleader for the football team?**

Stargirl is a major success as a cheerleader during the final game of the Mica Area High School football season.

Stargirl cheers with the other team's cheerleaders. She climbs a goalpost, walks out on the crossbar, and raised her hands and gives the "touchdown" sign.

The Electrons lose again, but Stargirl wins.

### • **Why could there a backlash against Hillari Kimble?**

Hillari does something mean, and the crowd can dislike her because of it.

Hillari gets hold of Cinnamon, Stargirl's pet rat, and it seems that she will kill the pet rat by dropping it from a high landing. However, instead of dropping it one story or more, she merely drops it at her feet.

### • **Write a character analysis of Dori Dilson.**

Dori Dilson does not go with the crowd. No one has been sitting with Stargirl during lunch. Dori, however, first sits with Stargirl, and suddenly Stargirl's table is filled.

Sometimes, it takes just one person to do something for the crowd to start doing it. This can be a good thing when that one person does the right thing.

Dori is a ninth-grader, so this high school has four grades: 9th through 12th grades. She is also a poet who writes poems in a large notebook.

### • **The student population of Mica Area High School honor Stargirl "by imitation" (38)? Is that a good thing?**

Possibly it is good; possibly it is bad.

A world of clones of Stargirl would be a bad world because of a lack of diversity. Stargirl is doing exactly the right thing; she is being Stargirl. We, however, need to be ourselves.

Finding out who we are can be difficult. On the way to finding out who we are, imitating good models can be a good thing. Of course, we then need to move on past mere imitation. Instead of imitating other people, we ought to be our own original selves. This anecdote shows that:

When Rabbi Zusya was dying, he was afraid even though he knew that God is loving and merciful. He told his students, “When I stand before the Throne of Judgment, I am not worried that God will ask me, ‘Why were you not a Moses?’ After all, I am not Moses. I am not worried that God will ask me, ‘Why were you not an Isaiah?’ After all, I am not Isaiah. However, I am worried that God will ask me, ‘Zusya, why were you not Zusya? Why didn’t you live up to the best that Zusya could have been?’” (Source: Ronald H. Isaacs and Kerry M. Olitzky, *Sacred Moments: Tales from the Jewish Life Cycle*, p. 203.)

Some imitation is unavoidable. Creating original works of art is difficult. Most students start out by doing the basics. If you want to create your own original songs someday, you will probably start out by learning how to play “On Top of Old Smokey.” In order to learn how to break the rules like Pablo Picasso, you first have to know the rules.

These are some of the ways that students imitate the suddenly popular Stargirl:

- Students start playing the ukulele.
- When it rains, one dozen girls dance in the rain.
- The pet store runs out of rats. (This form of imitation may not be good. What happens to the rats when

Stargirl is no longer popular? Pets should not be victims of fads.)

• **How does Stargirl do at the annual oratorical contest?**

The annual oratorical contest is held the first week of December.

The state finals of the oratorical contest will be held in Phoenix, Arizona, in April.

Thirteen students enter the contest instead of the usual four or five. This is a good result of Stargirl's popularity: Students are expressing themselves.

Stargirl has more than one art:

- Stargirl plays the ukulele and sings.
- Stargirl's speech is more of a performance than a speech. Stargirl knows how to use words well.
- We will see that Stargirl can do pantomime and comedy well.

• **What film is shown after the annual oratorical contest?**

After the contest, a film is shown of a previous winner of the statewide annual oratorical contest being mobbed and feted by the students at his high school when he returns home a winner.

This information will be important later in the novel.

• **Why is Stargirl popular?**

Popularity is a mystery.

Why is Wayne Parr popular at Mica Area High School? Apparently only because of his good looks. He seems to have no accomplishments.

Why is Stargirl suddenly popular at Mica Area High School? Probably because she has been a performer as a cheerleader at the football games. In addition, Stargirl lives life. She is not the kind of person who will sleepwalk through life.

Often, artists of all kinds have to go their own ways before becoming popular. Many overnight successes take decades to achieve. Jerry Spinelli himself wrote his books in addition to working at a full-time job for years before he became a popular enough writer to quit his regular job and just write books for a living.

## Section 9

### • **What effects does Stargirl have on the students of Mica Area High School? Are these effects positive or negative?**

Students care about each other. They learn the color of each other's eyes. They celebrate other students' happiness, and they hurt when other students hurt. This is a positive thing.

Students are active in many ways:

- “Kids whose voices had never been heard before spoke up in class” (40).
- “‘Letters to the Editor’ filled a whole page of the school newspaper’s December edition” (40).
- “More than a hundred kids tried out for the Spring Revue” (40).
- “One kid started a Camera Club” (40).
- “Another wore Hush Puppies instead of sneakers” (40-41).
- “A plain, timid girl painted her toenails Kelly green” (41).
- “A boy showed up with purple hair” (41).

Each of these things is positive, or at least harmless. Students may have started out imitating Stargirl, but many of these things are not imitations of Stargirl. Students are simply expressing themselves and being creative. Imitation at first can lead to originality later. These students are not clones of Stargirl. The main thing that Stargirl has done is to be herself — she is not a guru.

**• How is Leo affected by the change at Mica Area High School?**

Leo feels “lighter, unshackled, as if something I had been carrying had fallen away” (41).

Leo does not change his appearance because he feels no desire to do that. He does not color his hair purple, and he continues to wear sneakers.

This is as it should be. If all the students had to color their hair and wear Hush Puppies, that should simply be a new way of conforming.

**• What is the ironic thing that happens in section 9?**

Even though the students are becoming individuals, they are discovering school spirit: “It echoed from the rafters in the gym: ‘GO, ELECTRONS!’ It sparkled in the water fountains. At the holiday assembly, the words of the alma mater had wings” (41).

The old conformity included being “cool” in the sense of not caring. Now students have started to care.

**• According to Archie, what is the problem with miracles?**

When Leo says that Stargirl’s presence has caused a “miracle” (41) at Mica Area High School, Archie says, “Best hope it’s not. The trouble with miracles is, they don’t last long” (42).

This foreshadows trouble ahead.

- **What is your opinion of the end of section 9?**

At the end of section 9, we read, “It was a golden age, those few weeks in December and January. How could I know that when the end came, I would be in the middle of it?” (42).

The reader will definitely keep reading.



## Section 10

### • Is Stargirl normal?

Stargirl is a nonconformist, and she is both original and remarkable, but she is still a normal girl.

We will see that she can and does fall in love.

Here we see that she does not turn down an opportunity to be on television, even if it is just the student-created *Hot Seat*. Many or most people would not turn down a chance to be on television.

### • What is the purpose of the roadrunner at Mica Area High School?

The roadrunner is a bulletin board for the students to use.

It is made of wood and has been cut in the shape of a roadrunner.

### • How does Stargirl allegedly say the Pledge of Allegiance?

A sheet of paper appears on the bulletin board. On it appears a note saying, “This is how she says the Pledge of Allegiance.” All the students know that “she” refers to Stargirl.

The words to Stargirl’s alleged Pledge of Allegiance are these:

I pledge allegiance to the United Turtles of America and to the fruit bats of Borneo, one planet in the Milky Way, incredible, with justice and black bean burritos for all. (44)

Does Stargirl say the pledge of Allegiance in this way? We don’t know. Students allege that she does.

**• What happens when Anna Grisdale’s grandfather dies?**

Stargirl appears at the Grisdales’ house following the funeral. Like other mourners, she is crying.

Anna wonders whether Stargirl knew her grandfather. Anna’s mother asks her who Stargirl is.

Anna’s departed grandfather was Anna’s mother’s father. They were close, and the Grisdale family even built an addition to their house so that he could stay with them.

Anna’s mother is angry, and she asks Stargirl, “What are you doing here? Answer me” (45). She also asks Stargirl, “You didn’t even know him, did you?” (45).

Stargirl doesn’t answer, and Mrs. Grisdale tells her, “Leave my house” (45). Stargirl does.

Did Stargirl know Mrs. Grisdale’s father? We don’t know.

What is clear is that Stargirl cared about the death of Mrs. Grisdale’s father.

**• What happens when Danny Pike goes bicycle riding? What is the aftermath?**

Danny Pike breaks his leg while riding his bicycle, and he develops a dangerous blood clot. His life is saved, and he returns home to his family.

When he returns home, a group of people awaits him. A big banner says, “WELCOME HOME, DANNY” (46). He also has a new bicycle awaiting him.

A photograph that appears in the *Mica Times* is posted on the roadrunner. Stargirl is in the photograph.

Afterward, no one in the Pike family says that he or she bought the bicycle. Danny’s father is angry, possibly

because he did not think to buy a new bicycle for his son. Danny's mother is angry because she wants Danny to stay off bicycles for at least one year.

The new bicycle — unriden — ends up beside the Pike family trash cans. Instead of the new bicycle, Danny gets a new BB gun. The new bicycle is gone by the time that the trash collectors arrive.

Did Stargirl give the new bicycle anonymously to the Pike family? We don't know, but it is the kind of the thing that she might have done.

• **What is the significance of the “Pledge of Allegiance, the Grisdale funeral, and the Danny Pike affair” (47)?**

These things do not negatively affect Stargirl's popularity immediately; however, very quickly they can be used as evidence that Stargirl ought to be unpopular.

What immediately makes Stargirl unpopular is her cheering at basketball games.

## Section 11

### • How does Stargirl act as a cheerleader at basketball games?

Stargirl cheers whenever anybody scores, whether it is the Mica Area High School team or the opposing team. As you would expect, a score by the opposing team does not make the other Mica Area High School cheerleaders or the Mica Area High School fans happy.

Stargirl also does a cheer to welcome the other team's fans. Part of the cheer is "Howwww-dee, friends!" (48).

### • How does Stargirl act as a cheerleader at school?

Stargirl performs cheers at school as well. For example, if she notices someone picking up and throwing away litter, she will perform an impromptu cheer especially for them.

### • Stargirl embarrasses people by calling attention to them. (Remember her singing "Happy Birthday" at lunchtime.) Sometimes people think that they will die of embarrassment. Why don't they die of embarrassment?

Some embarrassing things turn out to be pretty good. That's why people don't die of embarrassment when Stargirl cheers for them:

Because they're clapping for you, that's why, and whoever heard of dying while they're clapping for you? And they're smiling at you. People who never even saw you before are smiling at you and slapping your back and pumping your hand, and suddenly it seems like the whole world is calling your name, and you're feeling so good you pretty much just float on home from school. And when you go to bed that night, the last thing you see before you zonk out are

those eyes, and the last thing on your face is a smile.  
(49-50)

When we read here is what Leo thinks, and Leo ought to know. He was embarrassed when Stargirl sang “Happy Birthday” to him instead of to Hillari Kimble.

All or most of these times when Stargirl is singing “Happy Birthday” to people in the cafeteria, people are embarrassed, but having “Happy Birthday” sung to you in public is actually a good thing.

**• How does the success of the basketball team affect the students at Mica Area High School?**

School spirit can be a good thing, but it can go too far.

When the basketball team starts winning, suddenly the students at Mica Area High School hate to lose or to even come close to losing. The students hate close games, and they prefer games that are decided in favor of their team in the first five minutes.

Leo is the narrator of *Stargirl*, and when he describes how the students at Mica Area High School act when the basketball team is winning game after game, he uses the word “we,” so he is caught up in the enthusiasm for the team: “We wanted more than victories, we wanted massacres. The only score we would have been totally happy with would have been 100 to 0” (52).

**• What does Leo regard as Stargirl’s “most remarkable” feature (52)?**

Stargirl cares about other people, and she does not want them to be hurt. However, criticism directed personally at Stargirl is something she is able to ignore. Leo says,

“Of all the unusual features about Stargirl, this struck me as the most remarkable. Bad things did not stick to her.

Correction: *her* bad things did not stick to her. *Our* bad things stuck very much to her. If we were hurt, if we were unhappy or otherwise victimized by life, she seemed to know all about it, and to care, as soon as we did. But bad things falling on her — unkind words, nasty stares, foot blisters — she seemed unaware of. (52-53)

When Stargirl cheers when an opposing team scores, some of the fans yell at her, “Siddown” (52). She ignores the yells.

**• Why does Stargirl leave a game in which the Electrons are ahead, 78-29?**

The Mica Area High School students are out for blood at every game. In an away game at Red Rock, the Electrons are ahead, 78-29, and the coach takes out the starters and puts in the substitutes. This infuriates the fans, who want to see the Electrons score 100 points. The coach puts the starters back in, and the Electrons score 100 points.

Stargirl does not see the Electrons score 100 points. She felt sorry for the other team’s players, and she felt that her cheering was making the situation worse. Therefore, she left the gym and talked to the bus driver.

**• Is it morally wrong to run up the score against an already beaten opposing team?**

A basketball team is very unlikely to rally from a 78-29 deficit and win, so it is safe to say that the basketball team has already been defeated.

We can ask if running up the score is consistent with the Golden Rule: treat other people the way you wish to be treated, aka do not treat other people the way you do not wish to be treated. The Mica Area High School team would not want the score to be run against them; therefore, they ought not to run up the score against the opposing team.

We can also look at consequences here. The main goal for the Mica Area High School team is to get a win, which they already have. Humiliating the other team does not turn one win into two wins. Mica Area High School does not gain from running up the score. Besides, Mica Area High School will not always be this good. In fact, it has been a long time since Mica Area High School had a winning basketball team. Someday, the other team will want to get revenge, and someday, maybe the other team will run up the score against Mica Area High School. Paybacks are a b\*tch.

Later, Mica Area High School loses a game by approximately 30 points. This makes the Mica Area High School basketball team and fans feel bad. Think how much worse the Red Rock basketball team and fans must feel. Reversibility is an important concept in ethics. In reversibility, you reverse the situation and ask yourself, Would you want done to you what you are thinking of doing to other people? The Mica Area High School basketball team and fans would not want the score run up against them, and therefore they ought not to run up the score against an opposing team.

*A Bad Example — Corrected by a Good Father*

Showboating — showing off after accomplishing an impressive athletic feat — is a no-no for many serious athletes. When Ken Griffey, Jr., was 12 years old, he was an incredible athlete, but he had not matured mentally. He hit a home run in a game, and he showboated as he ran around the bases. When he reached home plate, his father, major-league player Ken Griffey, Sr., was waiting for him and told him, “I’ll talk to you when you get home.” At home, his father told him, “Don’t you ever do that again! You don’t need to do that! That’s not how baseball is played!” As a grown-up major-league player, Ken Griffey, Jr., concentrated on winning games instead of showing off. By the way, for a while, both father and son played for the Seattle Mariners. Ken, Jr.,

didn't know what to call his father in front of the other players: Dad or Ken? The other players solved that problem for him — they gave Ken, Sr., a new nickname: Dad. (Source: Jeff Savage, *Sports Great Ken Griffey, Jr.*, pp. 20, 22, 43.)

### *A Good Example*

On April 26, 2008, Western Oregon faced Central Washington in a softball game. Up to bat for Western Oregon was Sara Tucholsky, who played in the outfield occasionally and who had only three hits in 34 at-bats that season. In the 0-0 game she hit a home run with two players on base. Excited — make that *really* excited — Sara missed first base and turned back to tag the base. That's when her knee gave out, and she crumpled to the ground in pain. Of course, Western Oregon coach Pam Knox wanted Sara to get the home run: "It's her only home run in four years. I didn't want to take that from her, but at the same time, I was worried about her." Obviously, the Western Oregon players couldn't pick Sara up and carry her around the bases. According to the umpires at the game, the Western Oregon players and their coaches weren't allowed to even touch her while she was an active runner. Therefore, because Sara was obviously injured and unable to run the bases on her own power, it seemed that the only option was to put a substitute runner on first base and have what should be a three-run home run recorded as a two-run single. Just then, opposing player Mallory Holtman, who played first base, said, "Excuse me, would it be OK if we carried her around and she touched each bag?" Mallory, holder of many, many offensive records for Central Washington, wanted Sara to get credit for her first-ever home run. Therefore, Mallory and fellow Central Washington player Liz Wallace, a shortstop, carried Sara around the bases, letting Sara gently touch each base. After the game, which her team lost because of Sara's home run, Mallory explained, "Honestly, it's one of those things that I hope anyone would do it for me. She hit the ball over her fence. She's a senior;



it's her last year. ... it's the right thing to do. She was obviously in agony." The game was played at Central Washington. What did the spectators think about this selfless act? They cheered in a standing ovation. Western Oregon coach Pam Knox said, "There wasn't a dry eye anywhere in the stadium after that. That was one of the most amazing things that I have ever seen in softball, and it says so much about Central Washington and the kids that they have." By the way, after the game, the umpires learned that they had misinterpreted the rules of the game. According to the 2008 NCAA softball rule book, "If an injury to a batter-runner or runner prevents her from proceeding to an awarded base, the ball is dead and the substitution can be made. The substitute must legally touch all awarded or missed bases not previously touched" (page 105, rule 8.5.3.2). Therefore, a substitution could have been made and Sara would have gotten her home run. This, of course, does not change the selfless nature of the act by the Central Washington players. Source: Graham Hays, "Central Washington offers the ultimate act of sportsmanship." ESPN. 28 April 2008 <<http://tinyurl.com/5ekxx9>>. Also: "Red hot softball Wolves win two more." 26 April 2008 <<http://tinyurl.com/mtco8mr>>.

**• Why would the coach of Mica Area High School run up the score against the opposing team?**

This is something that the Mica Area high School fans want, and the coach obliges them. This is a way for the coach to be popular.

**• What trick do the cheerleaders play on Stargirl?**

They tell Stargirl that someone left something in the gym. Stargirl goes to retrieve it, and the bus takes off without her.

