

# *Reading With Eric Walters*

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## *Stars*

**Theme:** Accepting responsibility; team work; gaining self esteem.

### **Synopsis of the Novel:**

Joseph was stealing cars for a mobster, and has an accident when driving one. While he is recovering in hospital he meets Maureen, a nurse, who manages to break through Joseph's uncaring attitude. When he recovers he is sent to a special camp where with several other boys and two counsellors. The boys are taken to the north where they learn a variety of survival skills, but the focus of the camp is learning team work.

Joseph is determined to escape and thinks that the whole idea is a waste of time for him. However, the counsellors see his potential and leadership skills. There is some friction among the boys, but Joseph protects himself and another weaker boy by threatening the bullies with his mobster friends.

Joseph has little difficulty in completing the various tasks, with the exception of a descending down a steep cliff on a cable, because he is afraid of heights. None of the boys discuss why they were in detention, but Joseph learns that Kevin is there because he tried to kill his step-father when he was beating his mother. Joseph tells Kevin of his plans to escape and says he will take him, too.

A final test is to spend some time alone in the bush. Joseph is the last one to be dropped off, and the counselors tell him that they are going to recommend that the judge send him to a home that they run, as they feel he will benefit from that. They tell him that he has never had a real home, and they feel he was always seeking that when he was running away.

During the night Gord is injured in a bear attack and Stan has to take him to seek medical help. Consequently, Joseph will have to contact the other boys and wait for Stan to return. Joe thinks he will do this, then run away. However, he does gather the boys together, and they wait for Stan to return.

Gord recovers from the attack, and Joseph goes to the home where he is happy; for the first time in his life he has security. He eventually gives Gord the key to a safety deposit box where he has hidden the money he earned stealing cars. Gord says it will be saved for his future education.

## Activities for *Stars*

### Creative Writing

1. Joe says,  
    *“No man is an island unto himself.”*  
What does this quotation mean?  
Write a short story using this quotation as the theme for the story.
2. Gord tells Joe that all animals have two basic instincts: the instinct for survival and self preservation, and the instinct of the female to protect her young.  
Do you agree or disagree with this statement?  
Write two or three paragraphs giving your opinion with examples to support your argument.

### Research

1. Joe’s father is an alcoholic.  
What is an alcoholic?  
Research this topic and write a report giving information on its symptoms, effects and treatment.
2. The six boys are all young offenders who have broken the law and have been kept in various detention centres.  
Use the available resources to research how young offenders are treated where you live.  
Do you consider the laws regarding the treatment of young offenders just and fair?  
Would you make any changes to the current Act? Why?  
Present your findings in the form of a report.

### Elements of the Novel

1. Characterization  
Create a chart to show the physical and emotional characteristics of the six boys participating in the STARS programme.
2. Point of View  
Joe is the narrator of the novel, and all events are seen through his eyes.  
Choose one event and retell it from the point of view of one of the other characters.

### Art

1. On a large sheet of paper, illustrate your favourite part of the novel.  
You can use any medium: paint, coloured pencils, pastel, cut and paste with coloured paper, etc.

### **Creative Writing # 5**

Write one event from your novel in the form of a script for a radio play.

Add directions to tell your characters how to deliver the words.

You may add directions for sound effects if necessary.

Work with a group of friends to record your script.

Play it for the class or a group of friends.

Ask for their evaluation.

### **Creative Writing # 6**

Write a narrative poem about some event from your novel.

Narrative poems tell a story, and are usually written in four line verses.

The rhyming pattern can be A B A B or A A B B or A B C B

Once you have chosen a rhyming pattern you must use the same one throughout the poem.

Most narrative poems have at least ten verses.

Give your poem a title.

## **Integrated Activities # 2**

We can learn many facts when reading novels.

Authors do a great deal of research to be sure their novels are accurate.

Make a list of facts that you learned from reading this novel.

## **Integrated Activities # 3**

Based on the descriptions given, make a map of the area where the main part of the story takes place.

You may use symbols or pictures to mark significant places on the map.

Label your map in pencil and print. the names of places.

Create a legend if you use symbols on your map.

Give the map a title.