

JERRY SPINELLI

Stargirl: Individuality vs. Conformity

Unit Plan by Jessica Steerman



This unit has been designed to develop students' reading, writing, thinking, and language skills through exercises and activities related to *Stargirl* by Jerry Spinelli.

Summary of the Text

When *Stargirl* arrives at Mica High, she immediately upsets the rigid traditions of this sadly typical high school. The free-spirited teenager's name alone sets her apart. Her atypical outfits and lack of make-up further distance her from other students. "Everybody's cheerleader," *Stargirl* sings to students on their birthday, leaves random cards for strangers and even cheers for the opposing basketball team (65). At a phase when most students just want to blend in with everybody else, 10th grader *Stargirl* shines as a refreshing, yet surprising, break from robotic conformity. *Stargirl* initially shocks students. Following the baffling high school mood swings, *Stargirl* experiences waves of intense popularity followed by utter isolation. *Stargirl* rises above the pettiness; she seems to repel all the insults. Narrator and eleventh grader Leo Borlock is torn between his love and intrigue for the quirky girl and his own desire to fit in with his high school peers.

Theme and Essential Questions

Primary Theme

Stargirl is about the conflict between conformity and individuality, about what happens when an utterly unique, couldn't-care-less-what-others-think character enters a close-minded, insular environment. Leo, the novel's narrator, acknowledges from the beginning that his high school is not a supporter of individuality. Not only do students follow the rigidly prescribed trends in clothing, food, music, and more, but the most popular kids are idolized precisely because they are *not* unique—they do nothing "special." Rather than feeling stifled in this environment, Leo appreciates it: he knows precisely how to act, and as long as he sticks to "normal" behavior, he is guaranteed acceptance in the high school community

Goals

- Students will develop appreciation for the use of themes in various works.
- Students will be able to track their writing progress through journal writing.
- Students will develop pride for the characteristics that make them unique.
- Students will be able to interpret texts and relate them to their own lives.

Essential Questions

- What is conformity, and what type of social norms or systems encourage it?
- What are the risks of nonconformity, and are they worth it?
- Is conformity good or bad, or can it be both?
- Do you consider yourself a conformist or individualist?
- What would the world be like if everyone looked and acted the same?
- What characteristics make me different from my friends and family members?
- Is it good or bad to be different?
- How are we impacted by the presence of others in our lives? Who has changed the way you think or feel?

Enduring Understandings

- Conformity can be a positive and negative, depending on the situation.
- People, and particularly teenagers, often face the difficult choice of whether to conform.
- Sometimes it is easier to conform, but it often takes courage to be true to yourself.
- Nonconformity makes the world both an interesting and dangerous place.

Common Core Standards

RL.8.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL.8.2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot

RL.8.3. Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision

W.8.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content

SL.8.4. Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation

SL.8.2. Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

L.8.4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies

Supplementary Texts and Materials

- *Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon* by Patty Lovell and David Catrow (Intervention Class)
- Picture books for low level readers who struggle with comprehension:
<http://www.the-best-childrens-books.org/books-about-individuality.html>
- “Why so many minds think alike”= By Elizabeth Landau CNN
http://www.cnn.com/2009/HEALTH/01/15/social.conformity.brain/index.html?eref=rss_us
- Video: “Scene from Dead Poet’s Society.” In this short clip, English teacher John Keating (Robin Williams) inspires his students to take the road less traveled.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnAyr0kWRGE>

- Video: “The Asch Experiment.” 2-minute Youtube video about the studies on group dynamics performed in the 1950’s. The experiment where students have to pick the same length line would be a good intro to the lesson.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRh5qy09nNw>
- Poem: “Robert Frost’s The Road Not Taken.” Two roads diverged in a wood, and I, / I took the one less traveled by, / And that has made all the difference.
<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-road-not-taken>

Materials Needed for this Unit

Stargirl PDF
 Chromebook
 Binder/Folder
 Journal
 Pen/Pencil
 Dictionary

Activities and Projects throughout the Unit

Newspaper “Fillers”- students review the format of a newspaper and look particularly at the “filler” items. Students are given a transition that Stargirl used the fillers in the newspaper to find out things about people so she could send them the appropriate cards or greetings.

Hot Seat-

Students will reenact Kevin and Leo’s “Hot Seat”. They will create the questions and pick the characters that they want to see up on the Hot Seat

Sunflower Club Daily (Do Now) Log- On the first day of class students will be given the one of the unit projects. They are all now apart of the Sunflower Club, which is a club of people who at least once a day does something nice for someone else. They are to keep a log in their individual journals of the date and a short explanation of the nice thing they did. This will be used as the Do Now daily. Later in the unit, students will share with the class in a 5-minute presentation some of the more interesting things that they did.