Although this is a bad deed, we do see a good deed here: "A Red Rock custodian drove her home that night" (54). Since it is a "two-hour return trip" (54), the Red Rock custodian

drives a four-hour round trip. This is a notable good deed. Sometimes, an evil deed provides an opportunity to do a good deed.

The next day the cheerleaders pretend that leaving Stargirl behind “was all a big misunderstanding” (54), and Stargirl believes them.

The cheerleaders are hypocrites. According to <[word-net.princeton.edu/perl/webwn](http://word-net.princeton.edu/perl/webwn)>, a hypocrite is “a person who professes beliefs and opinions that he or she does not hold in order to conceal his or her real feelings or motives.”

In Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, the hypocrites are punished in the Inferno, aka Hell. They wear heavy metal cloaks that are gold on the outside and iron on the inside. The hypocrites pretended in public to be nice people (golden), but on the inside they were not golden at all.

The cheerleaders put on an act for Stargirl. They pretend to be friendly to Stargirl, but on the inside they are not friendly to Stargirl.

## Section 12

### • What has happened to Stargirl's popularity?

Stargirl is no longer popular. We read,

In the month since we had scheduled the show, Stargirl's popularity had dropped out of sight. Gone were ukuleles from the lunchroom. More and more kids saw her cheerleading behavior as undermining the basketball team and its perfect record. I was afraid the boos for her might spread from the court to the studio. I was afraid the show might turn ugly. (57)

What Leo is afraid will happen does in fact happen.

We see that popularity is an up-and-down kind of thing. In the field of entertainment, it is difficult for anyone to remain popular over a long period of time. In music, many performers become known as one-hit wonders. Of course, having even one hit is something to be proud of.

### • How does Stargirl act while appearing on *Hot Seat*? Which pantomime does she perform?

Stargirl has many talents. We can add the talent of acting to her talents of playing the ukulele and singing and of speaking in public.

Stargirl takes the title *Hot Seat* literally and pretends that the seat really is hot. She does such things as fan her fanny.

Mr. Robineau recognizes that Stargirl's pantomime is a great moment. Unfortunately, as Leo suspected might happen, the show turns ugly, and so the great moment is never shown on TV.

### Section 13

#### • **How does Stargirl respond to the various questions and charges leveled against her?**

The show turns ugly when the “jurors” start asking questions. We see that Stargirl has not just ceased to be popular — she has become deeply unpopular.

#### • **“What was wrong with the name your parents gave you?” (62).**

Stargirl answers that “Susan” is a good name, but when she was young, she came up with the name “Pocket Mouse” for herself. Her parents were OK with that name, and with other names that Stargirl came up with, and she never went back to Susan.

#### • **“... do you love your country?” (64).**

Stargirl answers that yes, she does love her country. She also asks, “Do you love yours?” (64).

Of course, there are various ways to love a country. One way to love it or leave it. Another way is to love it but find a way to make it better.

#### • **“What don’t you say the Pledge of Allegiance right” (64).**

Stargirl answers, “Sounds right to me” (64).

#### • **“Why do you cheer for the other team?” (64).**

This is the real charge against Stargirl. If she cheered the way the other cheerleaders cheer — for Mica’s team only — Stargirl would likely still be popular. Stargirl’s answer is that she is a cheerleader, and so she cheers — for everybody.

Stargirl is different from other people. Other people's happiness makes her happy. The fans of the other team are happy when their team scores, and that makes Stargirl happy.

Stargirl is genuinely surprised when Becca, one of the inquisitors, says that she (Becca) always wants her team to win. This is the attitude of nearly every sports fan. An alternative would be to hope for a well-played game rather than for a victory. NBA basketball star Bill Russell has won more NBA championships than anyone else (he won 11 NBA championships in 13 tries), but he remembers times when both teams were playing so well that he didn't care who won — he just wanted both teams to keep playing incredibly well.

• **“Why did you quit homeschooling?” (65).**

Stargirl's answer is she wanted to make friends. This is ironic because at the moment she has few friends. Or perhaps it is not ironic because she does have at least a few friends. Dori Dilson is one friend, and soon Leo will be a friend — at least for a while.

• **Why doesn't Stargirl respond to these questions?**

**“You meddle into everybody's business. You stick your nose in, whether you're invited or not. Why do you do that?” (66).**

**“Where'd you come from, Mars or something?” (66).**

**“Why don't you go back to where you came from?” (66).**

**“What's the matter with you?” (67).**

**“Why do you wanna be so different?” (67)**

**“Why don’t you wear makeup?” (67).**

**“You don’t like us, do you? *Do you?*” (67)**

Stargirl doesn’t have an opportunity to answer these questions because the accusations are coming at her so quickly. Of course, her inquisitors aren’t interested in hearing her answers. They are interested in hurling accusations at her.

**• Why does faculty adviser Mr. Robineau stop *Hot Seat*?**

Things are out of hand. The jury keeps shouting at Stargirl even after the show has been stopped.

## Section 14

**• Does Stargirl change after *Hot Seat*? What does she do on Valentine’s Day?**

Stargirl keeps on giving gifts. Whenever it is a holiday, she leaves a small gift on the desks of students in her homeroom. Because it is Valentine’s Day, she leaves a candy heart on each of their desks this time.

**• Does Stargirl change after *Hot Seat*? Does she cheer for the Sun Valley basketball team?**

Stargirl does not cheer for the other basketball team after her appearance on *Hot Seat*. This actually makes Leo feel “better” (69).

**• After Sun Valley basketball star Ron Kovac is injured, what does Stargirl do?**

Ron Kovac is the star for Sun Valley, and his talent gives his team a 21-9 lead. However, he is injured — he breaks a bone in his ankle — and he has to be carried off the basketball court.

Stargirl cradles his head in her lap and speaks to him, no doubt comforting him.

**• After Sun Valley basketball star Ron Kovac is injured and carried off court in a stretcher, why do people applaud?**

People applaud for different reasons.

The Sun Valley cheerleaders and fans applaud in tribute to him.

Leo wonders about why the Mica Area High School fans are applauding. They could be standing and applauding in tribute. Or they could be standing and applauding because he is

injured and unable to play, therefore unable to stop Mica Area High School's undefeated basketball season.

Leo is applauding for the right, not wrong, reason, we can assume.

When a player is injured and able to walk off the court, fans on both sides applaud. This is done because no one wants to see a player suffer a serious injury in a sports event. Applauding because the player is unable to play any more and perhaps defeat your team would definitely be applauding for the wrong reason.

**• Why does the Mica Area High School basketball team lose to Glendale?**

Quite simply, Glendale has a superior team. The Glendale team is from the Phoenix area, and it is a basketball powerhouse. Mica Area High School has a smaller pool of talent to draw from, and the league it has been playing in is not as strong as those in the cities in Arizona. Glendale leads “by thirty points with a minute to go” (71-72).

**• Why does Stargirl's face get “bloody”?**

Stargirl is doing what is expected from a cheerleader: cheering for her team. She is not cheering for the other team.

Stargirl's face does not actually get bloody. Someone hits her in the face with a tomato, and the tomato juice and pulp looks like blood. Some people applaud.

Apparently, this is premeditated. Someone had to think ahead and bring the tomato to the game. You can't normally buy tomatoes at the concession stand — perhaps for the reason that they would get thrown at opposing players and at referees.



• **What do you think of the ending of Section 14?**

This ending will keep the reader reading.

Stargirl makes the first move, and she gives Leo a Valentine card that says, “I LOVE YOU” (72). The card is sort of signed — not with a name but with a drawing of a star and of a girl.

## Section 15

### • **How does Leo react to getting a love note from Stargirl?**

Stargirl may be in touch with her feelings, but Leo is not.

Leo wonders at first whether everybody got a Valentine card from Stargirl, but his friend Kevin says no, although Stargirl did give Valentine cards to the students in her homeroom. Apparently, Leo is not in Stargirl's homeroom.

When Stargirl approaches Leo at lunchtime and says to him, "Hi, Leo" (74), Leo runs.

### • **Does Stargirl still have friends?**

Stargirl still has friends. In the cafeteria, she is sitting "at her usual table with Dori Dilson and several other friends" (73). Stargirl "seemed subdued" (73), probably because of the incident with the tomato.

### • **How does Archie react to Stargirl getting hit in the face with a tomato?**

When Leo and the other members of the Loyal Order of the Stone Bone tells Archie about the game, Stargirl, and the tomato, Leo gets the feeling that Archie already knows what happened.

This probably means that Stargirl has already been by to talk with Archie. In addition, Archie has all along been aware that being a nonconformist can lead to unpopularity. Possibly, Archie is enough of a nonconformist to have experienced being unpopular during parts of his life.

### • **Why do you suppose Archie talks about the Eocene skull?**

One reason for Archie to talk about the Eocene skull is that there are more important things than winning a basketball game. The Eocene skull is of an animal that has gone extinct.

No doubt, some day the species *homo sapiens* will be extinct. What can stave off the day of extinction is perhaps cooperation. Conflict is likely to make us go extinct sooner rather than later. *Homo sapiens* needs to live up to its name; *homo sapiens* is Latin for “wise man,” although today we would say “wise humankind.”

## Section 16

### • What happens when Stargirl tells Leo, “You’re welcome” (76)?

Stargirl approaches Leo a second time in the school cafeteria; this time Leo does not run away.

By telling Leo, “You’re welcome” (76), Stargirl forces Leo to respond to her. He says, “Thanks for the card” (76). Stargirl smiles — dazzlingly.

The most significant thing to learn from this scene is that Kevin can tell that Stargirl is in love with Leo. He even tells Leo, “She’s in love” (76). Kevin does not add “with you” when he talks to Leo, but he does not have to.

### • What decision does the cheerleading squad make? Is it the right decision to make?

The cheerleaders kick Stargirl off the cheerleading squad.

This time, I don’t think the decision is justified. When Stargirl was kicked off the cross-country team, I did think the decision was justified. Going the wrong way in a competition and never showing up at the finish line pretty clearly goes against the rules. It also goes against the idea of the pursuit of excellence in sports.

Cheering when the other team scores can be understood as good sportsmanship. Stargirl certainly entertains a crowd, which is part of what a cheerleader’s job is. Certainly, comforting an injured opposing player ought not to be grounds for kicking a cheerleader off the team.

Opinions can vary when it comes to considering whether a cheerleader should be kicked off the cheerleading squad for cheering when the opposing team scores. My opinion may be wrong.

• **Why do a group of girls call Leo “Starboy” (78)?**

Kevin was able to tell that Stargirl is in love, and so apparently can other students, such as the girls who call Leo “Starboy” (78).

• **Why does Leo spy — for the second time — on Stargirl?**

Leo is occasionally cowardly. He visits Stargirl’s house because Stargirl likes him and because he likes Stargirl. He is unable to be as open as Stargirl about such things as liking or loving another person.

Stargirl lives on Palo Verde (78). The name means “Green Tree” or “Green Stick” in Spanish. Stargirl’s house is an ordinary house. No grass grows in the front yard because of the climate, but cacti do grow there.

• **What do Leo and Stargirl talk about?**

Stargirl is observant. She knows what is going on around her. She knows that Leo is crouched behind a car at her home. Earlier, she knew that Leo followed her into the desert.

They talk about several things:

*Stargirl asks Leo why he followed her into the desert.*

She also asks why he turned around and went back — and whether he was afraid. Leo denies that he was afraid, but actually he was. We can guess that he wasn’t afraid of getting lost but was afraid of talking to Stargirl — kind of like he is now. After all, if he weren’t afraid, he would stop crouching behind the car.

*They talk about Cinnamon the rat.*

Stargirl is observant when it comes to her pet. She understands what Cinnamon is doing — such as cleaning Leo’s ear canal. She has also taught Cinnamon a trick: Stand up. She knows what Cinnamon likes to eat: a Mini Wheat, or

two grapes. Cinnamon also likes to be tickled behind the ears.

*Stargirl tells Leo goodnight.*

Stargirl is not pushy. She does not force Leo to stop crouching by the car, although he certainly could stop doing that if he chose to.

Leo does not want to leave. He would like to stay at Stargirl's house, curled up by the car.

## Section 17

### • How does Leo feel about Stargirl?

Leo is “loopy with love” (85). This is obvious enough that Kevin recognizes it, and Leo is afraid that everyone will recognize this. No doubt many students will — especially when Leo and Stargirl fly “across the school fields, swinging hands for all the world to see” (86).

### • What is the desert like?

There is much to notice in the desert if you take time to look. Newcomers to the desert don’t know enough to look closely at the desert. At first, they see only the saguaro cacti. Later, if they look, they will see the many other kinds of plants on the desert ground, not just the very noticeable saguaro cacti.

So it is with other things, not just the desert. One can skim the surface, not noticing subtle features, or one can go deeper and notice things that many people never notice. This applies to art as well as deserts.

### • Does Stargirl have the time?

According to Stargirl, “Nobody has the time. The time cannot be owned. The time is free to everyone” (88).

Of course, Stargirl is playing around with words. “Do you have the time?” (88) is usually understood as “Do you know what time it is?”

Time is important. We are born, we live, and we die. Everyone is given one lifetime, and what we do in our one lifetime is important.

### • What is Stargirl’s enchanted place?

Stargirl’s enchanted place is a place in the desert, although Leo doesn’t think that it is enchanted at first.

Leo thinks, “The place couldn’t have been more ordinary. The only notable presence was a tall, dilapidated saguaro, a bundle of sticks, in worse shape than Archie’s Señor” (90).

Notice that Stargirl is sharing something good with Leo. This is something that the Cherokee do. In *The Education of Little Tree*, we read about a time when Little Tree spends some time playing in the woods, where he collects some musk bugs, which smell good. He takes them to his Granma, so that she can enjoy their smell, too. Both his Granpa and Granma say that they had never been aware of the musk bugs before (which is probably not true; they are letting Little Tree have the pleasure of thinking that he has introduced them to the musk bugs’ smell). Also, we read,

Granma said I had done right, for when you come on something that is good, first thing to do is share it with whoever you can find; that way, the good spreads out to where no telling it will go. Which is right. (57)

Stargirl’s enchanted place seems similar to the Cherokees’ secret place, so she doesn’t share it with everyone, but she does share it with Leo. Enchanted places need to be shared — if they are shared — with the right people, otherwise other people are likely to litter the place up.

Of course, Stargirl’s enchanted place is exactly not the same as the Cherokees’ secret place, although both are places that we ought to be on the lookout for so that we recognize them when we see them. Our personal enchanted place can be much different from Stargirl’s.

By the way, if you find this discussion guide useful, let other people such as teachers know about it and my other discussion guides. All of my discussions have free downloads.



• **What happens when Stargirl and Leo meditate?**

Stargirl is a practiced meditator, but Leo is a novice. Again, Stargirl is sharing something good with Leo.

According to Stargirl, the enchantment “started when the earth was born. It never stops. It is, always. It’s just here” (90).

However, it can be difficult to be aware of the enchantment because doing so requires turning off the commotion going on constantly inside of us. Stargirl says, “Even just sitting, like this, our bodies are churning, our minds are chattering. There’s a whole commotion going on inside of us” (91).

Stargirl is able to do this, apparently. Leo peeks and looks at her as she meditates: “Clearly, she had erased herself. She was gone. She was serenity. ... She seemed to have been dipped in sunlight and set here to dry” (93).

Even Cinnamon appears to meditate: “He, too, was facing the sunset, his pelt the color of a new penny” (93).

Leo has remarkable success in his first attempt at mediation, although he doesn’t think so:

But something did happen. A small thing. I was aware of stepping over a line, of taking one step into territory new to me. It was a territory of peace, of silence. I had never experienced such utter silence before, such stillness. The commotion within me went on, but at a lower volume, as if someone had turned down my dial. (94)

## Section 18

### • How alone are Stargirl and Leo?

They are very alone. At first, they are so into each other that they don't notice that most of the other students are ignoring them — not even looking at them. Stargirl either does not notice, or if she does, she ignores it. Leo becomes aware of the shunning, and it bothers him. (“Shunning” is a word that Archie uses and defines in Section 19.)

### • Does everyone ignore Stargirl and Leo?

Not everyone ignores Stargirl and Leo. Kevin still talks to Leo. Kevin was wondering when Leo would notice the shunning, and he was hoping that Leo would not notice the shunning.

Stargirl is not totally ignored, either. At the table she sits at for lunch, Dori Dilson and a ninth-grader sit. However, not so long ago the table was very crowded.

### • How does the shunning start?

No meeting is held to decide to shun Stargirl — and whoever pays attention to her. Rather, it simply happens, and lots of students — almost every student — join in.

### • What do students blame Stargirl for? Are the students justified in blaming her for that?

The students blame Stargirl for the end of the basketball team's undefeated season, although we remember that at that particular game Stargirl did not cheer for the opposing team.

The loss that ended the basketball season had nothing to do with Stargirl. The other team was simply much better than the Mica Area High School basketball team. It was from an urban area and so had a bigger pool of basketball talent to

draw from, and it faced much better competition than the Mica Area High School basketball team faced.

## Section 19

### • What is “shunning”?

The Amish in Pennsylvania do this. When someone makes the Church angry, the Church (which consists of the worshippers) shun him — they ignore him. Archie says, “The whole community is in on it. Unless he repents, nobody speaks to him for the rest of his life. Not even his family” (100).

### • What does Stargirl have to repent?

Apparently, her main “sin” is cheering for the opposing basketball teams. Another “sin” is comforting Ron Kovac.

### • What does Archie mean when he says, “Poor dolphin. Caught in a tuna net” (100).

Nowadays, when you buy tuna, the can may say “Dolphin safe.” It wasn’t always that way. Fishermen would use nets to catch tuna to use as food. The fishermen weren’t after dolphins, but they did catch dolphins in the tuna nets. The dolphins ended up as dead as the tuna although the fishermen weren’t trying to kill the dolphins.

