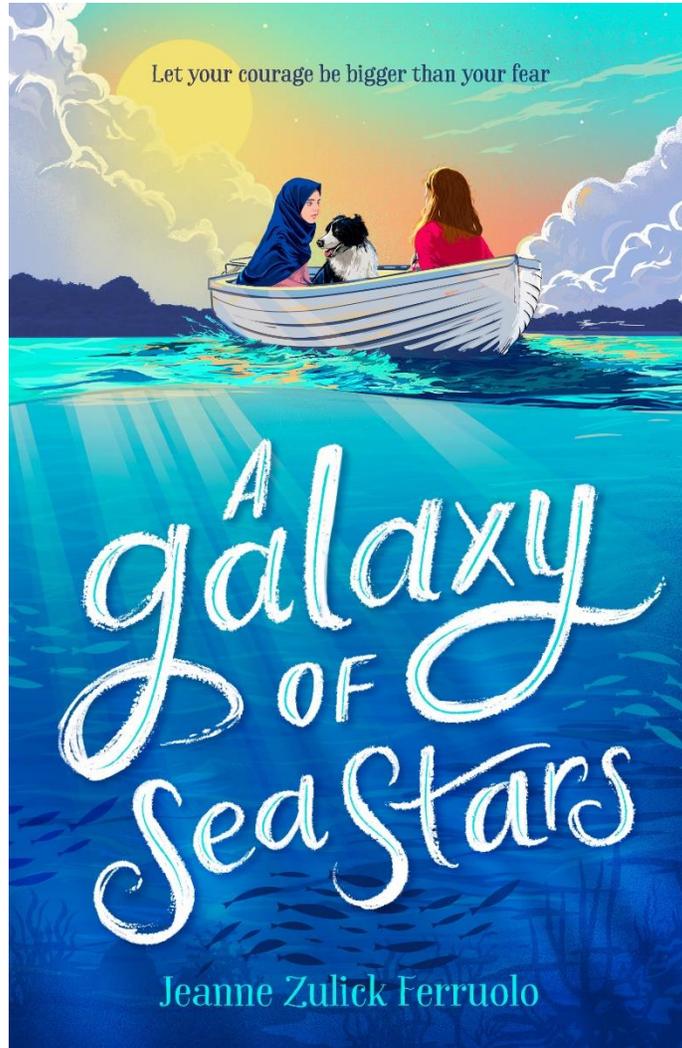


A GALAXY OF SEA STARS: AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

# A Galaxy of Sea Stars



**A middle grade novel by Jeanne Zulick Ferruolo**

*Farrar Straus Giroux/Macmillan*

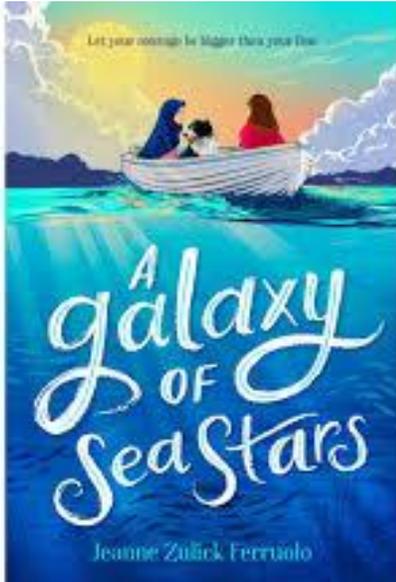
## A GALAXY OF SEA STARS: AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

### A GALAXY OF SEA STARS

By Jeanne Zulick Ferruolo

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**Sometimes, the truth isn't easy to see.**

**Sometimes, you have to look below the surface to find it.**

Eleven-year-old Izzy feels as though her whole world is shifting and she doesn't like it. She wants her dad to act like he did before he was deployed to Afghanistan. She wants her mom to live with them at the marina, where they've moved to, instead of spending all her time on Block Island. Most of all, she wants Piper, Zelda, and herself—the Sea Stars—to stay best friends as they start sixth grade at a new school.

Everything changes when Izzy's father invites his former interpreter's family, including eleven-year-old Sitara to move into the marina's upstairs apartment. Izzy doesn't know what to make of Sitara, with her hijab and refusal to eat cafeteria food, and her presence disrupts the Sea Stars. But in Sitara, Izzy finds someone brave, someone daring, someone who isn't as afraid as Izzy to use her voice and speak up for herself. As Izzy and Sitara grow closer, Izzy must make a choice: stay in her comfort zone and risk betraying her new friend, or speak up and lose the Sea Stars forever.

A Galaxy of Sea Stars is a heartwarming story about family, loyalty, and the hard choices we make in the name of friendship.

