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Sample MonkeyNotes

Note: this sample contains only excerpts and does not represent the full contents of the booknote. This will give you an idea of the format and content.

Stargirl

by

Jerry Spinelli
2000



MonkeyNotes Study Guide by Jane Johnson

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KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS

SETTING

The setting for *Stargirl* was Mica, a made-up town in Arizona. It was a fairly new town, developed around an electronics business park a decade and a half earlier.

Arizona is a fascinating state, quite different from northern states and eastern states. The soil.....

CHARACTER LIST

Major Characters

Stargirl - Her real name is Susan Julia Caraway. She was a 10th grade girl with blonde hair and freckles. She called herself Stargirl. Stargirl was mysterious. While the reader does become acquainted with her.....

Leo Borlock - Leo Borlock, the narrator of the story, was a student at Mica High School. He found himself thinking about Stargirl much of the time. He wanted to understand her. He and his friend, Kevin, set.....

Archie Brubaker - Archie was a retired professor who had known Stargirl for years, since

Kevin Quinlan - Kevin was a student at Mica High School. He was a good friend of Leo

Hilari - Hilari was the developer of Hilari's Hypothesis, as Kevin called it. She stated that Stargirl was.....

Minor Characters

Alan Ferko - Stargirl sang to him on his birthday, the second day of school.

Cinnamon - Stargirl's pet rat. Cinnamon traveled with Stargirl.

Dori Dilson - A ninth grade poet who nobody knew until, one day, she sat with Stargirl in

CONFLICT

Protagonist - The protagonist was Stargirl, a new student at Mica Area High School.

Antagonist - The antagonist was Hilari Kimble, a student who never liked Stargirl, not even

Climax - The climax of the story was Stargirl's return to an empty parking lot upon.....

SHORT PLOT/CHAPTER SUMMARY (Synopsis)

Stargirl left homeschooling and enrolled in the tenth grade of a public high school in Arizona. She was a free spirit with a lot of enthusiasm. The other students had difficulty understanding her when she arrived. Students liked her when she cheered for the football team by cavorting on the football field. She was asked to join the cheerleading squad and she did join.

Then during the basketball season, many of the fans thought that she had too much sympathy for an injured player on one of the opposing teams. Also, they did not like the way she cheered the opposing teams' baskets. And, she did not want to cheer and add to the misery of teams that her team, the Mica.....

THEMES

The importance of being yourself.

The importance of knowing what is really important.

The interconnectedness of everyone.

MOOD

The mood is both upbeat and sad. It varies with what the narrator, Leo, is describing. The upbeat parts make the sad parts even sadder than they would otherwise be. But, after finishing the book, we are.....

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - BIOGRAPHY

Jerry Spinelli, the author of *Stargirl*, has written many other books, including *Maniac Magee*, which won the 1991 Newbery Medal. The Newbery Medal is an award given each year to an author by librarians. It is named after an eighteenth century British bookseller who was interested in producing quality books.

Jerry Spinelli also wrote an autobiography which he titled *Knots in My Yo-Yo String: The Autobiography of a Kid*. It covers what he can first remember through his high school years. *Stargirl* won the

LITERARY / HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Arizona, where the story is set, is a very interesting state. While it is a great place to live, it is also a fascinating place to visit. The vegetation is quite different than that found in northern and eastern states.

Spinelli adds many references to the natural surroundings in Arizona in telling the story. He mentions.....

CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES / ANALYSIS

PORCUPINE NECKTIE

Summary

When Leo Borlock was little, his Uncle Pete wore a necktie with a porcupine on it. Leo was fascinated by that tie. When Leo moved to Arizona at the age of twelve, Uncle Pete gave him the necktie. This pleased Leo greatly. Leo tried to start a porcupine necktie collection, but he could never find another porcupine tie.

For Leo's fourteenth birthday his mother put a piece in the local paper about him. The paper featured local children on their birthdays. In the piece, Leo's mother mentioned that Leo collected porcupine neckties.

A short time after the article appeared in the paper, Leo found another porcupine necktie in a package on his front step. The package it came in did not have the name of the sender. It was a mystery.

Notes

The way this book starts is unusual. It does not start with Chapter 1. It starts with a short piece about the past. As we read Chapter 1, we will be wondering what the connection between that first part and the rest of the story is. But, as we read the story, we will come to something that reminds us of the beginning and gives us an answer.