The object of the shunning is Stargirl. She is the person whom the students are trying to hurt. Leo simply happens to be near her, and so he is caught up in the shunning.

### • Why does Archie believe in enchanted places?

According to Archie, he is “A man of bones. You can’t be up to your eyeballs in bones and not believe in enchanted places” (101).

### • What does Leo want Stargirl to do?

Leo says that he doesn’t want Stargirl to be like everybody else: “Not exactly. Not totally” (101).

Leo wants Stargirl to be enough like everyone else that she fits in.

What we need to ask, of course, is whether she can do that and still be Stargirl. If Stargirl is enough like everyone else to fit in, will something of value be lost? Will Stargirl be lost?

We need to ask whether Stargirl has enough courage and resolve to continue to go her own way. We will find that out in the course of this novel.

• **What does Archie think of Stargirl?**

Archie thinks that Stargirl is more “unformed, uncivilized” (103) than most of us. She is “untitled, unnamed, natural” (103).

Civilization, in the form of just law and culture and science, can be a good thing. So what does Archie have in mind here? Probably, he has in mind the fact that we often put people into metaphorical boxes. Instead of seeing people as individuals, we see them in terms of a role: the cheerleader, the jock, the brain, the nerd, the mean girl, the spazz, the princess, etc. By the way, this is one of the themes of the movie *The Breakfast Club*.

• **What happens when Archie and Leo consult Señor Saguaro?**

Archie asks Señor Saguaro for help:

*Parece, Señor Borlock aquí es la víctima de un ‘shunning’ de sus compañeros estudiantes en le liceo. El objeto principal del ‘shunning’ es la enamorada del Señor Borlock, nuestra propia Señorita Niña Estrella. El está en búsqueda de preguntas.*  
(104)

Google Translate translates the Spanish into English in this way:

It seems, Mr. Borlock here is the victim of a ‘shunning’ of his fellow students at her school. The main object of ‘shunning’ is the love of the Lord Borlock, our own Miss Girl Star. He is in search of questions.

According to Archie, Señor Saguaro gives a question in reply:

He says it all boils down to this — if I’m translating correctly: Whose affection do you value more, hers or the others’? The Señor says everything will follow from that. (104)

Note that the answer is not a straightforward, Do this, or Don’t do that. Nevertheless, it is a good reply and a good question.

Leo has to answer the question in his own way. Either he values the affection of Stargirl more than he values the affection of the students doing the shunning, or he values the affection of the students doing the shunning more than he values the affection of Stargirl.

The way to tell how Leo answers the question is to see how he acts in response to the shunning.

## Section 20

- **How is Glendale, the basketball team that defeated Mica Area High School, doing in the state basketball tournament?**

Glendale keeps winning in the tournament. Stargirl may or may not be happy about their success, but their success must be making her unpopular. Since students are blaming Stargirl for the basketball team's loss to Glendale, they must be thinking that if Stargirl had not been on the cheerleading squad, it would be Mica Area High School, not Glendale, advancing in the tournament.

- **How is Stargirl doing as an oratorical contestant?**

Stargirl is winning. If the school wants a winner, the school ought to be supporting Stargirl.

Stargirl wins the district oratorical contest, and next up is "the state finals in Phoenix on the third Friday in April" (106).

Stargirl practices her speech, which is different each time. She practices in the desert, probably at the enchanted place, with Leo as her audience.

- **What does Stargirl see?**

Stargirl is teaching Leo many things: to revel, to wonder, to laugh, and to see.

Stargirl is teaching Leo how to see. Artist Beauford Delaney taught author James Baldwin how to see. They were standing together on a corner in Greenwich Village, and Mr. Delaney pointed down and told Mr. Baldwin, "Look." Mr. Baldwin looked and saw nothing but a puddle of water, so Mr. Delaney told him, "Look again." This time Mr. Baldwin really saw what was there: Floating on the water was some oil, and reflected in the oil was the city. Mr. Baldwin says,

“It was a great revelation to me. I can’t explain it. He taught me how to see, and how to trust what I saw. Painters have often taught writers how to see. And once you’ve had that experience, you see differently.” (Source: Randall Kenan and Amy Sickels, *James Baldwin*, pp. 30-31.)

Stargirl sees things that people such as Leo don’t notice. She sees a door that is painted several times a year. She sees an old man sitting on a bench — and she sees things such as that he has “a tiny American flag” (108) “pinned onto his lapel” (108). She sees two ants carrying away a leg of a beetle — a leg that is much bigger than the ants.

**• What do Stargirl and Leo want to do with their lives?**

Leo wants to be a TV director. He wants to be in entertainment, but he wants to be behind, not in front of, the TV cameras.

Stargirl wants “to be a silver-lunch-truck driver” (109). She would bring lunches to people all over. Of course, this is a job that nourishes others.

**• Why doesn’t Stargirl want credit for her good deeds?**

Stargirl continues to do good deeds. She buys on sale an African violet for 99 cents. Her intention is to give it to someone who has a family member in the hospital (110).

She drops off the flower and does not leave a card on it. This puzzles Leo, who wonders why she doesn’t want credit for her good deeds.

Now Stargirl is puzzled. She doesn’t understand why someone would want credit for his or her good deeds.

Leo says, “Well, it’s nice to get credit” (111).

Stargirl answers, “Is it?” (111).



Stargirl's response is interesting because she is quick to give credit to other people. We remember that if she saw someone picking up litter and throwing it away, she would cheer for them. Yet Stargirl prefers to remain anonymous. The idea may be that one's good deeds ought to be done secretly, but that other people's good deeds ought to be acknowledged.

Unfortunately, it is also possible that some of Stargirl's good deeds don't work out as she wants. We remember the bicycle. Chances are, Stargirl gave away the bicycle, but it did not have the effect she wanted. It did not result in happiness, unless whoever took it away from the garbage pile used and enjoyed it or had a child who did.

• **Who gave Leo the porcupine necktie?**

Stargirl, of course. It took Leo a long time to catch on to that fact.

We see a difference between Leo and Stargirl here. When the young Leo thinks about starting a collection of porcupine neckties, he thinks about buying them. However, they are unusual, and so he isn't able to find any to buy.

Stargirl may have thought about buying a porcupine necktie, but she came up with another way to get a porcupine necktie to give to Leo: She had her mother make one for Leo. (Her mother may also have painted the sunflower on Stargirl's bookbag.) Stargirl is creative, and she is able to solve problems.

## Section 21

### • **Where do the cards that Stargirl gives away come from?**

Stargirl makes her own cards. We also find out that Stargirl is not “a great artist” (112), so it is no wonder that she had her mother make the porcupine necktie for Leo. Her mother also probably painted the sunflower on Stargirl’s bag.

So Stargirl’s arts include playing the ukulele and singing and acting, but not drawing and painting.

One thing we get more evidence about is how much Stargirl cares. On the weekends she and Leo deliver many African violets and many cards to people’s homes.

### • **Stargirl loves fillers. What are fillers?**

Fillers are used in newspapers to fill in the empty space at the bottom of a column when there is nothing else — more of an article or an advertisement — to fill it in. Fillers are little odd bits of information. Sometimes they are items that can be found through research, such as “how many pounds of rice a typical Chinese person eats in a lifetime” (113). Or they convey local information, such as “so-and-so’s cat is missing” (113).

An interesting assignment could be to ask students to do research and then write five to ten fillers. Alternatively, an interesting assignment could be to ask students to research, write, and artistically design fliers. The fliers could be of local interest and could contain facts about local flora and fauna or facts about local buildings or sports teams.

### • **How does Stargirl know what is going on in people’s lives?**

One main source of information is the newspaper. Apparently, that is how Stargirl found out that Leo collects

porcupine neckties. The newspaper lists people who are having birthdays, people who are in the hospital, and people who have died.

Another source of information is eavesdropping. When Stargirl has her hair cut, she listens to what other people say.

Another source of information is bulletin boards around town. Stargirl knows the locations of 41 bulletin boards in town. She reads the notices, and she finds out about such things as people who are elderly and want company.

Stargirl is a lot like Sherlock Holmes, the famous fictional detective. She reads a note on a bulletin board, and she tries to figure out more information about the person who wrote the note. Someone writes that they are willing to do odd jobs. Fair enough, but what else can be learned from the note? Stargirl observes that the card is written on scrap paper, so maybe the person who wrote the note couldn't afford to buy paper — or is sloppy. Why would someone put a card like this on a bulletin board? Maybe they have lost their job.

Stargirl also often tries to figure out how to help a person who writes one of the notes. They want to do odd jobs? Maybe her parents have an odd job that they are willing to pay someone to do.

A note could say that someone has opened a new business. That note could call for a congratulatory card from Stargirl.

Of course, fillers in newspapers are also a source of information for Stargirl.

• **What card game do Stargirl and Leo play?**

They follow someone for exactly 15 minutes, observing the person closely, and then they decide what kind of card that person needs.

In this section they follow a woman who is alone and who asks to rent a copy of the romantic-comedy movie *When Harry Met Sally*. Stargirl decides that the woman needs a “While-you’re-waiting-for-Harry-be-good-to-yourself card” (116).

**• Stargirl decides that the woman needs a “While-you’re-waiting-for-Harry-be-good-to-yourself card” (116). What rule for using hyphens is being followed in that long adjective?**

When you put two or more words together to create an adjective that appears before the noun it modifies, connect the words together with hyphens.

**• Stargirl is observant. What does Leo see that Stargirl doesn’t? Why do you think Leo, not Stargirl, sees this?**

Leo says that the woman needs a “Don’t-let-Harry-catch-you-flicking” card. He caught the woman flicking a nose booger from her finger.

Stargirl thought that the woman was scratching her nose, but Leo saw that she was a real pro at quick, sneaky nosepicking. Perhaps Stargirl is simply kinder than Leo and does not see negative things about people, but she does think that the flicking is funny and she laughs (117).

**• What does it mean to say that Stargirl is “the Johnny Appleseed of loose change” (117)?**

Johnny Appleseed’s real name was John Chapman, and he lived from 1774 to 1845. He traveled around Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, planting apple trees whenever he went. Actually, he did not simply drop apple seeds as he traveled, the way that Stargirl drops coins, but he established nurseries to grow apple trees, and he made it easy for people to transplant apple trees on their property. He did not press people for money for the apple trees.

Stargirl even drops quarters. She has in mind the happy face of a child seeing a penny on the street, but nowadays penny candy often costs more than a penny.

For some people, picking up loose change on the streets can be a source of income. For a while in the early 1980s, I was very impoverished, and I was always happy when I found a quarter on the street because I could buy a hot dog or a bag of popcorn with it. Some people are not as nice as Stargirl, and they glue a quarter to a manhole cover. Someone is happy that they found a quarter, but then they find out that they can't pick up the quarter because it glued down with permanent metal glue. I used to know where a few of these quarters were located in Athens, Ohio. The impoverished people of Athens, Ohio, frequently walk the streets with heads down because they are looking for lost change. This is a healthy walk, and it is a source of income for them.

**• The reference to “Johnny Appleseed” is an allusion. What is an allusion?**

Whenever a speaker or writer refers to something from history or mythology and expects the audience to understand what he or she is referring to, the speaker or writer is making an allusion.

In *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Mark Twain opens the novel with Tom eating forbidden jam. Jam is made of fruit, and so Tom is eating forbidden fruit. Mark Twain wants his audience to understand that he is making a reference to the forbidden fruit of a tree in the Garden of Eden.

Allusions should be regarded as a compliment to the audience. The speaker or writer is assuming that the audience is well educated enough to understand the allusion.

## Section 22

### • Are Stargirl's parents "normal folks" (119)?

Yes, they are normal.

They are very accepting of Stargirl. They cook tofu loaf for her because she is a vegetarian, and they call her "Stargirl" and "Star."

Stargirl's mother makes costumes for the movies.

Stargirl's father works for the electronics company in town. He is painting windowsills when Leo arrives.

### • Is Stargirl's home a normal home?

Yes. Leo says, "The house itself could have anybody's" (119).

### • Is Stargirl's room a normal room?

Stargirl's room is a normal room. Leo thinks, "Except for Cinnamon's blue and yellow plywood apartment in one corner, it might have belonged to any high school girl" (119).

Stargirl does have an office (in a secret location) where she makes her cards and plans her good deeds. Leo guesses that Archie knows where the office is located, and Stargirl says that Archie has said that he likes Leo.

One unusual thing about the room is that Stargirl saves clippings of her hair when it is cut so that she can put it outside so that birds can use it to build their nests. A comic writer named H. Allen Smith once wrote an essay about a man who wanted to make clothing out of the very softest material available: belly-button lint. After reading the essay, strangers would sometimes mail Mr. Smith their belly-button lint. He would put the lint on a windowsill, and birds would pick it up and use it to build nests.

**• What is Stargirl’s “happy wagon” (121)? How many stones are in it? What is the biggest number of stones that has ever been in it? What is the smallest number of stones that has ever been in it?**

Stargirl has a happy wagon in which she places stones when she is happy. She explains to Leo, “When something makes me happy, I put a pebble in the wagon. If I’m unhappy, I take a pebble out” (121).

Right now, 17 pebbles are in the happy wagon. This is the greatest number of pebbles that have ever been in the wagon, so Stargirl is the happiest she has ever been.

The smallest number of pebbles that has ever been in the wagon is three.

In *Love, Stargirl*, the sequel to *Stargirl*, we learn that Stargirl has 20 pebbles.

**• Is Stargirl affected by the shunning at school?**

Apparently not. She has 17 stones in her happy wagon. The shunning is not making her unhappy. Stargirl even adds a stone to the happy wagon in this section.

**• What new things do we learn about Stargirl?**

1) Stargirl is a vegetarian. She eats tofu loaf while the rest of the family and Leo eat meatloaf (122).

2) Stargirl’s parents call her “Stargirl” and “Star” (122).

3) Stargirl thinks ahead for some of her good deeds. Across the street lives a boy named Peter Sinkowitz. She keeps what seems to be a scrapbook of his life. A couple of times a week she jots down what she sees him doing. She also occasionally takes candid snapshots of him. Her plan is to continue doing this for a couple of years and then give the scrapbook

to his parents to hold on to. When Peter is old enough to appreciate the scrapbook, his parents will give it to him.

• **Why is Stargirl upset when Leo asks her, “Are you running for saint?” (123).**

Apparently, Stargirl wants no reward for the good deeds she does. Or recognition.

Stargirl may not know how extraordinary she is. (And yes, in many ways she is an ordinary girl.)

• **Why are 18 stones in Stargirl’s happy wagon at the end of this section?**

Stargirl has 18 stones in her happy wagon because of Leo.

Stargirl is happy and at this time Leo is returning her love.

• **Is Stargirl a saint?**

Good question, but the answer is no. Stargirl is simply a caring person, the kind of person that we could be if we put time and effort into it.

Stargirl thinks — or she may be teasing when she says it — that Leo is jealous because she spends so much thinking about other people instead of thinking about Leo. Therefore, she kisses him. Leo thinks, “And I can tell you, that was no saint kissing me” (125).



## Section 23

### • What things do Stargirl and Leo do on the weekends?

The weekends are good times because Leo and Stargirl are able to be alone. Leo does not have to worry about the shunning at high school.

Leo and Stargirl do these things:

- Take long walks.
- Visit the enchanted place in the desert.
- Sit on park benches and people-watch.
- Drink strawberry-banana smoothies.
- Visit Archie and eat pizza.
- Stargirl practices her speech, and Leo listens.

### • How does the shunning affect Leo?

Like Leo does, I think that we can assume that the shunning affects him much more than it affects Stargirl.

Leo thinks, “If someone spoke to me, especially if I had not spoken first, I wanted to cry. I had never realized how much I needed the attention of others to confirm my own presence” (126).

Leo is “Mr. Stargirl,” and so the shunning includes him.

### • What accusations are made against Stargirl?

These are the accusations against Stargirl:

- She is “a self-centered spotlight hogger” (127).
- She thinks she is “some kind of a saint” and is “better than the rest of” the students (127).

- She wants “everyone else to feel guilty for not being as nice and wonderful as she” is (127).
- “Most of all, they said she was the reason why the Mica Elections were not soon to become Arizona state basketball champions” (127).

**• Does this sentence contain a typo: “She was why they lost the next game so miserably to Red Rock” (127)?**

Apparently, this sentence does contain a typo. The Mica Area High School basketball team scored 100 points against Red Rock. They lost miserably (by approximately 30 points) against Glendale.

**• What makes Leo angry?**

Señor Saguario’s question was this: “Whose affection do you value more, hers or the others’?” (104).

Leo becomes angry because he does not want to have to choose. He wants the affection of Stargirl and the affection of the other students at Mica Area High School.

## Section 24

### • What does Stargirl do that makes “pretending impossible” (128)?

Stargirl puts a message on the roadrunner bulletin board (129):

**STARGIRL  
LOVES  
LEO**

This makes Leo a special target of the shunning. Before, he was on the periphery of the shunning that was directed at Stargirl. Now, he is specially targeted.

### • How many people sit with Stargirl at lunch now?

Only one: Dori Dilson. She is “the only friend who had not deserted” Stargirl (130). It takes courage to sit with Stargirl.

### • How does Leo react to Stargirl’s sign?

Badly, although his first impulse is good when he sees the sign while looking out the window in Spanish class: He is happy that Stargirl loves him, and he wants “to drag the Spanish teacher to the window and say, ‘Look! She loves me!’” (129).

His second impulse is “to run outside and rip the sign away” (129).

Leo does not like to be the target of public scrutiny and the target of shunning. He avoids Stargirl for a while.

Stargirl is the one who is able to be open about her love for another human being. At lunch, she blows a kiss to Leo, which embarrasses him.