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

### Dealing with Change

Izzy and Sitara have both had to move in the story and are both beginning sixth grade at a new school. Have you had to move to a new town, home, school, or even just a new classroom where you didn't know everyone? How did you feel before that change took place? How did you feel after you had been there a while? What would have made that transition easier for you? Do you know other kids who are dealing with change? What can you do to make it easier for them?

### Family

What does family mean to you? How are Izzy's and Sitara's families different? How are they the same? In what ways do Sitara's parents treat Izzy as if she were their daughter? What does this say about the Haidarys and the idea of what it means to be a family?

### Friendship

Friendships play a big role in Izzy's story. At the beginning she wants more than anything to stay best friends with Zelda and Piper—the Sea Stars. Why do you think their friendship is so important to her? Do you think she makes poor choices just so she can stay friends with them? What does this say about their friendship? Have you ever felt like Izzy?

### Self-Identity

Describe Izzy at the beginning of the story. How does she change? How does Sitara inspire this change? Do you like Izzy better at the beginning of the story or the end of the story? Why?

### Fear

Izzy is afraid of a lot of things – losing the Sea Stars, saying the wrong thing, being judged, losing her mom, and being alone...just to name a few. What causes these fears? How does fear stand in Izzy's way of being the person she wants to be? What is an example in the story of Izzy beginning to confront her fears? Why does she do this? How does this change her as a person? Do you think it makes her a better friend or a worse friend? What is something you are afraid of? What might happen if you faced this fear?

### Bullying

There are many instances of bullying in A GALAXY OF SEA STARS. Some are subtle (the bully is saying or doing something in a sneaky way and pretending to be a friend when they are really trying to hurt and intimidate) and some are overt (the bully is saying or doing something in a very public way that is clearly intended to hurt and intimidate). What is an example of subtle bullying in the story or in real life? What is an example of overt bullying in the story or in real life? What can you do to stop this kind of behavior?

### Immigration and Refugees:

Why do people leave their homes and families to come to the United States as refugees? Did you or anyone you know ever live in another country? What was it like for you or them coming to America? What can we all do to help make this big transition easier for immigrants and refugees?

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### AUTHOR'S CRAFT – THE USE OF SYMBOLS AND MOTIFS

In literature, symbols can be images or things that stand for bigger ideas. Authors often use symbols to make their story about more than the events it describes. However, authors don't usually make these symbols obvious --- so it can take some investigation to figure out what a symbol might stand for or how to interpret them.

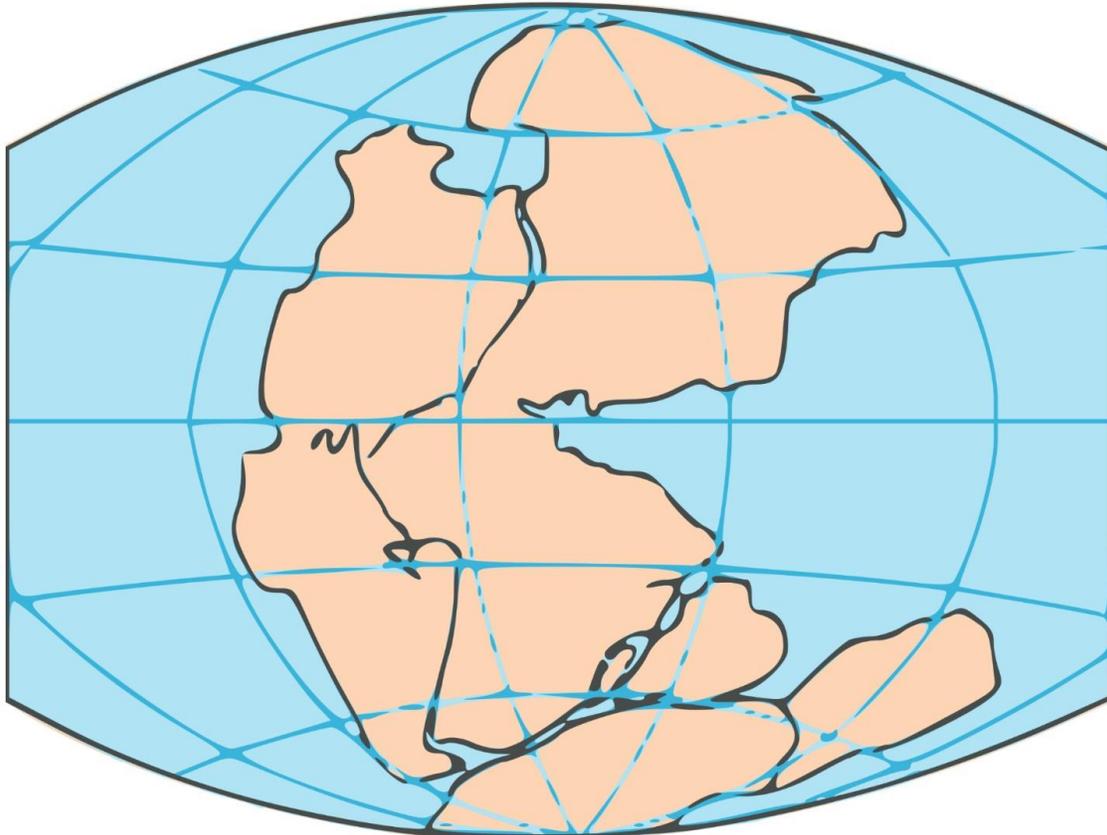
Some symbols in A GALAXY OF SEA STARS include the pond that Izzy is mapping, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Breachway. Why do you think the author included these symbols and what do you think they stand for?