Homework Vocabulary Book- Students will create a book out of their vocabulary word squares where they have the word, a definition, a picture and the vocabulary word defined in a sentence. This will be the nightly homework assigned since students will not be able to read the book at home unless they have access to a computer to read ahead.

Diary of A _____ - Students will be creating an alternate persona of a student (one that comes in contact with Stargirl on a semi-regular basis) at Mica Area High School. They will write a journal that reflects on several of the novel’s events and creates a snapshot of the year covered in the book from their chosen character’s persona.

Assessments and Grading

Daily Do Nows (each day is worth 5 points)

Students will be jotting down the nice thing that they did the day before as a member of the Sunflower Club.

Vocabulary Homework (each night is worth 10 points)

Students are responsible for filling out the vocabulary worksheet nightly for a selected group of words from the vocabulary list for that week.

Guided Reading Questions and Quick Writes (25 points)

Students are responsible for completing the guiding reading questions while we read the book together as a class. These will be handed in at the end of class as their exit tickets.

Sunflower Group Presentation (50 points)

Students are required to present to the class their most interesting good deeds, and speak about how the nice actions made them feel. In order to gain full points, students must have all the daily do nows completed.

Diary of a _____ (50 points)

In the middle of the unit, students will complete their Diary of a _____ assignment. This will allow them to create a character that will either conform to Mica High's ways or stand out like Stargirl.

Final Summative Essay on Conformity (100 points)

Students will write a 5 paragraph final essay, using information from Stargirl and at least one of the supplementary materials to answer the following question: In what ways can conformity be positive and negative? Students should include personal connections / stories, and avoid traditional formatting requirements (e.g. use of black, 12 pt times new roman font, 1" margins and double spacing), however standard grammar, punctuation, and spelling still apply. The essay must also include definitions of "conformity" and "nonconformity" in the student's own words. Incorporating pictures, graphics and/or cut-outs to enhance the paper is encouraged.

Monday Day 1	Tuesday Day 2	Wednesday Day 3	Thursday Day 4	Friday Day 5
<p>-Introduce the unit and have a discussion on individuality and conformity. Students will fill out the KWL chart.</p> <p>-Hand out the weekly planner and schedule</p> <p>-Assign chromebooks and make sure students have access to the PDF.</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: introduce the sunflower club</p> <p>-Read as a class <i>Stand Tall Molly Lou Mellon</i>. Make connections to the unit and individuality</p> <p>- Review what it means to be an individual and what it means to conform</p> <p>-Fill in the W section of the KWL chart</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Introduce Stargirl and the plan for reading</p> <p>- Lesson on Jerry Spinelli</p> <p>-hand out vocabulary for chapters 1-4 . Review definitions</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Newspaper filler activity as a class. Gallery walk of different sections of the newspaper.</p> <p>- Homework: vocabulary four square for one of the vocabulary words for the week.</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Read chapter 1 aloud as a class and answer comprehension questions together</p> <p>- Homework: vocabulary four square for one of the vocabulary words for the week.</p>

Monday Day 6	Tuesday Day 7	Wednesday Day 8	Thursday Day 9	Friday Day 10
<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Read chapter 2 aloud as a class and answer comprehension questions together</p> <p>- Homework: vocabulary four square for one of the vocabulary words for the week.</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Read chapter 3 aloud as a class and answer comprehension questions together</p> <p>- Homework: vocabulary four square for one of the vocabulary words for the week.</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Read chapter 4 aloud as a class and answer comprehension questions together</p> <p>- Homework: vocabulary four square for one of the vocabulary words for the week.</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Review for the vocabulary quiz and comprehension quiz on Friday.</p> <p>- Homework: vocabulary four square for one of the vocabulary words for the week. Study for quiz</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>-Students ask any questions they have about chapters 1-4. They will have the rest of the period to complete the vocabulary and comprehension quiz.</p>

Monday Day 11	Tuesday Day 12	Wednesday Day 13	Thursday Day 14	Friday Day 15
<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>-Watch the “Scene from Dead Poet’s Society” . Have a discussion about a time when they have followed a leader instead of being an individual.</p> <p>-hand out vocabulary for chapters 5-9. Review definitions</p> <p>- Read chapter 5 aloud as a class and answer comprehension questions together</p> <p>- Homework: vocabulary four square for one of the vocabulary words for the week.</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>-Finish reviewing vocabulary for the week.</p> <p>- Read chapter 6 aloud as a class and answer comprehension questions together</p> <p>- Homework: vocabulary four square for one of the vocabulary words for the week.</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Read chapter 7 -8 aloud as a class and answer comprehension questions together</p> <p>- Homework: vocabulary four square for one of the vocabulary words for the week.</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Read chapter 9 aloud as a class and answer comprehension questions together</p> <p>-Hot Seat Activity i</p> <p>- Homework: vocabulary four square for one of the vocabulary words for the week.</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Review for the vocabulary quiz and comprehension quiz on Monday.</p> <p>- Homework: vocabulary four square for one of the vocabulary words for the week. Study for quiz</p>