When Stargirl wants to know what Leo thought of the sign, all he can do is shrug (130). Worse, when Stargirl puts her

pet rat on his shoulder, he “swept the rat off and sent him flying to the ground” (131). This shocks Stargirl.

• **How do the students of Mica Area High School react to Stargirl’s sign?**

Their main reaction is to shun Leo more than they have been shunning him. Kevin is still a friend to Leo. He is to Leo much like what Dori Dilson is to Stargirl. Kevin and a few other friends still talk to Leo.

• **What does Renshaw do in this section?**

Renshaw, a freshman, is like almost all the students at Mica Area High School — he ignores Leo.

While on an errand for a teacher, Leo sees Renshaw and shouts out his name. Renshaw ignores him and keeps on walking.

Leo’s unpopularity stems from one thing only: “I had linked myself to an unpopular person. That was my crime” (132).

## Section 25

### • Why does Leo avoid Stargirl?

Leo avoids Stargirl because he is so uncomfortable about the shunning.

By avoiding Stargirl, Leo is doing to Stargirl what almost everybody else in the high school is doing to Stargirl: He is shunning her.

### • Does anyone talk to Stargirl?

Yes, a number of people do talk to Stargirl. She tells Leo, “Dori talks to me. You talk to me. Archie talks to me. My family talks to me. Cinnamon talks to me. Señor Saguario talks to me. I talk to me” (134).

Stargirl also asks Leo, “Are *you* going to stop talking to me?” (134).

### • What does Leo want Stargirl to do?

Leo wants Stargirl to fit in with the other students. Basically, he wants Stargirl to conform, which means that Stargirl will no longer be Stargirl.

If Leo has his way, Stargirl will no longer comfort people like Ron Kovac. Ron Kovac was the basketball star for Sun Valley, and his talent gave his team a 21-9 lead over Mica Area High School. However, he was injured — he broke his ankle — and he had to be carried off the basketball court. Stargirl cradled his head in her lap and spoke to him, no doubt comforting him. Leo asks Stargirl, “Why didn’t you just let him be taken care of by his own people?” (136).

If Leo has his way, Stargirl will regard people such as Ron Kovac as the enemy: “He was the enemy, Stargirl! Susan. Whatever. The *enemy!*” (135).

If Leo has his way, Stargirl will no longer cheer for everybody.

If Leo has his way, Stargirl will no longer sing “Happy Birthday” and play her ukulele for any student who is celebrating a birthday.

If Leo has his way, Stargirl will be a member of “a group” in which “everybody acts pretty much the same” (137).

To sum up, if Leo has his way, Stargirl will become Susan. This means that she will no longer be Stargirl.

**• Is Leo correct in his belief of “what jails and mental hospitals are for” (137)?**

To some extent, yes.

Jails and mental hospitals are filled with nonconformists, but nonconformists of a type different from Stargirl.

Jails are filled with people who don’t conform to the just laws. They steal, they rape, they murder. We want these nonconformists to be in jail.

Mental hospitals are filled with people whose brains don’t work properly. Often, these people hallucinate and are unable to distinguish fantasy from reality. We want these nonconformists to get the medical care they need.

Stargirl is neither a criminal nor a mental case. Her type of nonconformity is neither illegal nor evidence of mental illness. Society ought to be able to accompany her type of nonconformity, which is largely based on caring and on doing good deeds. In a few cases, society can reject Stargirl, as when she is kicked off the cross-country team. However, this is hardly the equivalent of saying that she needs to be jail or in a mental hospital.

Note: During the Civil Rights Movement, some jails were filled with people who resisted unjust laws. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was arrested many times. Jesus also spent time in jail. Civil disobedience can be an ethical and proper thing to do if done for the right reasons.

- **Does anybody like Stargirl?**

Leo says that nobody likes Stargirl, but he is wrong. All of the people who talk to Stargirl instead of shunning her like Stargirl.

- **What is your opinion of the end of this section?**

The ending of this section will definitely keep the reader reading: “Two days later Stargirl vanished” (138).

## Section 26

### • What is Susan like?

Susan is ordinary in all ways. Leo thinks, “She looked just like a hundred other girls at Mica High” (140).

Susan dresses and looks like all the other girls at Mica Area High School:

The girl standing, grinning in front of me wore jeans and sandals, had burnt-red nails and lipstick, painted eyes, finger rings, toe rings, hoop earrings I could put my hand through, hair ... (139)

Susan does not have a canvas bag with a sunflower painted on it.

Susan does not play the ukulele and sing “Happy Birthday” to other students.

### • How does Leo react to Susan?

Leo is happy with Susan Julia Caraway. He thinks, “I had never been so happy and so proud in my life” (140).

At times Leo had been embarrassed to be seen with Stargirl, but he is happy and proud to be seen with Susan.

### • Is it true that nobody eats anchovies?

Leo and Susan eat a pizza together. One half has pepperoni, and the other half has anchovies.

Leo says that no one eats anchovies, and Susan, believing him, takes the anchovies off her pizza and does not eat them.

Of course, Leo is incorrect here. If no one ate anchovies, no one would be able to order a pizza with anchovies.



• **How does Susan choose which clothing to buy?**

Susan buys the kind of clothing that other girls buy, but she especially buys clothing items that have “the designer’s name plastered prominently on them. She seemed to buy not for color or style but for designer label size” (141).

By buying that kind of clothing, Susan is turning herself into a walking advertisement. She is advertising the clothing of the designer whose name appears on the clothing.

In addition, Susan appears to be the kind of girl who prides herself on her Pavlovian response to advertising.

• **Who is Evelyn Everybody?**

Evelyn Everybody is popular.

Evelyn Everybody is a conformist.

Evelyn Everybody fits in.

Evelyn Everybody lacks originality.

Evelyn Everybody is not real.

• **Why is Susan sad for herself?**

Susan is desperately trying to become popular in order to please Leo, but her attempt is not working. This makes her sad. (We have evidence later in the novel that Susan is trying to please Leo by becoming popular.)

This kind of sadness is new. Previously, Stargirl had been sad because someone else was sad, but Susan is sad for herself.

Stargirl had been concerned about other people.

Susan is concerned about herself — and about pleasing Leo.

- **How many stones are in Susan’s happy wagon?**

Only two stones are in Susan’s happy wagon.

Earlier, we learned that the fewest number of stones in Stargirl’s happy wagon was three.

- **Is Stargirl still present in Susan?**

Yes, Susan displays some creativity and originality.

Susan sits on a bench at school, with this sign dangling around her neck: “TALK TO ME AND I’LL SCRATCH YOUR BACK” (143). She has a backscratcher in her hand.

People still ignore Susan, and Leo is embarrassed by Susan’s display of creativity and originality.

They never talk about Susan’s failed attempt to get other students to talk to her.

- **What is the importance to Susan of winning the state oratorical contest?**

Susan thinks that if she wins the contest that she will be popular. After all, she has seen a movie about a boy who won the contest being welcomed by the students when he returns to his school after his victory.

- **What is Susan’s main goal in life?**

Susan’s main goal in life is to be popular.

Stargirl has transformed herself into Susan in order to become popular to please Leo.

## Section 27

### • **Why is Dori Dilson mad at Susan/Stargirl?**

We aren't told, but we can guess.

Dori Dilson is angry because Susan has replaced Stargirl.

Dori Dilson prefers the nonconformist Stargirl to the conformist Susan.

### • **When Susan/Stargirl is away from Mica Area High School, is she more like Susan or like Stargirl?**

She is more like Stargirl, although she retains Susan's desperate desire to be popular.

She is able to tease the teacher driving her and her guest, Leo, to the state oratorical contest.

She is able to enjoy the desert.

She retains Stargirl's gift for oratory.

### • **Is Susan/Stargirl confident that she will win the state oratorical contest?**

Yes, she is very confident. She rejects false modesty, and she is certain that her talent/genius will result in a victory at the state oratorical contest.

### • **What does Susan think will happen when she returns to Mica Area High School, as winner of the state oratorical contest?**

Susan thinks that she will be popular.

Susan thinks that a mob of students will be waiting for her at the high school when she returns from winning the state oratorical contest. After all, this will be the first time that a student from Mica Area High School has won the state oratorical contest. Also, she has seen a movie about a boy who

won the contest being welcomed by the students when he returns to his school after his victory.

• **What does Mr. McShane mean when he asks, “Susan, did you ever hear of counting your chickens [before they hatch]?” (147).**

He is saying that she might not win the contest.

However, as we will see later, he should have been referring to her thinking that she will be popular and will be greeted by a mob of students when she returns to Mica after winning the state oratorical contest.

• **What does Susan/Stargirl do when they stop for a moment in the desert?**

She acts like Stargirl. We read,

She skipped and whirled and cartwheeled among the prickly natives. She bowed to a yucca, waltzed with a saguaro. She plucked a red blossom from a barrel cactus and fixed it in her hair. She practiced her smile and her nod and her wave — one-hand, two-hand — to the adoring mob at her hero’s welcome. She snapped a needle from a cactus and with the slapstick pantomime of a circus clown pretended to pick her teeth with it. (149)

• **This novel pays attention to dead things: fossils, decay-ing cacti, extinct birds. Why?**

Dead things used to be alive.

We can ask what is alive in this novel that can become dead.

One possible answer is that Stargirl is in danger of dying and of being replaced by Susan.

Another possible answer is that Leo’s love for Susan/Stargirl can die or fade away. Leo can decide that he prefers the

affection of the other Mica Area High School students to the affection of Susan/Stargirl.

Dead things don't entirely disappear. Fossils remain behind. The cries of extinct birds may possibly heard in the various cries of the mockingbird.

If Susan replaces Stargirl, fossilized remnants of Stargirl may remain in Susan.

If Leo decides that he prefers the affection of the other Mica Area High School students to the affection of Susan/Stargirl, he may learn to regret his decision.

People killed the moa and the passenger pigeon, which are extinct birds. People can also kill off parts of themselves.

• **Does Susan have any good points?**

Susan loves Leo. This is perhaps her best point.

## Section 28

- **At the state oratorical contest, is Susan/Stargirl acting more like Stargirl or like Susan?**

She is acting more like Stargirl. Stargirl is the orator of the two. Before Susan appeared, Stargirl was making speeches and winning first place.

- **How does Stargirl’s speech “I Thought I Heard a Moa” go over at the state oratorical contest?**

Stargirl’s art is in words rather than pictures.

She is able to combine the new and the old well. Part of her speech is what she practiced, and part of her speech is new, but it all hangs together.

Leo is astonished when Stargirl says that she had not been practicing a secret speech — the one that she just said on stage: “Nope. That was the first time I heard it, too” (153). She adds, “I’m saying that I didn’t even make it up. It was just there. All I did was open my mouth and let it out” (154).

Similarly, Stargirl is not sure what she will say in the finals of the state oratorical contest.

- **How many people from Mica witness Stargirl’s speeches?**

Four people, apparently: Stargirl’s parents, Leo, and Mr. McShane.

If Susan/Stargirl were more popular, more people from Mica would have been there.

- **How does Stargirl’s speech go over in the finals of the state oratorical contest?**

The audience listens — intently:

When she finished with barely a whisper — “Can you hear it?” — and leaned with her cupped hand to her ear, fifteen hundred people seemed to inch forward, straining to hear. There were ten seconds of purest stillness” (155)

She wins the state oratorical contest.

• **Is Stargirl popular at the state oratorical contest?**

Yes, she is popular, and she is popular because of her talent/genius.

Few personal supporters — family, friends, and teachers — are in the audience, but it doesn’t matter.

In the finals, Stargirl makes her speech, and we read,

And then it came, suddenly, explosively, as if everyone had awakened at once. We were all on our feet, clapping and shouting and whistling. I found myself sobbing. The cheering was as loud as that of a crowd at a championship basketball team. (156)

## Section 29

### • **Stargirl wins the state oratorical contest. Why?**

Stargirl wins just like she said she would.

Stargirl does not win because of her popularity. Apparently, only four people who know her are in the audience.

Stargirl wins because of her talent or possibly genius. Stargirl wins because of her merit — she deserves to win.

This contest is won through merit. Stargirl is able to affect people through her speeches. Her speech in the finals of the state oratorical contest is a magical time, but the magic is real, not fantastical.

Stargirl is one of those rare people who can create magical times.

### • **Is Stargirl popular at the state oratorical contest?**

Yes, she is amazingly popular:

Two TV crews washed her in lights and interviewed her backstage, Strangers mobbed her, citizens of Phoenix gushing, telling her they had been coming to the contest for years and had never heard anything like it. Schoolchildren thrust programs in her face for autographs. Every parent wanted her for a daughter, every teacher for a student. (157)

### • **How does Susan/Stargirl feel after the state oratorical contest, while she is still in Phoenix?**

Leo thinks, “She was so happy, she was so proud. She yelped and cried when she saw us. She hugged each of us in turn, and I thought she would squeeze the breath out of me” (157).



• **Are people in Mica aware of Susan’s/Stargirl’s accomplishment?**

They ought to be. She has been on television, apparently on two different stations. Her photograph appears on the front page of the *Arizona Republic*, along with an article in which a reporter calls her speech “mesmerizing, hypnotic, mysteriously touching” (158).

People in Mica should certainly be aware of her accomplishment.

• **What happens when Susan returns to Mica Area High School? Who greets her?**

Susan was expecting a huge crowd of people.

Susan was expecting to be popular.

Only three people are waiting to greet Susan/Stargirl: Dori Dilson and two teachers.

Dori Dilson, a true friend, is crying because so few people are there to greet Susan/Stargirl.

Dori Dilson is like Stargirl — she feels sad when other people are sad.

We know that Dori Dilson is a true friend because she shows up to greet and congratulate Susan/Stargirl even though she was mad at her.

Dori Dilson even calls Stargirl “Susan” because that she is what Stargirl has been saying that is what she wants to be called. Dori’s sign says this (160):

WAY TO GO,  
SUSAN

WE'RE PROUD OF  
YOU

### Section 30

- **How do Susan's/Stargirl's parents react to the very few people greeting Susan/Stargirl?**

Susan's/Stargirl's parents don't overreact: "Susan's parents came and retrieved her from Mr. McShane's car. As in all things, they did not appear especially surprised or emotional over what was happening" (161).

Her father does give Leo the silver plate that Stargirl had won in the state oratorical contest. He has "a strange smile" (161) on his face when he gives it to Leo.

Why does her father give the silver plate to Leo? Perhaps her father thinks that he will value it more than Stargirl will. Perhaps Stargirl will see the silver plate and be reminded of the very few people here this night.

- **How does Susan react to the very few people greeting Susan/Stargirl?**

Leo thinks, "Susan seemed to be in a trance" (161).

- **What happens to Susan? What happens to Stargirl?**

Susan disappears. Stargirl reappears.

Stargirl is still unpopular. She gives everyone happy-face cookies during lunchtime. Hillari Kimble smashed hers. The other students simply leave the cookies on their plates. The Mica Area High School students are still shunning Stargirl.

- **Who supports Stargirl?**

Dori Dilson is no longer mad. Apparently, she has nothing to be mad about because Stargirl has returned and Dori prefers Stargirl to Susan.

• **Does Leo support Stargirl?**

Sadly, the answer is no.

Leo wants Stargirl to be “normal.”

• **Why does Stargirl give up on being “popular and normal” (162)?**

Being normal did not work for Susan. It made her unhappy, and it did not make her popular.

If Stargirl is Stargirl, she may or may not be popular, but she will be happy. (With some acceptance from other people, she could be even happier.)

Clearly, the advantage lies in being Stargirl as opposed to being Susan.

Stargirl is ordinary in many ways; she is extraordinary in other ways. She can be very popular, and she can be very unpopular. She can also create magical times. One magical time we have already seen (her speech); one we will soon see (the Ocotillo Ball).

If the students of Mica Area High School were more open to Stargirl, she could create even more magical times (a concert with THE UKEE DOOKS).

• **Why does Stargirl say to Leo, “I know you’re not going to ask me to the Ocotillo Ball. It’s okay” (162)?**

Stargirl knows and loves Leo.

Unfortunately, Leo is a conformist. He wants to be a part of the crowd, and he wants Stargirl to be Evelyn Everybody.

Here Stargirl says that she forgives Leo for what he is not going to do. He will not ask her to the Ocotillo Ball, and he will not let Stargirl be Stargirl.

By the way, an ocotillo is a desert shrub.

• **Is Leo a needy soul?**

Unfortunately, yes. Leo is a conformist. He wants to be a part of the crowd, and he wants Stargirl to be Evelyn Everybody. By doing that, he misses out on one of two magical times in this novel. What is worse is that he knows that Stargirl can be magical; Leo was present at the finals of the state oratorical contest.

• **Who wants to be a member of the musical group THE UKEE DOOKS?**

Although 40 names appear on the sign-up sheet, only one of the people wants to be a member: Dori Dilson, of course.

The only other names on the sheet are names that are meant to be funny: Minnie Mouse, Darth Vader, the Swamp Thing, the principal, and Wayne Parr.

Can THE UKEE DOOKS be an anagram? It forms the sentence SHE'D EKE OUT OK.

One meaning of “eke” is “to manage with difficulty to make (a living, livelihood etc)”

(<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/eke>).

This sentence can be interpreted as saying that Stargirl is going to be OK, although she has had some tough times at Mica Area High School. But can we say the same thing for Leo?

• **Why does Kevin think it is “now okay to say bad things about Stargirl” (164)?**

Leo thinks, “Permission to do so must have come from my behavior. Apparently the first to read me was Stargirl herself” (164).

• **Why aren't the after-school performances of the Ukee Dooks magical times?**

The after-school performances of the Ukee Dooks are not magical times, but they could be.

The first point to make is that Stargirl and Dori Dilson are good — “very good” (165), in fact.