Another symbol in the story is the concept of Pangaea – the great continent from which all continents came from. Pangaea reminds us that we are all really from the same place. Why do you think the author included Pangaea in this story?



## PANGAEA ACTIVITY

**Cut out this map of Pangaea and put back together. This activity comes from:**  
[Hands-On Geography Activity: Make a Pangaea Puzzle \(tinasdynamichomeschoolplus.com\)](https://www.tinasdynamichomeschoolplus.com/)



### Other Pangaea resources:

[Pangea Activity & Worksheets | Teachers Pay Teachers](#)

[Pangea Lesson for Kids - Video & Lesson Transcript | Study.com](#)

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### MORE ACTIVITIES

In A GALAXY OF SEA STARS, mapping is important for Izzy because it becomes a way for her to make “something stand still” and stop changing. Can you make a map of your street, school or neighborhood? Does having a map make you feel differently about a place? Does it give you a different perspective? How do maps help people?

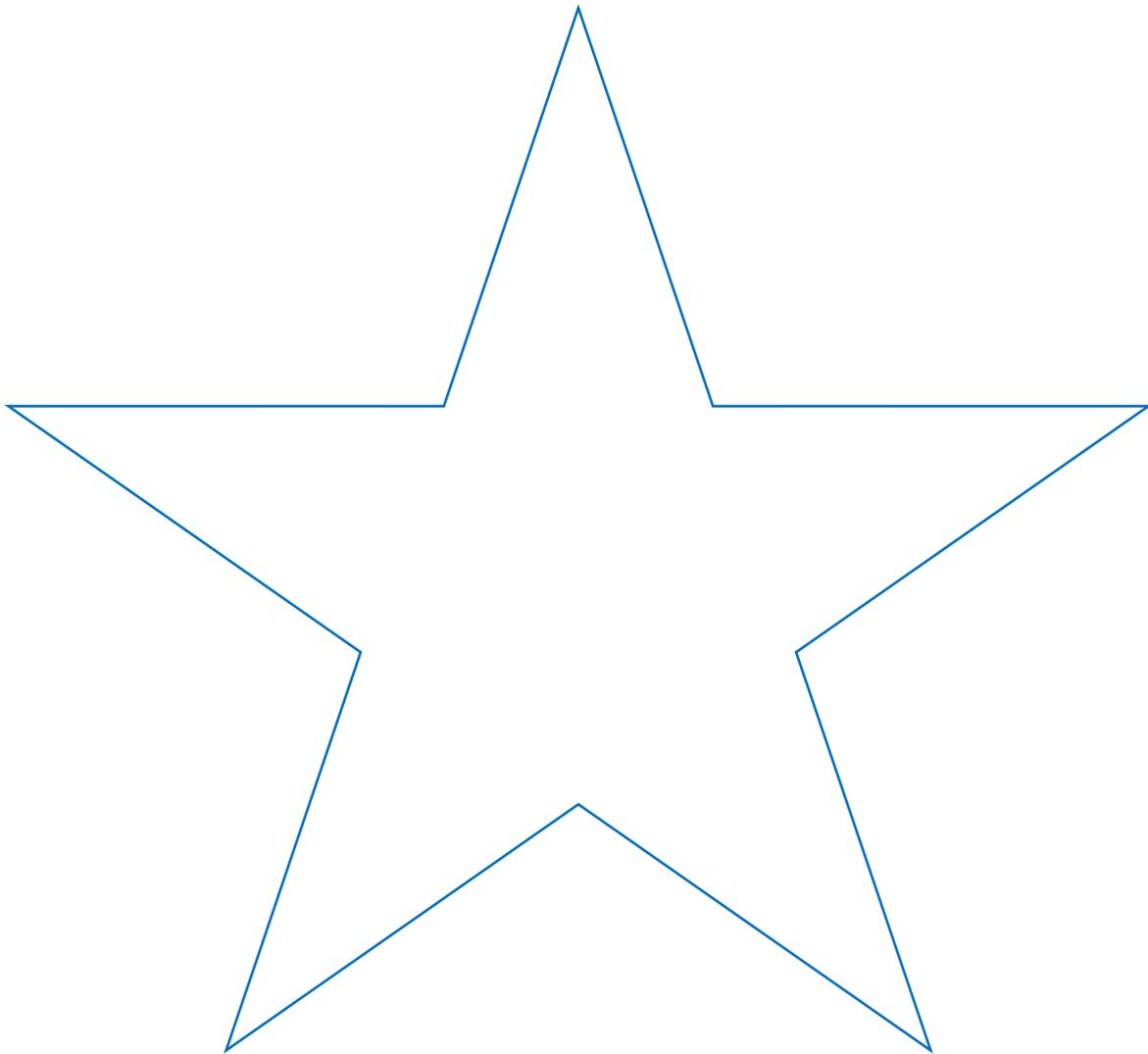
When they are on the roof of the marina, Sitara explains to Izzy how she finds comfort in the night sky. Since she’s able to find the same stars in Afghanistan that she does in Rhode Island, looking into the night sky makes her feel connected to her home. At the same time, the night sky is always changing. The stars you see in the summer are not the same stars you see in the winter. What constellations do you see right now? Check them again in other seasons – how have they changed?

