Meet the Stars

by Ben Heath
illustrated by Margo Lucas

Suggested levels for Guided Reading, DRA™, Lexile®, and Reading Recovery™ are provided in the Pearson Scott Foresman Leveling Guide.

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Scott Foresman Reading Street 3.3.3
Meet the Stars

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Vocabulary

- dim
- gases
- gigantic
- ladle
- pattern
- shining
- temperature

Word count: 1,236
Arnie stared out the window of his new bedroom. Dim sunlight glowed from behind dark clouds. A misty rain fell. Along the field beside his house stood a row of pine trees. Beyond the trees rose the big, spooky house next door.

It had been three days since Arnie’s family moved to Benton. So far, it seemed like the worst place, ever. Arnie missed his friends. He missed his old house and his school. But mostly, he missed the city.
Arnie had spent his whole life living in the city. He and his family had lived in a busy neighborhood. And there was always something happening there.

Every morning, Arnie walked the three city blocks to school. His friends all walked along with him. After school, Arnie and his friends always went to the playground. They played stickball and soccer. They played tag and basketball. And when they were finished, they stopped at Mr. Suarez’s corner store. Mr. Suarez always had a cooler full of drinks.

On weekends Arnie and his family did all sorts of fun things. They rode the subway to the zoo or to a baseball game. They swam at the city pool or rented rowboats in the park. There was always something new and exciting to keep Arnie busy.

Compared with the city, Benton was tiny. There wasn’t much to do there at all. There were hardly any other houses, and Arnie hadn’t seen a single kid either.
Why did my dad have to take that new job? Arnie wondered, feeling sorry for himself. If he hadn’t, we’d still be in the city.

Suddenly, Arnie’s big sister Melba poked her head in the door. “Mom and I are going to the supermarket,” she said. “Do you want to come?”

“No thanks,” Arnie said. Wow, Melba must be even more bored than I am, he thought. Who’d want to go to the grocery store?

Just then, far across the field, the door of the big, spooky house swung open. Out came a tall, skinny woman. She wore a bright yellow raincoat and big purple boots. Beside her walked a small boy who looked about Arnie’s age.

Arnie watched as they walked quickly down their driveway. Then they walked straight toward his house.
Arnie heard the doorbell and raced downstairs. By the time he got there, Dad was closing the front door.

“Who was that?” Arnie asked.

Dad turned from the door with an unusually large envelope in his hand.

“That was our new neighbor, Ms. Williston.” Dad said. “She left this envelope on our doorstep.”

Arnie peeked out the window. He watched as the neighbors walked back up their driveway. They opened the door to the spooky old house, disappearing inside.

Dad let Arnie open the envelope. It was an invitation decorated with a colorful, star pattern.

Come to Williston Manor.
Tomorrow evening, just at sunset
Enjoy an “Evening with the Stars.”

Arnie didn’t know what to think. They were a million miles from Hollywood. Why would stars come all the way to Benton?

As confusing as the invitation was, only one thing mattered to Arnie. He had seen a boy his own age, and he wanted to meet him. Maybe Arnie would have a new friend at last.
The next morning, Arnie got up early. The sky had finally cleared and the sun was shining. All day long, Arnie thought about the party. Finally, it was time to go. He and his family walked up the long driveway to the big, spooky house. Dad knocked.

Instantly, the door swung open. Ms. Williston stood in the doorway. She wore a long, purple gown.

Beside her stood the boy.

“Hi, I’m Thomas,” he said in a friendly voice.

“Welcome to my Evening with the Stars,” Ms. Williston said. “We’ll begin with cookies and milk.”

Arnie was starting to like her.

Arnie looked around the house as they stepped inside. It wasn’t as spooky as it looked from the outside, but it was big. Actually, it was gigantic.

Ms. Williston led the way to her living room. Then she served the cookies and milk. As they ate, Arnie talked with Thomas.

“How long have you lived in Benton?” Arnie asked.

“Three months,” said Thomas. “I used to live in the city before I moved here.”

Arnie couldn’t believe his luck. Another kid from the city! “Me, too!” exclaimed Arnie. “Isn’t it boring here?”

“That’s what I thought at first, too,” agreed Thomas. “But it’s not that bad.”
As they ate the cookies and talked, it grew darker outside.

Suddenly, Ms. Williston stood up, holding her arms out to address the party. “It is time to meet the stars,” she announced with importance.

Arnie looked around. He felt confused. He didn’t see any stars.

Thomas noticed his worried expression. “Don’t worry,” he said with a grin. “It’ll be fun.”

Ms. Williston led the way up a long, winding staircase. She opened a door out onto a spacious roof deck.

“Behold!” she shouted. “The stars!”

Arnie looked in amazement. All across the sky, the stars spread out like diamonds. In the city, the stars had never looked so bright, or so close.

“So those are the stars,” Arnie said.

“Those are more than stars,” said Ms. Williston. “They are constellations. A constellation is a group of stars.” Ms. Williston pointed to one group. “What do those stars remind you of?” she asked Arnie.

“They look like a dog,” Arnie answered.

“That’s right,” said Ms. Williston. “That constellation is called Canis Major. There are all sorts of other constellations too.”
Then Ms. Williston brought out a telescope. She let everyone look through it to see the stars up close.

“Wow! They’re beautiful,” gushed Melba. “I feel like I could reach out and touch one!”

“Well, even if they weren’t millions of miles away, you would have trouble doing that, my dear,” explained Ms. Williston. “You see, stars are made of gases that burn at a very high temperature. They’re much too hot to touch or even get near.”

Next, Ms. Williston turned to Arnie. “There is one star that’s much closer to us than any other. Do you know which one that is?”

Arnie grinned. “That’s easy. It’s the sun.”

As the evening wore on, Ms. Williston pointed out many different constellations, such as the Big Dipper that looks like a ladle. And Ms. Williston let everyone look at the moon’s craters through the telescope.

Finally, it was time for Arnie’s family to go home. They thanked Ms. Williston and Thomas for a wonderful evening and said goodbye.

Arnie was walking down the driveway when he heard Thomas running after him. “Arnie!” Thomas shouted. “My aunt said you can come over to swim in our pond tomorrow if you want!”

Arnie smiled. Stargazing, swimming, and a new friend . . . the spooky, old house had turned out to be full of surprises. Maybe Benton wouldn’t be so boring after all!
Telescopes help people take a closer look at distant objects. Telescopes were invented in the 1600s. Two types of telescopes are refractors and reflectors.

One type of telescope uses two lenses. The lenses are placed inside a long tube. The lenses work together to magnify objects. This telescope is called a refractor.

Another type of telescope uses mirrors to capture light. This light is used to magnify objects through a lens. This type of telescope is called a reflector.

1. Did the illustrations help you better understand stars and constellations? Why or why not? Use a chart like the one below to write your answers.

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2. How did Arnie feel about Benton at the beginning of the story? How did Arnie’s feelings change by the end of the story?

3. In the story, Ms. Williston and Thomas live in a gigantic house. Use a dictionary to find three synonyms for *gigantic*.

4. Do you think Arnie will enjoy living in Benton? Why or why not?