

Stars

Adventures in Reading:

Family Literacy Bags from Reading Rockets



Funded in part by
the Park Foundation, Inc.

Contents:

- Two books - one fiction, one nonfiction
- Parent information sheet
- Three activity sheets
- Bookmark
- Parent survey

for teachers and librarians



This Reading Rockets Activity Packet is designed to support reading activities at home. We've chosen a fiction and nonfiction book about stars and constellations, appropriate for a third grade listening level, and included related activities to encourage some hands-on fun and learning. Just assemble the packet in a two-gallon zip top bag, and send home with your students.

Reading Rockets carefully chose books that are widely available and appealing to young readers. The titles selected should be available in your school library. If the two featured titles are not available, or you prefer another title, feel free to substitute books related to the theme. You'll find a list of suggested alternative titles included in the bookmark.

The featured books are ***Her Seven Brothers*** by Paul Goble and ***Find the Constellations*** by H.A. Rey. ***Her Seven Brothers*** is a retelling of the Cheyenne legend about the creation of the Big Dipper. A young Indian girl who has a special gift for embroidery learns from the spirits that she must leave her home and search for a new one with seven brothers. Seven brothers welcome her, and her gift of beautiful clothes, in the north, but the Chief of the Buffalo Nation also wants a new sister. The girl and her seven brothers make a dramatic escape to the sky. In ***Find the Constellations*** by H.A. Rey, the author/illustrator best known for *Curious George*, presents the stars and constellations in a straightforward and easy-to-understand format. There are also detailed sky views and simple illustrations that help readers turn stargazing into a wonderful game.

The parent information sheet includes an introductory note that you can personalize instructions about how to use the packet, and tips for sharing fiction and nonfiction books with children.

The activities are designed to encourage further exploration and learning at home:

- >> Creativity Activity: a hands-on craft project
- >> Imagination Activity: encourages imaginative play, writing, or drawing
- >> Get Real Activity: focuses on real-world experiences for parent and child
- >> The bookmark lists both the featured titles and additional titles

Putting it all together

Print out copies of the parent information sheet, the activities, the survey, and a master for making bookmarks. Cut the bookmark page into strips. You may wish to print the activity pages and bookmark on card stock for durability.

Into a two-gallon zip top bag, place:

- >> Two books — one fiction title and one nonfiction title
- >> Parent information sheet
- >> Three themed activity pages
- >> Bookmark
- >> Survey for parents

Send the packet home with your student. Encourage parents to keep the parent information sheet, the activities, and bookmark, and return the books and survey to you.

Let reading rockets know what you think of the family activity packets by e-mailing us through our website: www.readingrockets.org/sitecontact. Click on "Family Literacy Bags"

ADVENTURES IN READING!

Welcome

Dear _____

Exploring new ideas and enjoying books with you sends a powerful message to your child: Reading and learning are fun, and happen everywhere — not just at school. This Reading Rockets Activity Packet about Stars was created to help you and your child enjoy reading and learning together.

Start your learning adventure by reading some books with your child about this popular topic. Then explore the topic with three activities. Enclosed you'll find what you need:

- >> two books to share with your child
- >> three related activities
- >> bookmark with a list of other books to extend the fun, if you wish
- >> short survey to tell me if you enjoyed using the packet

The simple steps on the back explain how to use the packet.

The bookmark, this parent information sheet, and the activities are yours to keep.

When you've finished with the materials, please return the books and the completed survey to school in your child's backpack. Please return the Reading Rockets Activity Packet by _____ .

I hope you'll enjoy reading and learning together!

Teacher signature

To learn more about children's books, reading with your child, and information about helping kids become confident readers, please visit www.ReadingRockets.org

Instructions

How to use your Reading Rockets Activity Packet

Getting ready

1. Before you read the books to your child, be sure to read them yourself. One book is fiction — a “make-believe” story. The other book is nonfiction, or informational and true. Reading the books first will give you the “inside scoop” to the twists and turns of the story, the interesting information inside, and the parts of the books that will appeal most to your child.