## EXPAND YOUR GALAXY WORKSHEET!

In a *Galaxy of Sea Stars*, Izzy realizes that in meeting new friends she will never again limit herself to anything smaller than a galaxy. "Not a posse or flock or gaggle or pack. Not a swarm or herd or gang. From now on, only a galaxy will be big enough for her." (p. 316).

This activity is all about how we can each increase our "galaxy" of friends. Copy this page onto heavy stock and cut out the star. Decorate it as you see fit. Maybe include an inspirational word or a kind message? You can even add a string so that it can be hung when completed.

Then, in a random act of kindness, give your beautiful star to someone you don't know that well. Maybe even someone you don't know at all! When you do it...SMILE 😊...and let them know that you hope they are having a great day. Chances are that if they weren't before...they will be now!



## LEARN PASHTO

There are many languages spoken in Afghanistan, however Pashto and Dari (Afghan Persian/Farsi) are the official languages of Afghanistan. In A GALAXY OF SEA STARS, although Sitara speaks several languages, her first language is Pashto. Pashto uses a modified form of the Perso-Arabic alphabet which consists of 46 letters and 4 diacritic marks.

چ	ج	ث	ټ	ت	پ	ب	ا
che	jeem	sey	ttey	tey	pey	bey	alef
ر	ذ	ډ	د	خ	ح	څ	ځ
rey	zaal	ddaal	daal	khey	halwa he	tsey	dzey
ص	ښ	ش	س	ږ	ژ	ز	ړ
saad	kheen	sheen	seen	ge	zhe	ze	rrey
ک	ق	ف	غ	ع	ظ	ط	ض
kaaf	qaaf	fe	ghayn	ayn	zoey	toey	zaad
	ه	و	ن	ن	م	ل	ګ
	ger de he	wow	nnoon	noon	meem	laam	gaaf
			ئ	ی	ې	ي	ی
			faaleeya ye (verbal ye)	tanis ye (fem. ye)	naarena ye (soft ye)	sakhta ye (strong ye)	ye

Can you write letters in Pashto?

For more information, see: <https://www.afghan-web.com/languages/>

**VOCABULARY – PASHTO WORDS FROM THE STORY**

<b><u>ENGLISH</u></b>	<b><u>PASHTO</u></b>	<b><u>OTHER LANGUAGE?</u></b>
Beautiful	khaista	
Couch/cushions	toshak	
Mother	Mor	
Dad	Baba	
Celebration	melmastiyâ	
Cloth spread to eat	dëstarkhan	
Fish	mâhi	
Bird	mërghëy	
Come in	dënana râsha	
Please	lutfan	
Thank you	manana	

**MORE READING**

*The Story of My Life, An Afghan Girl on the Other Side of the Sky*, by Farah Ahmedi with Tamim Ansary, Simon & Schuster, 2005.

*The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family*, by Ibtihaj Muhammad, Little Brown Books for Young Readers, 2019.

*The Breadwinner Series: The Breadwinner, Parvana's Journey, Mud City, My Name is Parvana*, by Deborah Ellis, Groundwood Books, 2001.

*Soundings, The Story of the Remarkable Woman Who Mapped the Ocean Floor*, by Hali Felt, Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 2012.

*Solving the Puzzle Under the Sea, Marie Tharp Maps the Ocean Floor*, by Robert Burleigh, Illustrated by Raul Colon, Simon and Schuster, 2016.

*Ocean Speaks: How Marie Tharp Revealed the Ocean's Biggest Secret*, by Jess Keating, Illustrated by Katie Hickey, Penguin Random House, 2020.