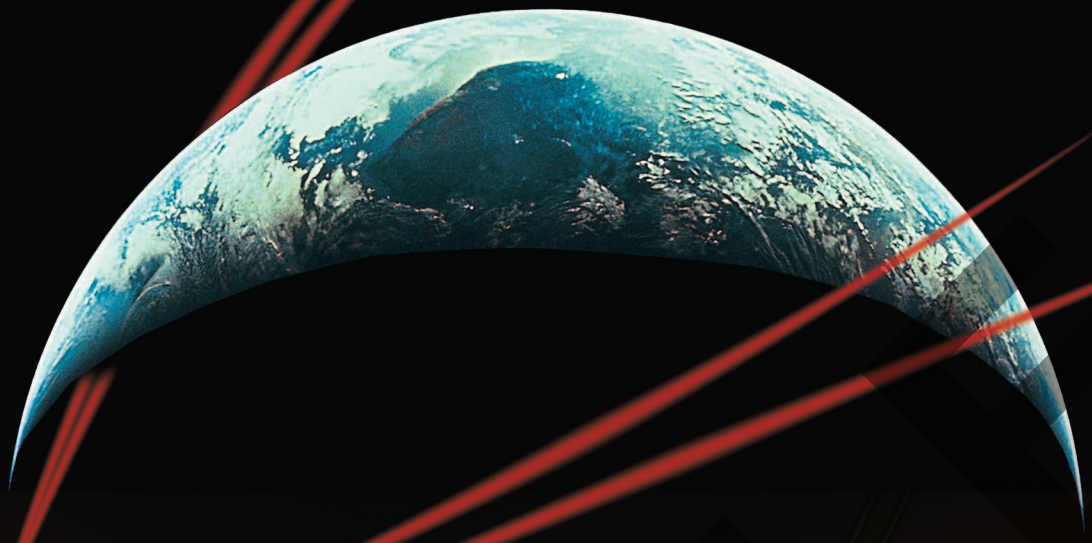

STELLAR

STAAR® Techniques to Engage Learners in Literacy and Academic Rigor

Grade 6
English Language Arts

region 4®

STELLAR

STAAR® Techniques to Engage Learners in Literacy and Academic Rigor

Grade 6 English Language Arts

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Introduction

STAAR Techniques to Engage Learners in Literacy and Academic Rigor (STELLAR) was developed as a resource for classroom teachers to use in preparing their students for the STAAR Grade 6 Reading Assessment. Through the course of four units, it incorporates multigenre reading selections that are thematically linked and creatively crafted to encourage inquiry, discussion, and ongoing reflection. Every unit offers value-added enrichments through technology, research, and listening and speaking, while providing relevant scaffolding options for diverse learners and gifted and talented students. Also included are suggestions for big ideas, skills-based vocabulary, literary extensions, and benchmark and summative assessment options to support authentic literacy experiences.

STELLAR Grade 5 and *STELLAR Grade 6* were developed in tandem and utilize the same passages, vocabulary, key questions, extensions, and applications, but the assessments have been customized to meet the rigor and standards of each grade level.

Value-Added Components

STELLAR is carefully crafted to provide big-picture ideas in the form of essential unit questions, themed passages, and assessments based on these passages. In addition to the basics, each unit contains applications for listening and speaking, research, skills-based vocabulary, technology, and project ideas. To aid in planning for unit instruction, *STELLAR* offers ideas for differentiation for diverse learners, adaptation for gifted learners, and lesson-planning tools. The text also contains several appendices for research-based study-skills practice, product options, grouping strategies and activities, and discussion formats and models, all of which can be utilized within each unit. Finally, in order to allow extensions with the selected themes beyond the materials provided within each unit, additional appendices on choosing themed passages and integrating instruction with technology are included.

Thematic Instruction

STELLAR puts forth the best practice of thematic instruction in integrated language arts. It utilizes the English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) as its foundational document. There are five strands of instructional skills outlined in the TEKS: Reading (including Figure 19), Writing, Oral and Written Conventions, Research, and Listening

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and Speaking. These skills are meant to be taught in conjunction with one another in order to help students make connections between the different literacy strands. In any unit of study, therefore, educators are encouraged to integrate the literacy strands so that students must synthesize skills and concepts from each to gain meaning and insight.