The second point to make is the Mica Area High School students, including Leo, ignore those performances. Leo watches secretly from a distance, but he does not make an appearance in front of the Ukee Dooks.

Most students don't even look in the direction of the Ukee Dooks. Some students, including Hillari Kimble and members of the basketball team, laugh at the Ukee Dooks, a musical group that consists of exactly two people: Stargirl and Dori Dilson.

If students were to pay attention to the music, the concerts could be magical times.

• **Who is braver: Leo or Dori Dilson?**

Dori Dilson is the braver of the two.

Dori Dilson is brave enough to do what she wants. She wants to participate in some musical performances with Stargirl, and she does exactly that, even though they are either ignored or laughed at by the other students, and although Leo, who could choose to give them support, instead chooses not to give them support.

Leo is not strong or brave enough to choose the affection of Stargirl over the affection of the other students at Mica Area High School.

Dori Dilson is a foil to Leo. Here are two definitions of *foil*:

A foil is a character who serves by contrast to

highlight or emphasize opposing traits in another character. For instance, in the film *Chasing Amy*, the character Silent Bob is a foil for his partner, [Jay], who is loquacious and foul-mouthed. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Laertes the man of action is a foil to the reluctant Hamlet. The angry hothead Hotspur in *Henry IV, Part I*, is the foil to the cool and calculating Prince Hal.

Source: [http://guweb2.gonzaga.edu/faculty/wheeler/lit\\_terms\\_F.html](http://guweb2.gonzaga.edu/faculty/wheeler/lit_terms_F.html).

A foil is a character whose personality and attitude is opposite the personality and attitude of another character. Because these characters contrast, each makes the personality of the other stand out. In Sophocles' *Antigone*, Ismene is a foil for Antigone. Where Antigone is aware of the world, Ismene denies knowledge and hides from it. Where Antigone stands up to authority, Ismene withers before it. Antigone is active and Ismene is passive. Ismene's presence in the play highlights the qualities Antigone will display in her conflict with Creon[,] making her an excellent foil.

Source: <http://masconomet.org/teachers/trevenen/lit-terms.htm#F>.

### Section 31

- **How does Leo answer Señor Saguaro's question: Whose affection do you value more, hers or the others'?**

Leo does not ask Stargirl to the Ocotillo Ball, just as she had predicted.

Leo chooses the affection of the other students instead of the affection of Stargirl.

- **Why does Leo reject Stargirl?**

Leo is a conformist. He needs the affection and approval of the other students at Mica Area High School. He needs their affection more than he needs the affection of Stargirl and Dori Dilson.

- **How popular is Wayne Parr?**

Wayne Parr is still popular. He mentions that he will wear a powder-blue suit to the dance, and suddenly a number of other boys decide to wear powder-blue suits to the dance.

- **Why doesn't Leo go to the Ocotillo Ball?**

Leo is probably ashamed of not asking Stargirl to the dance, and so he doesn't ask anybody. He is not the kind of person to go alone to a dance.

- **What does Leo miss by not going to the Ocotillo Ball?**

He misses a magical time: a time that everyone talks about for years afterward.

- **What happens when some students — not all — open themselves up to Stargirl?**

Stargirl appears at the dance without a date, but she does have a driver. Dori Dilson rides a bicycle, and Stargirl is in



a sidecar. The bike and its sidecar are decorated with flowers.

Stargirl is alone. She dances alone and enjoys herself.

Then Raymond Studemacher's date suggests that he dance with Stargirl. He does. This is enough to make other students want to acknowledge that Stargirl exists.

Boys approach Stargirl, but she is already making a request to Guy Greco and the Serenaders: Play the Bunny Hop.

Then the magic begins, as many, many students do the Bunny Hop.

**• Is Raymond Studemacher braver than Leo?**

Leo was not brave enough to defy Stargirl's unpopularity and take her to the dance and dance with her.

Raymond Studemacher, at the suggestion of his date, does dance with Stargirl.

Raymond Studemacher is able to do the right thing with only a little urging from his date. This leads to something special, although most or all students would not call Raymond Studemacher special:

To the student body at large, Raymond Studemacher did not have enough substance to trigger the opening of a supermarket door. He belonged to no team or organization. He took part in no school activities. His grades were ordinary. His clothing was ordinary. His face was ordinary. He had no detectable personality. Thin as a minute, he appeared to lack the heft to carry his own name. And in fact, when all eyes turned to him on the dance floor, those few who came up with a name for him frowned at his white jacket and whispered "Raymond Something." (171)

Raymond Studemacher is not good looking like Wayne Parr. Like Wayne Parr, Raymond Studemacher lacks accomplishments. But Raymond Studemacher is the boy who chooses to do the right thing. By doing so, he helps to create a magical time.

• **Are Guy Greco and the Serenaders more open to Stargirl than Leo?**

Guy Greco and the Serenaders are open to magic. The Bunny Hop at the Ocotillo Ball is magical, and they play the music for a long time.

• **How does Hillari Kimble react to the Bunny Hop?**

Hillari Kimble cannot stand the Bunny Hop, or more specifically, anything that makes Stargirl popular.

Hillari wants Guy Greco to play something other than the Bunny Hop. He declines.

Hillari chews gum and puts it in her ears. She tries to dance anything but the Bunny Hop.

Wayne Parr also does not join the Bunny Hop dance.

• **What kind of an exit does Stargirl make?**

When the Bunny Hop dancers finally return, “Hillari Kimble walked up to Stargirl and said, ‘You ruin everything.’ And she slapped her” (175).

Hillari expects to be slapped in returns, but Stargirl simply kisses her on the cheek and quickly leaves — and never returns. Dori Dilson has been waiting for Stargirl, and they ride off on the bicycle.

Dori Dilson apparently did not attend the dance; perhaps freshmen weren’t allowed to attend it. Dori Dilson is a true friend to wait for Stargirl.

- **Does Glendale win the state basketball tournament?**

We never find out. Frankly, it ought not to be that important to students at Mica Area High School. They should be happy that the Mica Electrons had such a great season. Then they should move on and cheer the Electrons in other sports. Let the Glendale fans either cheer or feel disappointed by the finals of the state championship game.

## Section 32

### • **What time is it now? How many years have passed since the Bunny Hop?**

Fifteen years have passed since the Bunny Hop.

Leo has grown up. He has graduated from high school and from college and gotten a job.

### • **Where did Stargirl go after she left Mica, Arizona?**

Archie says that Stargirl is in the Midwest — in Minnesota.

### • **Was Stargirl real? Are star people real?**

Archie says that Stargirl was real. He says that star people are real, but they are rare. Archie tells Leo, “Star people are rare. You’ll be lucky to meet another” (177).

Archie sometimes speaks in what seem to be riddles. For example, “And I think every once in a while someone comes along who is a little more primitive than the rest of us, a little more in touch with the stuff we’re made of” (177).

By the way, all of us are made of star stuff. The intense heat of the stars created the elements that our bodies are made of.

### • **What did Stargirl do for Leo?**

Stargirl loves Leo so much that she, Archie says, “[g]ave up her self, for a while there. She loved you that much. What an incredibly lucky kid you were” (178).

Of course, Leo was lucky to have Stargirl love him. Also, of course, Leo blew it. He preferred the affection of the other students to the affection of Stargirl.

### • **Where was Stargirl’s office?**

Stargirl’s office was in Archie’s shed out back.

She kept track of people's birthdays there, and she kept file folders of information on such people as Leo and "Kevin. Dori Dilson. Mr. McShane. Danny Pike. Anna Grisdale. Even Hillari Kimble and Wayne Parr" (180).

• **What happens to Stargirl's scrapbook about the life of Peter Sinkowitz?**

Archie has it. In five years, he will give it to Peter's parents.

### Section 33

#### • What kind of work does Leo do?

He is a set designer, a job that involves creativity. Set designers design sets for plays and movies and television shows.

This is an example of Stargirl's influence on Leo. He thinks that "I became one [a set designer] on the day that Stargirl took me to her enchanted place" (181).

#### • What are the things that Archie says about Stargirl?

Archie does seem to talk in riddles. Or perhaps a better word is poetry.

About Stargirl, Archie says these things:

- "She's better than bones" (181). Bones are dead; Stargirl is alive — more alive than most of us.
- "When a Stargirl cries, she does not shed tears, but light" (181).
- Stargirl is "the rabbit in the hat" (181). A magician can pull a rabbit out of a hat. A rabbit is an ordinary animal, but a magician astonishes an audience by making a rabbit appear. Stargirl is both ordinary and extraordinary. She falls in love like an ordinary girl, but she can make a kind of magic happen.
- Stargirl is "the universal solvent" (181). In science, water is the universal solvent because so many things dissolve in it. Water dissolves both bases and acids.
- Stargirl is "the recycler of our garbage" (181).

**• Why does Archie bury the skull of Barney, the Paleocene rodent?**

A scene such as this cries out for interpretation, and discovering the correct interpretation can be difficult.

We bury dead things, and a skull (without living tissue attached to it) is a dead thing.

What is the dead thing that we have near the end of this book?

Not Stargirl. Chances are, Stargirl is going to be just fine. She created magic with the Bunny Hop, and she leaves most Mica Area High School students with a glorious memory. Ironically, now that years have passed, and because of the Bunny Hop, Stargirl is popular.

Not Archie. Archie is doing fine. He is old, and he will die, but that is natural and expected.

In my opinion, a piece of Leo dies. He made a major mistake in his life when he preferred the affection of other students to the affection of Stargirl, and he realizes that and he regrets his decision.

One thing that seems to be dead is the relationship of Leo and Stargirl. Apparently, he has not heard from her for 15 years.

**• What is written on the scrap of paper that Archie buries with the skull of Barney?**

Archie answers, “A word” (183). However, he does not reveal what that word is.

I confess that I don’t know what that word is. I would like the word to be “conformity,” but conformity seems alive in today’s society.

Words are important. The word “YES” is positive. The word “NO” is negative. A person who buries the word “NO” could symbolically be burying a way of responding to life. However, Archie is a person who says “YES” to life, as does Stargirl.

Leo is the person who ought to bury the word “NO.”

• **What changes occur in Mica over the years?**

Archie either dies or moves away.

Stargirl’s enchanted place is now the location of a new elementary school (183).



## More Than Stars

### • **What happens to Kevin, Hillari Kimble, and Wayne Parr?**

Kevin does not have a career in television; he sells insurance, a job that uses his talents.

Hillari and Wayne break up “shortly after graduation” (184).

The last anyone heard of Wayne, he was thinking of “joining the Coast Guard” (184).

### • **What do people talk about at school reunions?**

They talk about Stargirl.

In particular, they talk about the Bunny Hop.

Ironically, now that years have passed, and because of the Bunny Hop, Stargirl is popular.

### • **In what ways does Stargirl still affect Mica Area High School?**

Stargirl has had a good influence — or several good influences — on the school:

- Members of the Sunflowers club “have to sign an agreement promising to do ‘one nice thing per day for someone other than myself’” (185).
- The Mica Area High School’s marching band includes a ukulele.
- When the opposing basketball team scores its first basket, “a small group of Electrons fans jumps to its feet and cheers” (185).

### • **In what ways does Stargirl still affect Leo?**

Leo becomes a set designer, a job that requires creativity.

Leo remembers Stargirl.

Leo sometimes walks “in the rain without an umbrella” (185).

Leo feels guilty when he buys a card from Hallmark — Stargirl made her own cards.

Leo leaves change on the sidewalk for other people to find.

Leo looks for silver lunch trucks and listens for mockingbirds.

Leo reads newspapers, including the fillers.

Leo regrets rejecting Stargirl.

Leo is aware of good deeds happening in the world.

• **Does *Stargirl* have a happy ending?**

“Bittersweet” refers to a mixture either of bitter and sweet, or of pain and pleasure.

Bittersweet seems to be a good adjective for the end of this novel.

The bitter and the pain are Leo’s knowledge that he rejected Stargirl and his longing for another chance:

[...] I wonder, *Is she there?* I wonder what she calls herself now. I wonder if she’s lost her freckles. I wonder if I’ll ever get another chance. I wonder, but I don’t despair. Though I have no family of my own, I do not feel alone. I know that I am being watched. The echo of her laughter is the second sunrise I awaken to each day, and at night I feel it is more than stars looking down on me. (186)

This quotation is a little worrisome to me. Leo has no family. He does not seem to have moved on in his life. However,

some of what we read here is the result of what we read in the rest of the paragraph:

Last month, one day before my birthday, I received a gift-wrapped package in the mail. It was a porcupine necktie. (186)

This gift seems to be why Leo thinks, “Though I have no family of my own, I do not feel alone. I know that I am being watched. The echo of her laughter is the second sunrise I awaken to each day, and at night I feel it is more than stars looking down on me” (186).

The gift brings up the possibility that Leo and Stargirl will meet again or at least communicate together.

This gift brings up the possibility that Leo will get another chance.

However, it is fifteen years later. One hardly expects Stargirl not to live her life for fifteen years or to obsess over Leo for fifteen years. Stargirl is not the type of girl (or later, woman) to wait fifteen years for Leo Borlock to ride up on a white horse and carry her away.

Unfortunately, Leo Borlock may very well be the type of boy (and later, man) to wait fifteen years for Stargirl to ride up on a white horse and carry him away.

Even if Leo does get another chance, he and Stargirl are missing fifteen years that they could have spent together.

A sequel to *Stargirl* titled *Love, Stargirl* appeared in 2007. I have not read it yet because I wanted to form an interpretation to *Stargirl* without being influenced by the sequel. (Later: I read *Love, Stargirl* in one sitting of 3 hours and 45 minutes. In my opinion, *Stargirl* is really more about Leo than Stargirl. *Love, Stargirl* is about Stargirl.)

Jerry Spinelli's books tend to be about nonconformists who care. *Stargirl* and *Maniac Magee* are novels whose title characters are nonconformists who have extraordinary talents and who care about other people. *Loser* is about a nonconformist who lacks extraordinary talents but who has a loving family and a zest for living life and who, of course, cares about other people.

• **I want to be a better version of Leo. What do I do?**

Leo is basically a good kid, but he needs to be more accepting of other people, including and especially the oddballs and nonconformists.

• **Is Stargirl ordinary or extraordinary?**

Both.

*Ordinary*

Stargirl is a 10th-grade student in high school.

Stargirl is neither ugly nor beautiful.

Stargirl falls in love.

Stargirl does not reject a chance to be on television.

*Extraordinary*

Stargirl practices a few arts.

Stargirl loves life.

Stargirl cares about other people.

Stargirl can make magical events happen.

Stargirl goes her own way.

*But are the extraordinary things about Stargirl all that extraordinary?*

People are born with potentialities that can be developed. Stargirl has developed her potentialities for practicing arts such as public speaking, for loving life, and for caring about other people.

Apparently, Stargirl has not been born with the potentiality of being a great artist in drawing and painting or of being a great runner in cross country, so she did not develop those talents because she lacks them.

Stargirl has developed her arts through practice. She spent lots of time in the desert working on her public speaking. No one learns to play a musical instrument well without practice.

Stargirl has developed her love of life by taking time to observe, by being open to the discovery of enchanted places, by practicing art, and by taking time and effort to do good deeds.

Stargirl has developed her sense of caring by actively seeking to do good deeds.

Stargirl can make magical events happen because of the other things she has done in her life. If she had not practiced her speech, she would not be as good as she is at public speaking. If she did not play music and sing, she might not know about the Bunny Hop.

Stargirl makes choices and tries things. She tried to conform and be popular, but that did not work, so she went back to going her own way.

Conclusion: The things that make Stargirl extraordinary are things that an ordinary male or female can do.

Jerry Spinelli probably considers himself to be ordinary, but by working at developing an art — writing — he has created many extraordinary novels.

**• I want to be like Stargirl, but I don't want to be a clone of Stargirl. What do I do?**

Students' answer will vary, but here are a few ideas.

*Do's*

Look at three beautiful things a day.

Find and practice an art or arts of your choice.

Do good deeds of your own choosing.

Take time to be aware of and thankful for the things that make you happy.

Be aware of other people's successes and congratulate them.

Find an enchanted place and visit it often.

*Don'ts*

Don't be mean.

Don't overvalue fitting in with other students.

One possible answer students could come up with could be this: Be yourself. Usually, that would be a good answer, but not always. When Stargirl is herself, that is good. When Hil-lari Kemble is herself, that is not so good. Perhaps a better answer would be this: Be your better self. Leo needs to be his better self.

**• Is change possible?**

Absolutely.

No one is born knowing how to read. Learning how to read takes years of schooling.

No one is born a great athlete, although people are born with the potential to be great athletes — they are born with quick reflexes, although the reflexes can be made even quicker with training.

No one born a ballet dancer, although people are born with the potential to dance ballet. People become ballerinas through years of practice.

In my opinion, no one is born a good or a bad person. All of us are born morally neutral. We become good or bad people through the choices we make and the actions we perform.

The doing of good deeds is important. As a free person, you can choose to live your life as a good person or as a bad person. To be a good person, do good deeds. To be a bad person, do bad deeds. If you do good deeds, you will become good. If you do bad deeds, you will become bad. To become the person you want to be, act as if you already are that kind of person. Each of us chooses what kind of person we will become. To become a hero, do the things a hero does. To become a coward, do the things a coward does. The opportunity to take action to become the kind of person you want to be is yours.

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**Appendix B: Paper Topics (Perhaps for Older Readers)**

For these topics, use the MLA format and include a Work(s) Cited List. Your audience is either your teacher for this course, or the readers of a WWW site that discusses and evaluates children's literature.