CHAPTER 1

Summary

As the school reopened the year that Leo entered eleventh grade, he kept hearing references to someone very interesting. Then, he saw her. Her name was Stargirl Caraway. She was not dressed like the rest of the girls. She wore a long off-white dress with ruffles. She had blonde hair and freckles, and wore no makeup. She carried a ukulele on her back. Leo found out that she was a tenth-grader who had been home-schooled. In the lunch room no one actually sat with her, but everyone wanted to sit close enough to get a good look at her and to observe her.

Leo and his friend, Kevin immediately wanted her to be a guest on their in-school TV show, Hot Seat. With only the little knowledge they had, they knew that she would be a great guest.

Toward the end of the lunch period, Stargirl played the ukulele as she walked around the lunch room.

Notes

The school busily watched the new student and wondered why she was not more like they were. The students wondered what made her want to look and behave differently.

CHAPTER 2

Summary

The next morning Hillari tried to make sense of Stargirl and theorized that she was planted in the school. She was not really as she appeared. The school administration wanted to stir things up, Hillari said.

When Leo heard Hillari's theory, he feared that, if Stargirl was a plant, she could not be on Hot Seat. But, Kevin figured that, if she was a plant, they could get a lot of publicity for Hot Seat by using Hot Seat to expose her as a fraud.

On the second day of school, Stargirl wore a completely different outfit. She wore bright red overall shorts. The first day of school she had worn no makeup, but on the second day, she used makeup to create over-sized freckles and reddened cheeks.

At lunch, Stargirl walked around the lunch room. When she finally stopped, it was in front of Alan Ferko. She sang "Happy Birthday" to him while strumming her ukulele.

After lunch, Kevin and Leo discussed what could be Stargirl's future at Mica Area High School. Everyone at MAHS conformed to some degree. The survival of Stargirl, if indeed she was real, was in question.

As days became weeks, Stargirl wore many other outfits to school. And, she continued to sing to students on their birthdays. She was friendly to whoever was passing by. She joined the cross-country racing team, but was dropped when she did not complete a race.

Leo thought a lot about Stargirl, especially at night in the moonlight. It was during such a time that Leo decided that Stargirl was indeed real.

Notes

While, in the beginning, most of the students were not sure whether or not they liked Stargirl, Hilari knew from the beginning that she did not like her. Why was this? Perhaps she did not want someone else getting attention.

Stargirl did receive a lot of attention. But, drawing attention to herself did not seem to be her goal.....

PLOT STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

Most of the story took place in one school year at Mica Area High School in Mica, Arizona.

The author tells the story through the eyes of one of the characters, Leo Bordock.

The author uses one of the characters, Archie Brubaker, a retired professor, to give insight into what is happening in the story.

Short chapters, between three and ten, mostly between three and seven, pages divide the.....

THEMES - THEME ANALYSIS

The importance of being one's self: Stargirl was not comfortable changing to being more.....

The importance of knowing what is really important: Stargirl seemed to have her

The interconnectedness of everyone: When Stargirl attended the funeral of Anna Grisdale's

POINT OF VIEW

Archie Brubaker gives the author's point of view when, referring to Stargirl, he says“

IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS

1) Page 2: **“It did not occur to me that I was being watched. We were all being watched.”** (Leo, the narrator, speaking)

Stargirl was doing the watching. She was looking for birthdays, and anything which would be a reason for doing something nice for someone.

2) Page 15: **She was elusive. She was today. She was tomorrow. She was the faintest scent of a cactus flower, the flitting shadow of an elf owl. We did not know what to make of her. In our minds we tried to pin her to a corkboard like a butterfly, but the pin merely went through and away she flew.** (Leo, the narrator, speaking)

This is Leo's excellent description of Stargirl.....

SYMBOLISM / MOTIFS / IMAGERY

In Chapter Nine is a description of previously dormant mud frogs awakening in the.....

IMPORTANT / KEY FACTS SUMMARY

Title: *Stargirl*

Author: Jerry Spinelli

Date Published: 2000

Meaning of the Title: Refers to the name Susan Caraway gave to herself. Archie Brubaker said..... “

STUDY QUESTIONS

Match these 15 items with the following 15 choices	
1. Barney	1. Name of a mountain range
2. Señor Saguaro	2. Musical instrument played by Stargirl
3. Cinnamon.....	3. Faculty advisor for Hot Seat.....

ESSAY TOPIC IDEAS

1. What are some of the ways that Arizona differs from where you live?
2. In what ways is Mica Area High School similar to your school? In what ways is it different?.....

END OF SAMPLE FOR STARGIRL BY JERRY SPINELLI

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