The study of themes is a naturally recurring element within the TEKS; students are expected to make thematic connections within and between the many different genres:

> (2) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/**Theme** and Genre. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about **theme** and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:
>
> (A) analyze how the genre of texts with similar **themes** shapes meaning

All the components of the *STELLAR* series are based on the design schematic for the state summative assessment and the TEKS; therefore, it requires students to demonstrate understanding of theme through themed passages, crossover multiple-choice and short-answer questions for reading, and thematically linked writing tasks.

Assessments

The assessments contained in *STELLAR* are custom designed for Texas students. The assessments measure a student's level of performance on clearly defined standards, objectives, and skills. Student scores will be based on test questions that have been developed and aligned to the most current version of the ELAR TEKS as well as the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS).

The chosen selections meet the criteria for high-interest, 21st-century context and age-appropriate content. The Lexile score, which considers word frequency and sentence length, of each selection was used to determine ability-level applicability. Selections were then linked by theme, which allowed assessment questions to be written to a higher cognitive level for an upward

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How to Use This Book

STELLAR is divided into four thematic stand-alone units. Each unit offers three options for planning.

Option One encompasses instruction with components of the assessment given when appropriate. The suggested time frame, based on 45-minute instructional periods, is a total of 10 days for instruction, 3 days for assessment, and 2 days for review and debrief. An overview of the planning steps for Option One along with a sample calendar immediately follow this foreword.

Option Two documents student improvement through baseline testing, targeted instruction, and retesting. The suggested time frame, based on 45-minute instructional periods, is 4 days for baseline testing, 7 days for instruction and practice, 2 days for retesting, and 2 days for review and debrief. An overview of the planning steps for Option Two along with a sample calendar immediately follow this foreword.

Option Three strictly consists of test preparation (e.g., practice in test-taking skills, gaining familiarity with format and vocabulary, and understanding the expectations of a standardized assessment). The instructor may use the passages and assessments at the beginning of each unit to prepare students for the STAAR Grade 5 Reading Assessment. The suggested time frame, based on 45-minute instructional periods, is 4 days for assessment and 3 days for review and debrief. A sample planning calendar immediately follows this foreword.

Assessments are formatted as continuous free-standing documents. When printed as laid out, they do not reflect the format of the STAAR. To mirror STAAR formatting and layout, insert the questions after each reading selection after printing.

A Note to the Teacher: Every *STELLAR* unit is designed to engage students' interest by addressing subjects and content they will encounter in their everyday lives. All activities and facilitation questions contained herein are suggestions. Please preview all selections for applicability and appropriateness before using the materials in your classroom. All movie suggestions are sourced from The Internet Movie Database, and music selections are sourced from iTunes.

Throughout the units, you may notice passages reprinted from open-source web sites such as Wikipedia. Due to the nature of wiki sites, which are editable

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by the general public, the information they contain is often incorrect. For instructional purposes, the passages appear unaltered, but they should not be viewed as accurate representations of facts.

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Sparks

by Mark C. Bird

Notes about my reading

From Pac-Man, Oz, the moonwalk, Jaws
To rockets and sliced bread
Once sparks that lit up question marks
Ideas in human heads . . .

The PS3, X-Box and Wii
The BMX, the kite
King Kong, Ping Pong and hip hop songs
The book, to read and write

The Pyramids, New York, Madrid
The submarine, the chair
The bed, cheese spread and Barbie's head
The wheel, the bulb, the square

The swimming pool, the slide, the school
The fizzy pop, the gum
The shoe, kung fu, the flushing loo
The phone, the clock, the drum

The microchip, the paper clip
Cartoons, the ball, the screw
Blue jeans, baked beans and trampolines
The toothbrush, pens, shampoo

The aeroplane, ice cream, champagne
The world wide web, the fridge
French fries, cat's eyes and custard pies
The road, the car, the bridge

Wonder what's in your head
Magnify the sparks
Imagine what you will invent
With your own question marks

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Use "Sparks" (p. 5) to answer questions 15–24.

15 Read the lines from the poem.

> *Once sparks that lit up question marks*
> *Ideas in human heads . . .*

How do lines 4 and 5 affect the poem?

A The language creates a metaphor for better understanding.

B The figurative language shows imagination.

C The hyperbole explains the intended meaning.

D The language helps the reader understand question marks.

16 What is similar about the ideas in line 9?

F They are all places located in the United States.

G They are all cities in the United States.

H They are all countries around the world.

J They are all places located around the world.

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