- Write a character analysis of Stargirl.
- Discuss how Jerry Spinelli handles characterization. For example, how does Mr. Spinelli differentiate his characters' use of language? Do any characters develop? Which characters, if any, are stereotypes?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a conformist?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a non-conformist?
- Write an autobiographical essay. Use dialogue.

### Appendix C: Anecdotes About Jerry Spinelli

• In 2000, Newbery Medalist Jerry Spinelli published *Stargirl*, whose protagonist is a free spirit who does many good deeds. The character is memorable, and the character has inspired many Stargirl Societies whose members emulate Stargirl without being clones of her. The first Stargirl Society was started in Kent, Ohio, in 2004. Education specialist Kathy Frazier encouraged some of her 8th-grade students to read the novel. They loved it, and later, when they were high-school juniors (who often greeted each other with “Hey, Stargirl”), they had the idea to create a Stargirl club for middle-school students. Ms. Frazier says about the students, “They told me they wished they had read it in 6th grade, since in middle school there is such peer pressure to conform and it is so easy to lose one’s own self. Stargirl was able to keep her own creative spirit and individualism intact.” Mr. Spinelli gave the group permission to use the name “Stargirl Society,” and the high-school juniors sent invitations to middle-school students to join. The character Stargirl was inclusive, and in her spirit, Ms. Frazier says, “Anyone who wanted to come could. We didn’t leave anyone out.” The members, just like Stargirl, perform good deeds, including making cards of appreciation for people who are often underappreciated, such as cafeteria workers and janitors. Many of Stargirl’s good deeds were anonymous, and therefore many of the Stargirl Society’s good deeds are anonymous. Mr. Spinelli is very supportive of the Stargirl Societies: “I was impressed and heartwarmed at the idea that my little story provoked such a response from those kids. From my point of view, the objective of the Societies is or ought to be not to create clones of Stargirl but to encourage girls to discover, express and celebrate themselves.” Mr. Spinelli adds, “I’d love to see this thing become a more widespread movement. I personally find the Stargirl Societies so appealing and meaningful that I can imagine them

becoming a legacy that I cherish more than the book itself.” (Source: Sally Lodge, “Jerry Spinelli’s ‘Stargirl’ Inspires Societies.” *Publishers Weekly*. 11 October 2007 <<http://tinyurl.com/m4bx8pa>>.)

- The parents of Jerry Spinelli, author of the Newbery Medal-winning *Maniac Magee*, spent very little money on themselves, but out of love they made sure that their children enjoyed very nice Christmases. One Christmas, Jerry had unwrapped what he thought was his final present. His father told him, “Well, I guess that’s it. Looks like you did pretty good this year.” Later, Jerry was sent on an errand to the kitchen, and he found his real final present: a Roadmaster bicycle. Mr. Spinelli describes the gift in a memorable way: “Love leaning on a kickstand.” (Source: Jerry Spinelli, *Knots in My Yo-yo String: The Autobiography of a Kid*, pp. 69-70.)

- When Jerry Spinelli, author of the Newbery Medal-winning *Maniac Magee*, attended his 9th-grade prom, the girls were angry because they were not allowed to wear strapless gowns. Not content with merely being angry, the girls also took action. Many of the straps worn to the prom that evening were flimsy — one “strap” consisted of a single piece of thread. Another girl’s “straps” were actually lines painted with eyeliner. Of course, some girls wore real straps — but they carried scissors in their purses. By the last dance, every girl had bare shoulders. (Source: Jerry Spinelli, *Knots in My Yo-yo String: The Autobiography of a Kid*, pp. 134-135.)

- Jerry Spinelli, the author of *Crash* and *Wringer*, got many, many rejection letters when he was a young author, but he did not give up. Every time he finished a novel that no publisher would publish, he wrote another novel. Mr. Spinelli once noted that during his first 15 years of writing, he made only \$200 from his writing. He also recommended that publishers send rejection bricks instead of rejection letters, noting, “Decades of work should not be able to fit into an

envelope. You should be able to build a house with them.” (Source: John Micklos, Jr., *Jerry Spinelli: Master Teller of Teen Tales*, pp. 24-25.)

- Jerry Spinelli, the author of *Maniac Magee* and *Stargirl*, gets interesting letters. A boy once wrote to invite Mr. Spinelli to visit his school so he could meet the school’s pet duck. One year later, the boy again wrote Mr. Spinelli to visit his school so he could meet the school’s pet duck — but to hurry because the pet duck was getting old. (Source: John Micklos, Jr., *Jerry Spinelli: Master Teller of Teen Tales*, p. 68.)

- Jerry Spinelli, the author of *Maniac Magee* and *Stargirl*, wrote at home in a house with six kids. Of course, they made a lot of noise, so he bought a gizmo that made ocean sounds such as surf in an attempt to drown out the noise of the kids. Did it work? Mr. Spinelli says that “there’s no surf that’s a match for six kids in the house.” (Source: John Micklos, Jr., *Jerry Spinelli: Master Teller of Teen Tales*, p. 24.)

- Jerry Spinelli, author of the Newbery Award-winning young people’s novel *Maniac Magee*, is aware that at age six, many future authors were reading such works as Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*. What about Mr. Spinelli? He was reading Bugs Bunny comic books. (Source: David Seidman, *Jerry Spinelli*, p. 10.)

### *Conformity*

- When Ralph Nader was in the 8th grade, one of the boys in his class said about a girl in their class, “What a pig.” The girl — who was friendly and whom everyone liked, at least until the onset of testosterone in this young male — heard him and was hurt. All young Ralph could think about was what his deeply moral mother would have told the boy, “I believe it’s you.” In this particular situation, that sentence means, “There’s nothing wrong with that girl. But there is

something wrong with you.” Whenever Ralph or one of his siblings acted in a base manner, their mother would tell him or her, “I believe it’s you.” (Source: Ralph Nader, *The Seventeen Traditions*, pp. 1-3.)

- People frequently have an exaggerated respect for wealth and power. Heinrich Heine, the German poet, told a story about a scene he witnessed in Paris in the offices of the wealthy and powerful James de Rothschild. One day he saw a servant carry Mr. Rothschild’s chamber pot down a hallway. Another man who was in the hallway also saw the Rothschild chamber pot, realized whose it was, and removed his hat to show his respect. (Source: Ron Chernow, *The Death of the Banker*, p. 11.)

- A mother was worried that her daughter (who later became an Ohio University student) wasn’t popular enough in high school. So whenever she saw her daughter coming home from school, she would lock the door and yell, “No! Stay outside and get a tan so you can be popular!” (Source: Personal anecdote.)

### Appendix D: Anecdotes that Stargirl Might Like

Perhaps Stargirl would like these anecdotes although she has shown no particular interest in activism or politics or gay rights or religion. Still, she might like these anecdotes. I know that I like these anecdotes, and I hope that you like them.

- Wendy Roby recommends that people engage in random acts of feminism. For example, if “lads’ mags,” which feature photos of nude women, offend you, you can simply go to the stores that sell this kind of “reading” material and put copies of *Good Housekeeping* in front of these magazines to obscure their covers. A person who goes by the name Charlie Grrl recommends “subvertising” the lads’ mags by adding Post-it notes to the covers. For example, the Post-it notes could say, “Despite my come-hither expression, I wouldn’t shag a *Nuts* reader for a million pounds” or “I am somebody’s sister.” Another idea: Some prostitutes use calling cards as advertising. Why not make up some of your own and post them where prostitutes post theirs? For example: “Too sad and ugly for a real girlfriend? Call me!” The phone number listed could be for a very expensive psychic hotline. One woman once visited a toy store with her daughters, where they saw a pink castle with a blonde princess in the highest turret. The woman took out a blank card, wrote a message on it, and attached it to the highest turret. The message was this: “Please let me out. I gotta get to work!” (Source: Wendy Roby, “Feel riled? Get random!” *The Guardian*. 18 January 2008 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,,2242747,00.html>>.)

- A man named Pen-ju came to the Buddhist priest Si-tien and said, “In my life, I have tried to accomplish something remarkable, but I have failed. Can you teach me how to do something remarkable?” Si-tien agreed to teach Pen-ju, and the first task he set for him was to make a pair of sandals out



of straw. After many attempts, Pen-ju succeeded in making a pair of sandals that satisfied Si-tien. Next, Si-tien told Pen-ju to stand in the mud, then walk out of the mud and clean his sandals. In addition, he told Pen-ju to do this over and over again without stopping, except for meals and sleep. Pen-ju complained that this work was completely unnecessary, but Si-tien said that unless he did it, he would teach him nothing. After several weeks had passed, during which time Pen-ju had cleaned his sandals thousands of times, Si-tien told Pen-ju, “Before, you were unable to accomplish anything remarkable because you lacked persistence. Now you have learned persistence, so go out into the World, apply your persistence to an important task, and accomplish something remarkable.” (Source: Adam Podgórecki, *The Stories of Si-Tien*, pp. 41-42.)

- Activism occasionally occurs in the public schools. On Wednesday, May 21, 2008, more than 160 eighth-grade students in a South Bronx middle school — who were taking six different classes at Intermediate School 318 — went on strike and refused to take another standardized test as required by President George W. Bush’s No Child Left Behind program. The students created a petition that listed their grievances, including the “constant, excessive and stressful testing” that forces them to “lose valuable instructional time with our teachers.” Actually, the students didn’t even boycott a real test — they boycotted a practice Social Studies test. How did they do that? They simply handed in blank practice exam sheets for the three-hour practice exam. Thirteen-year-old Tatiana Nelson, one of the protest leaders, complained, “We’ve had a whole bunch of these diagnostic tests all year. They don’t even count toward our grades. The school system’s just treating us like test dummies for the companies that make the exams.” (Source: Allison Kilkeny, “Apathy Doesn’t Live in the Bronx.” *Huffington Post*. 23 May 2008 <<http://tinyurl.com/5ye53s>>. Also: Juan

Gonzalez, “Bronx 8th-graders boycott practice exam but teacher may get ax.” *New York Daily News*. 21 May 2008 <<http://tinyurl.com/5bdegt>>.)

- In 2008, voters in California passed Proposition 8, which banned gay marriage. (According to the law, gay couples and lesbian couples cannot get married, but it is OK if a gay man marries a lesbian.) Inspired by a proposition that allowed a slim majority to take away a civil right from a minority, students at Princeton University decided to attempt to pass their own Proposition 8 — one that forbids freshmen from using the sidewalks. According to gay pundit Andrew Sullivan, “They don’t hate freshman — they just want to protect the sidewalks.” Proponents of Proposition 8 say that freshmen are equal, but they should be kept separate. After all, allowing freshmen to walk on sidewalks is a violation of traditional sidewalk values. (Source: Andrew Sullivan, “Princeton’s Proposition 8.” *The Daily Dish*. 21 November 2008 <<http://tinyurl.com/56zrhz>>.)

- In November of 2003, a couple of high school students engaged in a nonconformist act. Stephanie Haaser jumped onto a table in the cafeteria and yelled, “End homophobia now!” — then she kissed her classmate Katherine Pecore. Both students were suspended for two days, although they had been inspired by an English class in which one assignment was to perform a nonconformist act in the tradition of American Transcendentalists Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Apparently, their school — River Hill High School in Clarksville, Maryland — believes in nonconformity, as long it is not too nonconformist, and in free speech, as long as it is not too free. (Source: “Female-student kiss spurs debate at school.” 20 November 2003 <[CNN.com](http://CNN.com)>.)

- Ronald Reagan made a lot of mistakes when he was President, including saying that trees pollute more than factories

do. Pollution kills, and students were upset that their President understood so little about pollution, ecology, and the environment. After saying this remark, President Reagan visited Claremont College in southern California. Around the trees on the campus, students had placed placards that read, “Stop me before I kill again.” (Source: Morris K. Udall, *Too Funny to be President*, p. 27.)

*Other Anecdotes*

• **Rise above.**

Theater director Tyrone Guthrie advised his actors and crew to do this. The advice means to rise above whatever forces are working against you. All of us have personal problems. No one’s life is perfect. Sometimes, life seems to conspire against us. Rise above all that, and produce the best work you can.

• **Astonish me.**

Dance impresario Sergei Diaghilev advised his choreographers to do this. The advice means what it says. Do such good work that the person who commissioned the work — and of course the audience — is astonished. (Tyrone Guthrie also used this phrase.)

• **Do it now.**

As a young man, choreographer George Balanchine nearly died and so he believed in living his life day by day and not holding anything back. He would tell his dancers, “Why are you stingy with yourselves? Why are you holding back? What are you saving for — for another time? There are no other times. There is only now. Right now.” Throughout his career, including before he became world renowned, he worked with what he had, not complaining about wanting a bigger budget or better dancers. One of the pieces of advice Mr. Balanchine gave over and over was this: “Do it now.”

- **Go out and get one.**

Ruth St. Denis once taught Martha Graham an important lesson when Ms. Graham was just starting to dance. Ms. St. Denis told Ms. Graham, “Show me your dance.” Ms. Graham replied, “I don’t have one,” and Ms. St. Denis advised, “Well, dear, go out and *get* one.” (Everyone needs an art to practice. Your art need not be dance. Perhaps your art can be writing autobiographical essays. Of course, you may practice more than one art.)

- **Assign yourself.**

The parents of Marian Wright Edelman were serious about education. Each school night, she and her siblings were expected to sit down and do their homework. Whenever one of the children said that the teacher had not assigned any homework, her father used to say, “Well, assign yourself.” Ms. Edelman once made out a list of “Twenty-Five Lessons for Life,” based on the values she had learned from her parents. Lesson 3 was, “Assign yourself. Don’t wait around to be told what to do.” In 1973, she founded the Children’s Defense Fund, which attempts to get federal legislation passed to help children.

- **Challenge yourself.**

Joss Whedon created the TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, which is noted for its clever dialogue. Day after day, people told Joss that they watched the series because of its dialogue, so he decided to challenge himself by writing an episode in which the characters could not talk. The episode, titled “Hush,” is excellent and was nominated for an Emmy.

- **Practice an art.**

The father of choreographer Bella Lewitzky taught her the importance of having an art to practice. He worked at an ordinary job, but when he came home, he painted. Ms.

Lewitzky says, “He taught me that it didn’t make a d\*mn bit of difference what you did for a living, as long as you had something that rewarded your life.” He also didn’t feel that it was necessary to have an audience for his art because the act of creation was rewarding in itself. Bella and her sister used to steal their father’s paintings — because if they didn’t, he would paint another work of art on top of the one he had already created.

• **Do it yourself.**

Early in their career, the Ramones played in London on July 4, 1976. Some cool kids who called themselves The Clash hung around during a sound check before the concert and talked to the members of the band, mentioning that they played music but weren’t good enough to play in public. Johnny Ramone told them, “Are you kidding? I hope you’re coming tonight. We’re lousy. We can’t play. If you wait until you can play, you’ll be too old to get up there. We stink, really. But it’s great.” (This is a great example of punk rock’s do-it-yourself attitude. You don’t need a lot of fancy equipment to play music. Just teach yourself a few chords, get up on stage, and rock. Similarly, if you want to write, you don’t need a lot of fancy equipment. If you have a computer, great, but all you really need is some paper and a pencil or pen.)

• **Be there.**

After retiring from her career in dance, Balanchine dancer Barbara Milberg became a very good student — and eventually a Ph.D. (and professor). In dance, she had learned that when the curtain went up, she had better be there, and so she never handed in a paper late.

• **Get it right.**

A man — who didn’t dance — visited the dance class of Margaret Craske. At the end of her class, he said goodbye and jokingly executed a *port de bras*. Quickly, Ms. Craske

reached out and corrected the position of the visitor's hand. As you would expect, in her dance classes, she tells her students over and over, "Get it right!"

- **Do it 'til you get it right.**

Garth Fagan, the choreographer of the theatrical version of *The Lion King*, learned an important lesson from choreographer Martha Graham: "Do it 'til you get it right!" She requested that he simply walk across the floor. He did 12 times before he realized that she wanted a walk that did not say, "LOOK AT ME! AREN'T I GORGEOUS!" When he did the walk correctly, Ms. Graham told him, "I think you're going to go places." As the head of his own dance troupe and as a Broadway choreographer, he did.

- **Make the first mark.**

Barbara Feldon, who played the role of Agent 99 on TV's *Get Smart*, is friends with artist Jan Stussy, whom she calls "the most prolific artist" she knows. She once asked him about his creation of art, "How did you develop the courage?" He replied, "When I was in the 10th grade, I realized that if you simply make the first mark, the rest will just happen. Whether it's that first mark with a brush on a canvas or pencil to paper, boldly make it and then let yourself free-fall. Art creates art." Ms. Feldon, author of *Living Alone and Loving It*, has added writing to her other creative endeavors, and she often tells herself, "Make the first mark."

## Appendix E: Anecdotes about Good Deeds

### The Ghoulardi All-Stars

Popular Cleveland, Ohio, horror-movie host Ghoulardi — his real name was Ernie Anderson — raised many thousands of dollars for charity by playing sports games around north-east Ohio with his Ghoulardi All-Stars. The Bob Soinski Parma Garfield Heights Combined Polish Marching Band provided the halftime entertainment. Their marching routines included making the formation of a pencil — a straight line. In addition, they saluted various sports by making circles of various sizes. A small circle represented a golf ball, a bigger circle a baseball, the next bigger circle a softball, and so on. As part of the team’s warm-up routine at softball games, the pitcher would throw several softballs for Ghoulardi to hit — and one grapefruit. Years after Ghoulardi had retired from Cleveland TV, a young man arrived at the television station with a photograph of the Ghoulardi All-Stars, saying that he wanted to thank them in person. When he was a baby, he had needed an operation, and the Ghoulardi All-Stars had raised the money for it. Without the operation, the baby would not have survived to become a young man. (Source: Tom Feran and R.D. Heldenfels, *Ghoulardi*, pp. 102, 104.)