Monday Day 16	Tuesday Day 17	Wednesday Day 18	Thursday Day 19	Friday Day 20
<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>-Students ask any questions they have about chapters 5-9. They will have the rest of the period to complete the vocabulary and comprehension quiz.</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Watch the Asch Experiment” and discuss as a class. Students answer questions about characters in the story and how they think they would respond.</p> <p>-hand out vocabulary for chapters 10-13. Review definitions</p> <p>- Homework: vocabulary four square for one of the vocabulary words for the week.</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Read as a class “Why so many minds think alike”. Analyze it. Students should write a response in their journal.</p> <p>- Read chapter 10 aloud as a class and answer comprehension questions together</p> <p>- Homework: vocabulary four square for one of the vocabulary words for the week</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Read chapter 11 and 12 aloud as a class and answer comprehension questions together</p> <p>- Homework: vocabulary four square for one of the vocabulary words for the week.</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Read chapter 13 aloud as a class and answer comprehension questions together</p> <p>- Review for the vocabulary quiz and comprehension quiz on Monday.</p> <p>- Homework: vocabulary four square for one of the vocabulary words for the week. Study for quiz</p>

Monday Day 21	Tuesday Day 22	Wednesday Day 23	Thursday Day 24	Friday Day 25
<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>-Students ask any questions they have about chapters 10-13. They will have the rest of the period to complete the vocabulary and comprehension quiz.</p> <p>-hand out vocabulary for chapters 14-17. Review definitions</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Pulse check to see how the class is feeling about the book.</p> <p>- Read chapter 14 and 15 aloud as a class and answer comprehension questions together</p> <p>- Homework: vocabulary four square for one of the vocabulary words for the week.</p> <p>- Students should be prepared to present their Sunflower Club projects for 5 minutes each tomorrow.</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Sunflower Club presentations</p> <p>- Introduce the writing assignment about the Diary of a _____.</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Read chapter 16 and 17 aloud as a class and answer comprehension questions together</p> <p>- Homework: vocabulary four square for one of the vocabulary words for the week.</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>-hand out vocabulary for chapters 18-21. Review definitions</p> <p>- Read chapter 18 and 19 aloud as a class and answer comprehension questions together</p> <p>- Homework: vocabulary four square for one of the vocabulary words for the week.</p>

Monday Day 26	Tuesday Day 27	Wednesday Day 28	Thursday Day 29	Friday Day 30
<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Read chapter 20 and 21 aloud as a class and answer comprehension questions together</p> <p>- Homework: vocabulary four square for one of the vocabulary words for the week.</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>-Students ask any questions they have about chapters 18-21. They will have the rest of the period to complete the vocabulary and comprehension quiz.</p> <p>-Students will have the rest of the class to work on their Diary projects</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Read chapter 22 and 23 aloud as a class and answer comprehension questions together</p> <p>-Mini activity with Frost poem to remind students about conformity and individuality</p> <p>- Homework: work on Diary project</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Read chapter 24 and 25 aloud as a class and answer comprehension questions together</p> <p>-- Homework: work on Diary project</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Students will Submit their Diary projects.</p> <p>- hand out vocabulary for chapters 26-29. Review definitions</p> <p>- Read chapter 26-27 aloud as a class and answer comprehension questions together</p> <p>- Homework: vocabulary four square for one of the vocabulary words for the week.</p>

Monday Day 31	Tuesday Day 32	Wednesday Day 33	Thursday Day 34	Friday Day 35
<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>Read chapter 28-29 aloud as a class and answer comprehension questions together</p> <p>- Homework: vocabulary four square for one of the vocabulary words for the week.</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>-Instead of a quiz, students will complete a Ven diagram comparing and contrasting Stargirl and Susan.</p> <p>- I will read aloud the final chapters of the book 30-33. We will fill out the comprehension questions as a class.</p> <p>-Students should be asking questions about the entire book to prep them for their final essay .</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Students will be given the class period to work on their final essay. They will be using all of the materials given to them in regards to conformity and individuality to answer the prompt. They should be creative and show mastery in the unit objectives.</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Students will be given the class period to work on their final essay. They will be using all of the materials given to them in regards to conformity and individuality to answer the prompt. They should be creative and show mastery in the unit objectives.</p>	<p>-Daily Do Now: Students write their responses about the good deed they completed in the last 24 hours.</p> <p>- Students will be given the class period to work on their final essay. They will be using all of the materials given to them in regards to conformity and individuality to answer the prompt. They should be creative and show mastery in the unit objectives.</p> <p>-Essays will be due at the end of class.</p>