2. Next, read the three activities to see which of them you think your child will enjoy most, and which one you have the time and materials on-hand to do right away. Chances are, after you read one (or both) of the books with your child, he or she may want to do an activity right away

Start the fun

3. When you know you'll have at least enough time to read and talk about one of the books, grab your child and a book, and dive right in. Start with the fiction selection. Talk about the cover of the book with your child — can he guess what it is about? Have they ever read a book by the same author or illustrator or about the same topic?

Read the book to your child. If you are using the fiction title, you will be sharing a make-believe story. As you read and explore the pictures, you should note to your child that the author may include real facts in fiction writing. Talk with your child about how to confirm factual information found in works of fiction. Then, try the nonfiction book or one of the activities.

4. When you read the nonfiction book, take a moment to explain to your child the difference between the two types of books. The fiction book told a made-up, make-believe story, and a nonfiction book focuses on real people, places, and things. The information in nonfiction books can answer lots of questions and confirm facts.

5. Feel free to pick and choose from the activities, or change them to suit your child's interests. Read the books again over the next few days and try different activities. Most important: have fun!

When you're done...

6. Keep the bookmark, the activities, and this page. Complete the survey and return it with the books to your child's school.

Make the most of the excitement the books create, and try some hands-on learning or make-believe fun. Exploring new ideas alongside you lets your child see you learning — and reading — too, and gives your child personal experiences to support her growing knowledge.

Tips for reading nonfiction books with kids:

- >> *Wonder out loud. As you are reading, or afterward, talk about facts you find interesting or questions you have.*
- >> *Show your child how to use the table of contents, section headings, index, and word list (glossary) to find the answer to a specific question.*
- >> *Don't be afraid to jump around, reading pages that especially interest your child. You don't have to read a nonfiction book straight through.*

Tips for reading fiction books with kids:

- >> *Take your time and talk about the story with your child. Ask your child questions.*
- >> *Explore the pictures with your child.*
- >> *Read with expression. Change your voice or how fast you read to create excitement. Ham it up!*
- >> *You don't need to read every word. Keeping your child interested is the goal.*

twinkle, twinkle



Stars look pointy and seem to twinkle because we see them through the layers of the *atmosphere* — the gasses that surround our planet. The movement of air and dust in the atmosphere bends (*refracts*) a star's light in different directions. Because the light is scattered by the time it reaches our eyes on Earth, stars appear to twinkle.

Even though stars do not twinkle or have points, these huge, hot balls of gas do shine. In this craft activity, your child will explore the shape and brightness of stars and constellations by making a mobile.

Supplies

- >> Aluminum foil
- >> Black thread
- >> Scissors, pen or pencil, ruler, glue, and tape
- >> Cardboard (at least 8 x 11 ½ inches in size)
- >> White paper
- >> Black construction paper and paint

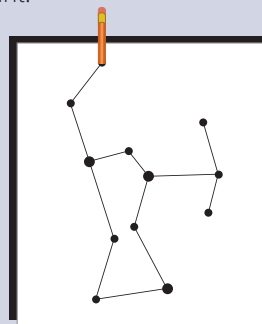
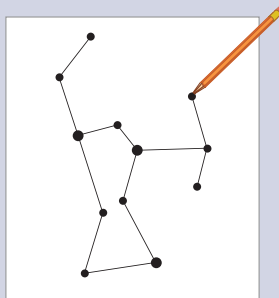
Getting Started

In his book *Find the Constellations*, author H.A. Rey explains why some stars appear brighter than others. Talk with your child about the brightest star of all — our sun — and ask her why she thinks stars in the night sky seem smaller and much less brighter.