### Fall Down the Waterfall

When Lindsay Petroff and her family moved to a new home, she and her two sisters wanted a clubhouse and play set. Their father loved carpentry, and one morning Lindsay woke to the banging of a hammer. She opened her window and called, “Dad! Are you doing what I think you are doing?” He called back, “Maybe!” She knew then that he was building a clubhouse, and she wanted to come outside right away, but it was way too early, and he made her go back to bed. Lindsay remembers, “It was like Christmas morning when you wake up at 4 a.m. and your parents make you go back to

sleep.” Eventually, Lindsay and her sisters were able to go outside, and her father finished the clubhouse — and the monkey bars, the slide, the swings, etc. Lindsay says, “After it passed my dad’s tests, we were unleashed and we played for hours and hours. It was better than Christmas, Easter, and the Fourth of July combined. We were so excited we even slept in it that night.” One of the games Lindsay and her two sisters played was called “Fall Down the Waterfall.” In this game, one sister was on the slide holding on while the other sisters poured buckets of water down the slide, making it slippery. Eventually, of course, the child would slide down, ending up in a muddy puddle. Later, their father remodeled the clubhouse, adding such amenities as a balcony. Still later, Lindsay and her sisters grew up and no longer played in the clubhouse and play set, which sat unused in the back yard. Eventually, their father dismantled the clubhouse and play set, which he took to the yard of another family with young children but not much money and reassembled. Lindsay says, “Every now and then, when I look out to the backyard, I get a pang of sadness at the empty spot where it used to be, but I’m glad someone else has the chance to make wonderful memories with it as well.” (Source: Lindsay Petroff, “Fall Down the Waterfall,” pp. 59-63.)

### **“There is No Way in Hell I’m Getting in the Elevator with That Man”**

When Ohio University student Haley Butler visited London, she saw and enjoyed the musical *Wicked*, although she attended the musical alone despite having promised her parents that she would not go out alone at night. On her way back to her hotel, she noticed that a strange man was following her. She tried to get away from him, but he kept on following her. In the subway, she needed to take an elevator to get to ground level, but she thought, “There is no way in hell I’m getting in the elevator with that man. He’s going to rape me. He’s going to rape me, and then kill me.” She was



making a major effort not to cry when the elevator door opened, and a man in the elevator looked at her, saw how frightened she was, and even though he had never seen her before, said, “Oh my gosh! How are you? I can’t believe I ran into you!” Haley knew that she had never seen this new man before, but she replied, “I’m great! It’s so good to see you.” The strange man who had been following Haley left, and Haley said, “You saved me. That guy was following me, and I didn’t know what to do!” The new man responded, “I know. I could tell by the look on your face! You seemed so frightened.” The new man even walked her to her hotel just to ensure that she would be safe. (Some men can be very helpful in situations like this. Comedian Jay Leno once noticed a woman being harassed by a man, so he went over and pretended to be the woman’s boyfriend and chased the harasser away.) (Source: Haley Butler, “*Wicked*,” pp. 20-25. Also: Bill Adler and Bruce Cassidy, *The World of Jay Leno: His Humor and His Life*, p. 59.)

### **Free Thanksgiving Turkeys for Life**

The rival baseball teams of Keene and Hinsdale (both of New Hampshire) hated each other. In an 1898 game played at Keene, Hinsdale player Alfred G. Doe batted against Keene pitcher Bill Griffin. Mr. Griffin threw the ball and hit Mr. Doe in the ribs, then Mr. Doe threw the bat at Mr. Griffin. Mr. Doe and Mr. Griffin were fighting when Mr. Doe suddenly became aware that several angry Keene fans were starting to come after him, so he ran clear out of the ballpark. Being a sprinter, he outdistanced the angry mob, but he was growing tired when he spied a house with the front door wide open. (This was before air conditioning and daily TV crime horror stories.) He ran through the open door and convinced the lady of the house, Mrs. Tom Finan, to let him hide from the angry mob there. Afterward, for many years, Mr. Doe sent Mrs. Finan a turkey just before Thanksgiving. (Source:

Ira L. Smith and H. Allen Smith, *Low and Inside*, pp. 172-174.)

### **Starting Your Own Peace March**

Comedian Bertice Berry and her cousin once traveled to a peace march, but they couldn't find it. At first, they started to get upset, but then they decided to have their own peace march. The two of them started marching, chanting, "We want peace. We want peace." Quite a few people came up to them — they were also looking for the peace march. Ms. Berry says, "I found out that a lot of people looking for peace are simply lost. We're all lost. And once we find each other, there will be a lot of power in coming together and working for change. But we have to do it in humor and in love." (Source: Roz Warren, editor, *Revolutionary Laughter*, p. 28.)

### **An Appetizer Instead of a Full Meal**

Sportswriter Jim Murray once wrote that a lifeguard "would rather lose his life than a customer's." As evidence to back up this assertion, he tells about lifeguard Dale Strand, who in 1953 saw a shark swimming in circles around two girls. Mr. Strand saved the girls' lives by grabbing the shark's fin and tail and holding on as the two girls made it safely to shore. Mr. Strand kept the shark from getting the full meal it was after, but the shark did get an appetizer: a chunk of Mr. Strand's thigh. (Source: Jim Murray, *The Best of Jim Murray*, p. 35.)

### **Telegrams of Condolence**

Shohei Baba was an amazingly popular pro wrestler in Japan and a very honest businessman. When he died of cancer in 1999, so many telegrams of condolence were sent to his family and to his business office that the main Japanese telegraph company was forced to close after running out of

paper. (Source: Keith Elliot Greenberg, *Pro Wrestling: From Carnivals to Cable TV*, pp. 72-73, 78.)

## **Appendix F: How Can I Tell Right from Wrong?**

When you are deciding what is right and what is wrong, here are a few things to consider:

### **Consequences**

If something will have bad consequences, we probably ought not to do it. If something will have good consequences, we probably ought to do it. This seems obvious. If hitting yourself on the head with a hammer gives you headaches, I recommend that you stop hitting yourself on the head with a hammer. Ask yourself this: What are the consequences of what you are thinking about doing?

### **The Golden Rule**

Here are two formulations of the Golden Rule, one stated positively, and the other stated negatively:

- Treat other people the way you want to be treated.
- Do not treat other people the way that you do not want to be treated.

Ask yourself this: Is what you are thinking about doing consistent with the Golden Rule?

### **Reversibility**

One way to find out if something is morally right is to ask if you want something done to you. You may be thinking that you would like other people to be forced to do something, but would you want to be forced to do that thing?

Let's suppose that you need money desperately and that the only way you can acquire that money is to borrow it and make a lying promise that you will pay the money back although you know that you will never be able to do so. The principle would be this: "When you need money, it's ok to make a lying promise that you will pay the money back

although you know that you will never be able to do so.” Is this principle moral?

“Reversibility” means that what you want to do to another person, that person can also do to you. (In other words, you “reverse” the situation.) You may be willing to make a lying promise to obtain other people’s money, but are you willing to allow other people to make lying promises to you in order to obtain your money? Of course not.

Here’s another example of reversibility from *The Dick Van Dyke Show*. In the episode “Punch Thy Neighbor,” Rob Petrie’s neighbor Jerry Helper teases Rob mercilessly about a “bad” show that Rob wrote for *The Alan Brady Show*. Rob tells Jerry that the teasing isn’t funny, but Jerry keeps on teasing. Finally, Rob opens his door and yells outside, “Jerry Helper is a rotten dentist.” Then Jerry realizes that the teasing isn’t funny. Jerry is willing to tease other people, but he doesn’t want to be teased himself.

### **Human Beings are Valuable**

To be moral, we ought to treat human beings as valuable, and we ought not to treat other human beings badly. In fancy language, we ought to treat other human beings and ourselves as ends (valuable in themselves) rather than as means (things to be used, then tossed aside). Make sure that what you are thinking about doing treats other people with respect.

The moral philosopher Immanuel Kant formulated a moral rule that he called the categorical imperative. This is one of the ways that he expressed it: “Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means.”

If you treat another person as a means, then you are using that person. For example, a guy unfortunately might be very nice to a woman, sleep with her, then never call her. In this

example, the guy is treating the woman as a means to an orgasm, not as someone valuable in herself.

If you treat other people as ends, then you are treating them as valuable in themselves. For example, you can treat everybody you meet with common courtesy (which, as you probably know, is no longer common). If you see a parent teaching her young child how to cross the street, you can decide to refrain from jaywalking this one time and thus be a role model for the child. You can also refrain from demonstrating power by ordering around waitresses in a restaurant.

As I hope that you can see, our example of making a lying promise to borrow money fails this formulation of the categorical imperative. If you make a lying promise to borrow money, you are using the person you are borrowing from. You are not treating the person as an end; you are treating the person as a means.

## **Happiness**

Happiness is good. We have to do some things, such as make a living and pay our bills. We ought to do some things, such as exercise and eat healthily. We want to do some things, maybe even things that other people find silly. As long as the things we want to do don't conflict with the things we have to do and the things we ought to do, go ahead and do them. Ask yourself this: Will what you are thinking about doing bring happiness to people, including yourself?

## **What Would Happen if Everybody Did It?**

If everybody pirates music, what would happen? Chances are, less new music will be written. If musicians can't make a living from their music, they will have to get money from other sources, including jobs that may not allow them enough time to write and perform good music.

**Do You Want You Do to Be Made Public?**

If you do something you are proud of, such as win a scholarship or win an athletic event, you probably want people to read about it in the newspaper. If you are caught shoplifting, you probably do not want people to read about it in the newspaper.

## Appendix G: How Should I Act?

C.S. Lewis, the writer of the *Chronicles of Narnia*, said that it is useful to divide possible actions into three groups:

- 1) The actions we have to do.
- 2) The actions we ought to do.
- 3) The actions we want to do.

People have to do certain actions, such as go to school when they are young and make a living when they are older.

People ought to do certain actions, such as take care of their bodies with healthy food and proper exercise and act morally.

People want to do certain actions, which vary from person to person.

According to C.S. Lewis, as long as the actions we want to do, do not conflict with the actions we have to do and the actions we ought to do, then go ahead and do them.

Answer the following questions:

What are the actions that you have to do?

What are the actions that you ought to do?

What are the actions that you want to do?

Do any actions that you want to do conflict with the actions that you have to do or the actions that you ought to do?

Is there any reason why you are not doing the things that you want to do, assuming that they do not conflict with the actions that you have to do or the actions that you ought to do?



### **Appendix H: Exercise: Twenty Questions**

Be original, witty, and interesting when you answer these questions, either while working in a small group, or alone.

- 1. The latest book or movie that made you cry?**
- 2. The fictional character most like you?**
- 3. The greatest album, ever?**
- 4. *Star Trek* or *Star Wars*?**
- 5. Your ideal brain food?**
- 6. You're proud of this accomplishment, but why?**
- 7. You want to be remembered for...?**
- 8. Of those who've come before, the most inspirational are?**
- 9. The creative masterpiece you wish bore your signature?**
- 10. Your hidden talents...?**
- 11. The best piece of advice you actually followed?**
- 12. The best thing you ever bought, stole, or borrowed?**
- 13. You feel best in Armani or Levis or...?**
- 14. Your dinner guest at the Ritz would be?**
- 15. Time travel: where, when and why?**
- 16. Stress management: hit man, spa vacation or Prozac?**
- 17. Essential to life: coffee, vodka, cigarettes, chocolate, or...?**
- 18. Environ of choice: city or country, and where on the map?**

**19. What do you want to say to the leader of your country?**

**20. Last but certainly not least, what are you working on, now?**

Source of Questions: These questions come from the Web site <popmatters.com>.

## **Appendix I: Q & A**

Be original, witty, and interesting when you answer these questions, either while working in a small group, or alone.

**When were you happiest?**

**What is your earliest memory?**

**Which living person do you most admire, and why?**

**What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?**

**What is the trait you most deplore in others**

**What's the most expensive thing you've bought**

**What is your most treasured possession?**

**Where would you like to live**

**What would your superpower be?**

**What makes you depressed?**

**Who would play you in the film of your life?**

**What is your most unappealing habit?**

**What is your favorite smell?**

**What is the worst thing anyone's said to you?**

**Cat or dog?**

**What do you owe your parents**

**What or who is the greatest love of your life?**

**What was the best kiss of your life?**

**Have you ever said, 'I love you,' and not meant it?**

**Which living person do you most despise, and why?**

**What is the worst job you've done?**

**What has been your biggest disappointment?**

**If you could edit your past, what would you change?**

**If you could go back in time, where would you go?**

**When did you last cry, and why?**

**How do you relax?**

**What single thing would improve the quality of your life?**

**What is the most important lesson life has taught you?**

Source of Questions: Q & A with Philip Glass; Interview by  
Rosanna Greenstreet (slightly edited)

<[http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2008/nov/29/mu-  
sic-philip-glass-composer](http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2008/nov/29/music-philip-glass-composer)>

**Appendix J: Q&A #2**

- **On which day of your life were you the most embarrassed you have ever been?**
- **On which day of your life did you look your cutest (or most handsome)?**
- **On which day of your life did you feel most grateful to be alive?**
- **On which day of your life did you learn the most important thing you have ever learned?**
- **On which day of your life did you make a radical change for the better in your life?**
- **On which day of your life were you at your most entertaining or wittiest or smartest or best?**
- **On which day of your life did you achieve a worthwhile goal that you had long wanted to achieve?**
- **On which day of your life did you do the stupidest — and funniest — thing you have ever done?**
- **On which day of your life were your parents most proud of you?**
- **On which day of your life were you most proud of yourself?**

## **Appendix K: How Can I Write My Own Anecdote Books?**

Everyone needs to practice at least one art. Here is an art that you are welcome to consider practicing.

I have published several collections of anecdotes in Print-on-Demand book format at Smashwords and Kindle Desktop Publishing.

So you would like to write and publish book collections of anecdotes such as *The Funniest People in Sports* or *The Funniest People in Music*.

No problem.

It will take a time commitment and some writing ability, but pretty much anyone can do what I do.

You will need a few prerequisites:

- You will have to read several books a year. (You can also find anecdotes in online media and in your personal life.)
- You will have to get in the habit of writing each (or almost every) day. I try to write approximately three anecdotes per day, although often I end up writing only one anecdote.
- You will have to avoid plagiarism when you retell in your own words the anecdotes you find in books.
- You will have to proofread carefully.

Here is what you will do:

### **Step 1: Read a Book and Note Any Anecdotes**

Read a book, and as you read it, take note of any good anecdotes in the book. I use a notebook and write down the page number the anecdote is found on, where the anecdote can be found (top, mid, or bot, or sometimes top/mid or mid/bot),

and a brief phrase to indicate the subject of the anecdote. For example, I might write “p. 28, mid, practical joke).

**Important:** Of course, not all books have anecdotes, but you will quickly identify the kind of books that have anecdotes. For example, biographies for teenagers are often well written and will usually contain a few good anecdotes. Reading shorter books — under 250 or so pages — is usually a good idea.

### **Step 2: Type the Anecdotes (with Footnotes) Using Your Own Words**

Type the anecdotes into a word processing document such as Microsoft Word. Try to write approximately three anecdotes a day. That will give you over 1,000 anecdotes per year. (If you write only one anecdote per day, you will have 365 anecdotes at the end of a year. If your books of anecdotes will contain 250 anecdotes, you can write at least one book per year.) When you type the anecdotes, use footnotes to indicate the source of the anecdotes. Also, type the bibliographic data for the book you have read and are getting the anecdotes from.

**Important:** When you type the anecdotes, avoid plagiarism. Use your own words, and if anything is taken word for word from the book you have read, use quotation marks.

### **Step 3: Proofread Each Anecdote Three Times**

Proofread each anecdote three times. From experience, I have learned that this is a wise thing to do. Proofreading is hard work, and it is easy to leave out a word or make a typo while typing an anecdote.

### **Step 4: Gather the Anecdotes into Book Collections**

Gather the anecdotes into book collections. For example, you may want to write a collection of sports anecdotes, a

collection of dance anecdotes, a collection of music anecdotes, etc. Of course, the collections will be up to you and your interests. If you decide to specialize in sports, your collections may be basketball, football, baseball, women's sports, and sports in general.

In each book collection, use only two anecdotes from a book you have read. You may read one book about sports, type 10 anecdotes, then put two anecdotes in your basketball collection, two anecdotes in your football collection, two anecdotes in your women's-sports collection, two anecdotes in your sports-in-general collection, and have two anecdotes that aren't all that good. Put those not-so-good anecdotes in a miscellaneous collection or a junk collection because you may later think of a way to rewrite an anecdote and make it funnier.

As you add the anecdotes to the books, put the anecdotes into categories: Children, Education, Practical Jokes, etc.

In addition, create a bibliography at the end of the book collection. Each time you add some anecdotes from a new book you have read, copy the bibliographic data of that book and paste it in your bibliography.

Important: Back up your work. Eventually, you will have many thousands of words written and many thousands of hours invested in this project. You don't want to lose all you have accomplished because of a computer malfunction.

### **Step 5: Keep Doing This Until You Have a Book Collection of 250 Anecdotes**

After six or seven or eight or nine months, or a couple of years, you will have book collections that are long enough to be published. If you specialize in one subject (as I do not) and work hard (as I do), you will have enough anecdotes for a book much more quickly. A collection of 250 anecdotes on a topic will be a short book. I recommend that you create



books of 250 anecdotes. That way, you can fairly quickly write a book. In addition, humor is good in short chunks. A collection of 1,000 anecdotes is too much, in my opinion.

### **Step 6: Proofread, and Make Sure All the Anecdotes are Good**

Proofread, weeding out the weakest anecdotes (if any) and replacing them with stronger anecdotes until you have 250 good anecdotes in the collection.