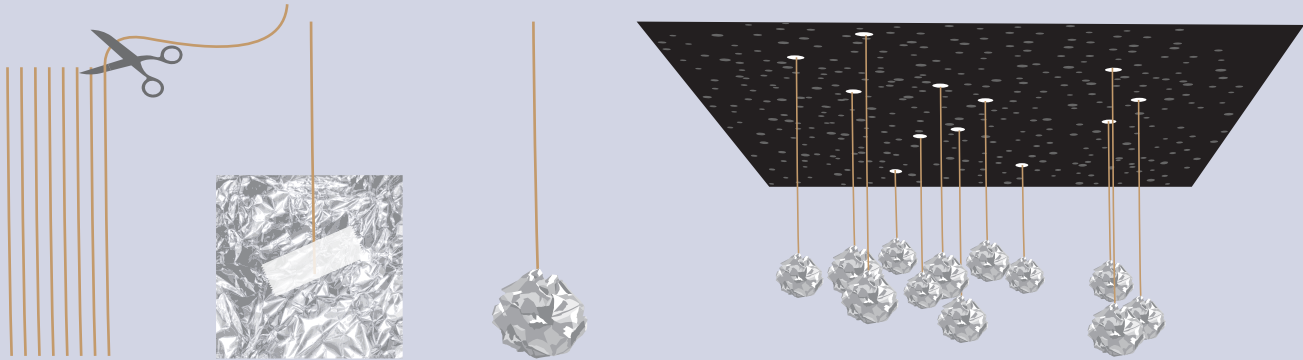
Because stars are very far away, they look small to us. They may also appear less bright because of a difference in distance or a difference in size. If you can, spend time outside on a dark clear night looking up at the stars. See if you can find the Indian girl and her seven brothers from Paul Goble's *Her Seven Brothers* in the Big Dipper. (The Sky Views in *Find the Constellations* can help you find these stars.)

To bring the stars inside, have your child select a constellation from the book you've read. Talk with her about the stars in her selection. Are they very bright or of a lesser *magnitude* — the measure of a star's brightness? How are the stars arranged? What does she like about the shape of the constellation?

As you discuss, have her cover the cardboard with a piece of black paper and glue it in place. Then let her draw the constellation or trace it from the book onto white paper. Then place the tracing over the black-covered cardboard and use the pencil or pen to poke holes into the cardboard where she's drawn the stars. Now that her constellation is in place, she can surround it with more stars using drops of white or silver paint.



twinkle, twinkle



While the paint dries, have your child measure and cut lengths of thread about 2 feet long. She'll need a thread for each hole she's poked in the cardboard. She will also need a square of aluminum foil to make a star for each thread. She can make her stars as large as she likes, but foil squares should be at least seven inches.

Have her tape a thread in the center of an aluminum foil square. Then have her squeeze and shape the foil into a ball around the end of the thread. It's a bright, round star!

When all her stars are ready, help her pull the end of a thread through each of the poked holes in the cardboard. Tape the thread to the back of the cardboard to secure it in the "sky." You and your child may want to review the constellation chart as you pull threads through, making some of the threads shorter for stars that are less bright or squeeze the foil even tighter to make the stars smaller for stars that seem smaller.

Hang the mobile on the ceiling with tape or tacks. Have your child lie under it. Can she find the picture in her constellation?

reach for the stars



If you want to get real about stars, the best thing for you and your child to do is head outside on a clear night.

Supplies

- >> A blanket or something to sit on outside
- >> A flashlight cover with red paper or plastic (the red protects your night vision)
- >> Sky view charts or star maps (from your books or the Internet)
- >> Compass
- >> Notebook and pencil (optional)

Getting Started

Pick a comfortable spot outside where you have an unobstructed view of the sky and spread your blanket. See if your child can find Polaris (the North Star). If she can, she won't need a compass to determine what direction you are facing, since when you are looking at Polaris, you are facing north. Once you have determined your location, use your flashlight to turn your star map in the appropriate direction. Look up for more of the brightest stars. (Even five to ten of the brightest stars can be seen from a big city.) Many of the brightest stars are found in the major constellations.

Take your time to look at the stars and search for the constellations you've read about. If you've found Polaris, it can help orient you and your child to many nearby constellations. Your child may want to keep track of the stars and constellations she's found. Encourage her to make her own star map, drawing the horizon and any buildings or tree in her view and including the date and time to help her remember this particular night sky.

While you are stargazing you can talk with your child about why fewer stars are visible in cities. You might also discuss why knowing about stars can be helpful or important, such as for navigation or to tell what time of year it is since the night sky changes with the seasons.

Indoor Stargazing

If you can't get out to see the stars or your stargazing is limited by light pollution, there are other ways you and your child can experience the stars:

Plan a trip to a planetarium. Find one near you through the Worldwide Planetarium Database:
www.aplf-planetariums.info/en/index.php

There are a number of websites that bring the stars into focus. Take a look at:

- >> The Star Witness, which brings you "tele-scoops" from the Hubble Space Telescope
<http://amazing-space.stsci.edu/news/>
- >> Journey to the Stars on the American Museum of Natural History's OLogy website
www.amnh.org/ology/astronomy
- >> The Lives of Stars video from the NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope program
www.spacetelescope.org/videos/hst15_chapter04/



stellar author

All around the world, people have been telling stories about the stars in the sky for thousands of years. Some of these tales were created to help explain how the stars appeared. *Her Seven Brothers* by Paul Goble is actually a retelling of the Cheyenne legend about the creation of the stars in the Big Dipper.

Other stories were created because people long ago who studied the night sky saw shapes and patterns among the stars and made up stories to describe what they saw. The same groups of stars were seen differently by people from different parts of the world. In this writing activity your child will compare her imagination with stargazers from ancient times.

Supplies

- >> Paper and pencil
- >> Sky view charts or star maps (from your books or the Internet)

Getting Started

Talk with your child about what a constellation is and how these man-made groupings of stars help make it easier to recognize which star is which. During your reading, you and your child may have already discussed that some constellations look like what they are supposed to represent but many do not.

Many of the constellations take names and have stories from Greek and Roman mythology. If your child is not familiar with mythology, talk with her about some of these myths and mythological creatures, such as the Centaur, Hydra, and Pegasus.

Look together at the stars on your chart. What kinds of patterns does your child see? Ask her to find a cluster of stars and design a new constellation with its own modern-day myth. Ask her to draw her constellation first. While she's drawing, you may want to remind her that a myth is a story that tries to explain how something came to be and often involves a hero or heroine. Her constellation myth should explain how and why her particular constellation is in the sky.

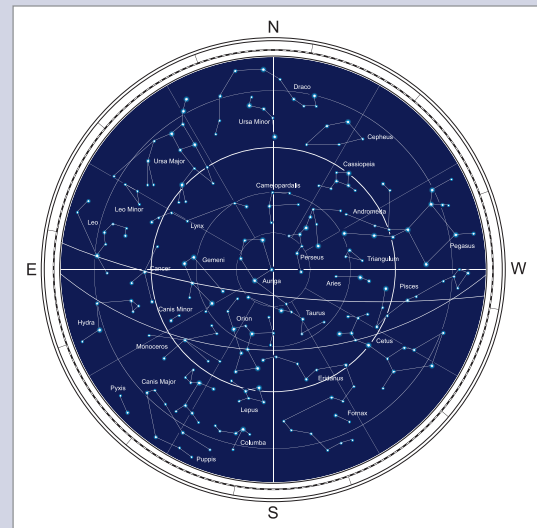
When her myth is complete, plan a nighttime read aloud of her starry tale outside under the stars!

Look for more titles about Stars in a library near you: www.worldcat.org/profiles/ReadingRockets/lists/2976304.

Extra Resources

This website provides mythology and more on all the constellations: http://starryskies.com/The_sky/constellations/index.html

Want to make more constellations? Try this interactive from PBS: www.pbs.org/parents/creativity/ideas/stars.html



STARS



Featured titles

Fiction

Her Seven Brothers by Paul Goble

Nonfiction

Find the Constellations by H.A. Rey

Additional fiction titles

The Lost Children by Paul Goble

The Love of Two Stars
by Janie Jaehyun Park

The Star People by S.D. Nelson

Starry Tales by Geraldine
McCaughrean

Additional nonfiction titles

Inside Stars by Andra Serlin Abramson
and Mordecai-Mark Mac Low

Once Upon a Starry Night by
Jacqueline Mitton

Stars by Ker Than

Stars by Seymour Simon

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