### **Step 7: Format Your Book**

Format your book. I use MS Word and Times New Roman font. I include a title page, a bibliography of my sources, and a brief author biography. In MS Word, I make sure the headings do not appear at the bottom of a page. I do this by clicking on each heading, then using Format>Paragraph>Line and Page Breaks, and check-marking “Keep with next.” This keeps the heading together with the first line of body text after the heading.

### **Step 8: Publish Your Book at Smashwords**

Publish your book. Go to Smashwords. This is a Web site that allows you to upload and publish books for free. At Smashwords you can create your own front cover. I usually go to Pixabay for stock photographs, then use them when I create the front cover. Smashwords will give you your own online bookstore. After publishing on Smashwords, publish on Kindle Desktop Publishing.

### **Conclusion**

Get started. If you write three anecdotes per day, you will write over 1000 anecdotes per year. If a book collection of anecdotes is 250 anecdotes, you can write four books per year, so if you specialize in writing anecdotes of just one

type (e.g., baseball), you can have a book in your hands very quickly.

Follow these steps, and you will read many more books than you might have and watch many fewer hours of TV than you might have (of course, there's nothing wrong with watching *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*), and you will be a published author.

Of course, you may also publish other kinds of books at Smashwords, including collections of autobiographical essays, collections of movie reviews, and collections of recipes or lesson plans or whatever else you wish.

Good luck. Work hard. Get started.

## Appendix L: Short Reaction Memos

The questions in this short guide to Jerry Spinelli's *Stargirl* can be used in discussions; however, they can also be used for short reaction memos. For example, I do this at Ohio University. See below for the assignment and sample short reaction memos.

### *How Do I Complete the Reaction Memo Assignments?*

During the quarter, you will have to write a series of short memos in which you write about the readings you have been assigned.

Each memo should be at least 250 words, not counting long quotations from the work of literature. Include a word count for each memo, although that is not normally part of the memo format.

Following the memo heading (To, From, Re, Date, Words), write the question you are answering and the part of the book that the question applies to.

You may answer one question or more than one question. I will supply you with a list of questions that you may answer

Note that a Works Cited list is needed if you use quotations.

For examples from my Great Books courses at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, see the following pages.

**To:** David Bruce  
**From:** Jane Student  
**Re:** *Odyssey*, Book 12 Reaction Memo  
**Date:** Put Today's Date Here  
**Words:** 323

***Odyssey*, Book 12: Is Odysseus a bad leader?**

This is an important question in the *Odyssey*. After all, Odysseus leads 12 ships and many men to Troy, but the ships are all destroyed and all of his men die and he returns home to Ithaca alone. Who is responsible for the deaths of Odysseus' men? Is Odysseus responsible for their deaths, or do the men bear some responsibility for their own deaths? Many readers prefer Odysseus, the great individualist, to Aeneas, the man who founds the Roman people, but then they realize that all of Odysseus' men died, while Aeneas succeeded in bringing many Trojans to Italy. When readers think of that, they begin to have a greater respect for Aeneas.

From the beginning of the *Odyssey*, this has been an issue. The bard says that the men perished because of the "recklessness of their own ways" (1.8). However, we notice that Odysseus is asleep at odd times. In Book 10, Aeolus gives Odysseus a bag in which the contrary winds have been tied up. This allows Odysseus to sail to Ithaca safely. However, they reach the island and see smoke rising from the fires, Odysseus goes to sleep and his men open the bag, letting the contrary winds escape, and the ship is blown back to King Aeolus' island. Similarly, in Book 12, on the island of the Sun-god, Odysseus is asleep when his men sacrifice the Sun-god's cattle.

It does seem that Odysseus does not bear the blame for his men's death. In many cases, they do perish through their own

stupidity. In other cases, of course, they die during war or during adventures, but in those times, Odysseus was with them, and he could have died, too.

One other thing to think about is that Odysseus is telling his own story. Could he be lying? After all, some of the adventures he relates are pretty incredible. (Probably not. The gods vouch for some of what he says.)

#### Works Cited

Homer. *The Odyssey*. Trans. Robert Fagles. New York: Penguin Books, 1996.

**To:** David Bruce  
**From:** Jane Student  
**Re:** *Inferno*, Canto 1 Reaction Memo  
**Date:** Put Today's Date Here  
**Words:** 263

### ***Inferno*, Canto 1**

#### **• What do you need to be a member of the Afterlife in Dante's *Inferno*?**

To be a member of the afterlife in Hell, you must meet a number of criteria:

- 1) You must be dead.
- 2) You must be an unrepentant sinner.
- 3) You must be a dead, unrepentant sinner by 1300.

Of course, only dead people — with a few exceptions such as Dante the Pilgrim — can be found in the *Inferno*.

Only unrepentant sinners can be found in the *Inferno*. Everyone has sinned, but sinners who repented their sins are found in Purgatory or Paradise, not in the *Inferno*.

Dante set his *Divine Comedy* in 1300, so the characters who appear in it are dead in 1300.

### ***Inferno*, Canto 1**

#### **• What does it mean to repent?**

A sinner who repents regrets having committed the sin. The repentant sinner vows not to commit the sin again, and he or she does his or her best not to commit the sin again.

***Inferno, Canto 1*****• What is the geography of Hell? In *The Divine Comedy*, where is Hell located?**

Hell is located straight down. We will find out later that when Lucifer was thrown out of Paradise, he fell to the Earth, ending up at the center of the Earth. The center of the Earth is the lowest part of Hell. Lucifer created the Mountain of Purgatory when he hit the Earth.

**To:** David Bruce  
**From:** Jane Student  
**Re:** *Candide*, Ch. 26-30  
**Date:** Today's Date  
**Words:** 368

**Ch. 30: Write a brief character analysis of the old man and his family.**

When Candide and his friends meet the old man, the old man is “sitting in front of his door beneath an arbor of orange trees, enjoying the fresh air” (119). The old man basically ignores politics that he cannot influence. Some people have recently been killed in Constantinople, and the old man does not even know their names. However, the old man does enjoy some material things, including good food, and he enjoys hospitality.

The old man invites Candide and his friends to enjoy some refreshments inside his house. They are served with “several kinds of fruit-favored drinks” and “boiled cream with pieces of candied citron in it, oranges, lemons, limes, pineapples, pistachio nuts, and mocha coffee” (119). The old man and his family have an abundance of food, but although Candide wonders if the old man has an enormous farm, the old man tells him, “I have only twenty acres of land, which my children and I cultivate. Our work keeps us free of three great evils: boredom, vice, and poverty” (119).

From this brief encounter, we learn several things:

- The old man and his family are content — even happy.
- The old man and his family ignore the wars and murders and crimes that happen elsewhere.



- The old man and his family have enough. They work hard on their little farm, and they have plenty of food and good things to eat.
- The old man and his family have only 20 acres, but 20 acres are enough.

Candide and his friends decide to emulate the old man and his family. Each of them begins to work hard on their little farm. Cunegonde learns to make pastry, Paquette begins to embroider, and the old woman does the laundry and repairs the linen. Brother Giroflée becomes a carpenter, and Candide and the others grow “abundant crops” (120). At the end of the short novel, the group of friends seem to have come the closest they can to happiness in a world filled with evil, but it does take an effort on their part. As Candide says in the short novel’s last words, “... we must cultivate our garden” (120).

#### Works Cited

Voltaire. *Candide*. Trans. Lowell Bair. New York: Bantam Books, 1981.

**To:** David Bruce

**From:** Jane Student

**Re:** *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court,*  
**Ch. 1-4 Reaction Memo**

**Date:** Put Today's Date Here

**Words:** 286

### **CH. 3: "KNIGHTS OF THE TABLE ROUND"**

**• What hints do we have of the relationship between Queen Guenever and Sir Launcelot?**

Some hanky-panky is going on between Sir Launcelot and King Arthur's wife, Queen Guenever. Some six or eight prisoners address her, and they tell her that they have been captured by Sir Kay the Seneschal. Immediately, surprise and astonishment are felt by everybody present. The queen looks disappointed because she had hoped that the prisoners were captured by Sir Launcelot.

As it turns out, they were. Sir Launcelot first rescued Sir Kay from some attackers, then he took Sir Kay's armor and horse and captured more knights. All of these prisoners were actually captured by Sir Launcelot, not by Sir Kay at all.

Two passages let us know that something is going on between Sir Launcelot and Queen Guenever:

1. The first is subtle; she looks disappointed when Sir Kay says that he captured the knights: "Surprise and astonishment flashed from face to face all over the house; the queen's gratified smile faded out at the name of Sir Kay, and she looked disappointed ..." (503).

2. The other is much more overt and occurs after Guenever learns that the knight who really captured the prisoners was

Sir Launcelot: “Well, it was touching to see the queen blush and smile, and look embarrassed and happy, and fling furtive glances at Sir Launcelot that would have got him shot in Arkansas, to a dead certainty” (503).

#### Works Cited

Twain, Mark. *Four Complete Novels*. New York: Gramercy Books, 1982.

## Appendix M: About the Author

It was a dark and stormy night. Suddenly a cry rang out, and on a hot summer night in 1954, Josephine, wife of Carl Bruce, gave birth to a boy — me. Unfortunately, this young married couple allowed Reuben Saturday, Josephine’s brother, to name their first-born. Reuben, aka “The Joker,” decided that Bruce was a nice name, so he decided to name me Bruce Bruce. I have gone by my middle name — David — ever since.

Being named Bruce David Bruce hasn’t been all bad. Bank tellers remember me very quickly, so I don’t often have to show an ID. It can be fun in charades, also. When I was a counselor as a teenager at Camp Echoing Hills in Warsaw, Ohio, a fellow counselor gave the signs for “sounds like” and “two words,” then she pointed to a bruise on her leg twice. Bruise Bruise? Oh yeah, Bruce Bruce is the answer!

Uncle Reuben, by the way, gave me a haircut when I was in kindergarten. He cut my hair short and shaved a small bald spot on the back of my head. My mother wouldn’t let me go to school until the bald spot grew out again.

Of all my brothers and sisters (six in all), I am the only transplant to Athens, Ohio. I was born in Newark, Ohio, and have lived all around Southeastern Ohio. However, I moved to Athens to go to Ohio University and have never left.

At Ohio U, I never could make up my mind whether to major in English or Philosophy, so I got a bachelor’s degree with a double major in both areas, then I added a Master of Arts degree in English and a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy. Yes, I have my MAMA degree.

Currently, and for a long time to come (I eat fruits and veggies), I am spending my retirement writing books such as *Nadia Comaneci: Perfect 10*, *The Funniest People in Dance*, *Homer’s Iliad: A Retelling in Prose*, and *William Shakespeare’s Othello: A Retelling in Prose*.

By the way, my sister Brenda Kennedy writes romances such as *A New Beginning* and *Shattered Dreams*.

## Appendix N: Some Books by David Bruce

### Discussion Guides Series

*Dante's Inferno: A Discussion Guide*

*Dante's Paradise: A Discussion Guide*

*Dante's Purgatory: A Discussion Guide*

*Forrest Carter's The Education of Little Tree: A Discussion Guide*

*Homer's Iliad: A Discussion Guide*

*Homer's Odyssey: A Discussion Guide*

*Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice: A Discussion Guide*

*Jerry Spinelli's Maniac Magee: A Discussion Guide*

*Jerry Spinelli's Stargirl: A Discussion Guide*

*Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal": A Discussion Guide*

*Lloyd Alexander's The Black Cauldron: A Discussion Guide*

*Lloyd Alexander's The Book of Three: A Discussion Guide*

*Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: A Discussion Guide*

*Mark Twain's The Adventures of Tom Sawyer: A Discussion Guide*

*Mark Twain's A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court: A Discussion Guide*

*Mark Twain's The Prince and the Pauper: A Discussion Guide*

*Nancy Garden's Annie on My Mind: A Discussion Guide*

*Nicholas Sparks' A Walk to Remember: A Discussion Guide*

*Virgil's Aeneid: A Discussion Guide*

*Virgil's "The Fall of Troy": A Discussion Guide*

*Voltaire's Candide: A Discussion Guide*

*William Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV: A Discussion Guide*

*William Shakespeare's Macbeth: A Discussion Guide*

*William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream: A Discussion Guide*

*William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: A Discussion Guide*

*William Sleator's Oddballs: A Discussion Guide*

(*Oddballs* is an excellent source for teaching how to write autobiographical essays/personal narratives.)

### **Retellings of a Classic Work of Literature**

*Ben Jonson's The Alchemist: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's Bartholomew Fair: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's The Case is Altered: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's Catiline's Conspiracy: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's The Devil is an Ass: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's Epicene: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's Every Man in His Humor: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's Every Man Out of His Humor: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's The Fountain of Self-Love, or Cynthia's Revels: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's The New Inn: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's Sejanus: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's The Staple of News: A Retelling*

*Ben Jonson's Volpone, or the Fox: A Retelling*

*Christopher Marlowe's Complete Plays: Retellings*

*Christopher Marlowe's Dido, Queen of Carthage: A Retelling*

*Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus: Retellings of the 1604 A-Text and of the 1616 B-Text*

*Christopher Marlowe's Edward II: A Retelling*

*Christopher Marlowe's The Massacre at Paris: A Retelling*

- Christopher Marlowe's The Rich Jew of Malta: A Retelling*
- Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Parts 1 and 2: Retellings*
- Dante's Divine Comedy: A Retelling in Prose*
- Dante's Inferno: A Retelling in Prose*
- Dante's Purgatory: A Retelling in Prose*
- Dante's Paradise: A Retelling in Prose*
- The Famous Victories of Henry V: A Retelling*
- From the Iliad to the Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose of Quintus of Smyrna's Posthomerica*
- George Peele: Five Plays Retold in Modern English*
- George Peele's The Arraignment of Paris: A Retelling*
- George Peele's The Battle of Alcazar: A Retelling*
- George Peele's David and Bathsheba, and the Tragedy of Absalom: A Retelling*
- George Peele's Edward I: A Retelling*
- George Peele's The Old Wives' Tale: A Retelling*
- George-A-Greene, The Pinner of Wakefield: A Retelling*
- The History of King Leir: A Retelling*
- Homer's Iliad: A Retelling in Prose*
- Homer's Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose*
- Jason and the Argonauts: A Retelling in Prose of Apollonius of Rhodes' Argonautica*
- The Jests of George Peele: A Retelling*
- John Ford: Eight Plays Translated into Modern English*
- John Ford's The Broken Heart: A Retelling*
- John Ford's The Fancies, Chaste and Noble: A Retelling*
- John Ford's The Lady's Trial: A Retelling*

- John Ford's The Lover's Melancholy: A Retelling*
- John Ford's Love's Sacrifice: A Retelling*
- John Ford's Perkin Warbeck: A Retelling*
- John Ford's The Queen: A Retelling*
- John Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore: A Retelling*
- John Webster's The White Devil: A Retelling*
- King Edward III: A Retelling*
- The Merry Devil of Edmonton: A Retelling*
- Robert Greene's Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay: A Retelling*
- The Taming of a Shrew: A Retelling*
- Tarleton's Jests: A Retelling*
- The Trojan War and Its Aftermath: Four Ancient Epic Poems*
- Virgil's Aeneid: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 5 Late Romances: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 10 Histories: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 11 Tragedies: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 12 Comedies: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 38 Plays: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 2 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 2: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 1 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 2: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 3 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 3: A Retelling in Prose*



*William Shakespeare's All's Well that Ends Well: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's As You Like It: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Coriolanus: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Cymbeline: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Hamlet: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Henry V: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Henry VIII: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's King John: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's King Lear: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Love's Labor's Lost: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Macbeth: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Measure for Measure: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's The Merry Wives of Windsor: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Othello: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Pericles, Prince of Tyre: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Richard II: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Richard III: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's The Tempest: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Timon of Athens: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's The Two Gentlemen of Verona: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's The Two Noble Kinsmen: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale: A Retelling in Prose*

### **Children's Biography**

*Nadia Comaneci: Perfect Ten*

### **Personal Finance**

*How to Manage Your Money: A Guide for the Non-Rich*

### **Anecdote Collections**

*250 Anecdotes About Opera*

*250 Anecdotes About Religion*

*250 Anecdotes About Religion: Volume 2*

*250 Music Anecdotes*

*Be a Work of Art: 250 Anecdotes and Stories*

*Boredom is Anti-Life: 250 Anecdotes and Stories*

*The Coolest People in Art: 250 Anecdotes*

*The Coolest People in the Arts: 250 Anecdotes*

*The Coolest People in Books: 250 Anecdotes*

*The Coolest People in Comedy: 250 Anecdotes*

*Create, Then Take a Break: 250 Anecdotes*

*Don't Fear the Reaper: 250 Anecdotes*

*The Funniest People in Art: 250 Anecdotes*  
*The Funniest People in Books: 250 Anecdotes*  
*The Funniest People in Books, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes*  
*The Funniest People in Books, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes*  
*The Funniest People in Comedy: 250 Anecdotes*  
*The Funniest People in Dance: 250 Anecdotes*  
*The Funniest People in Families: 250 Anecdotes*  
*The Funniest People in Families, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes*  
*The Funniest People in Families, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes*  
*The Funniest People in Families, Volume 4: 250 Anecdotes*  
*The Funniest People in Families, Volume 5: 250 Anecdotes*  
*The Funniest People in Families, Volume 6: 250 Anecdotes*  
*The Funniest People in Movies: 250 Anecdotes*  
*The Funniest People in Music: 250 Anecdotes*  
*The Funniest People in Music, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes*  
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*The Funniest People in Neighborhoods: 250 Anecdotes*  
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*The Funniest People Who Live Life: 250 Anecdotes*  
*The Funniest People Who Live Life, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes*  
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