

Substitute Guide: Central Idea and Evidence Across Two Texts

Grade: 6 **Subject:** Reading / Language Arts **Time:** ~45 min core + ~15 min extension RLA

Learning goal (plain language)

Students read **two short informational texts** about the same topic (light pollution) and figure out the **central idea** of each, make an **inference**, find the sentence that **best supports** a claim, and **compare** what the two texts agree on and how they differ. They finish by writing a short **evidence-based paragraph** that states a shared central idea and supports it with one piece of evidence from **each** text. **You do not need an English or reading background to run this.** Everything students need — including both full texts — is printed in their packet, and every question can be answered directly from those texts.

Standards alignment

Framework: 19 TAC §110.22 (Grade 6 English Language Arts and Reading).

- **Central idea:** identify and explain the central idea of an informational text and how details support it.
- **Inference:** make inferences supported by textual evidence.
- **Text evidence:** use specific evidence from the text to support responses and compare ideas across two texts.

Provisional — pending educator verification against the current official TAC source.

(Standards are paraphrased here, not quoted. Please confirm codes and wording against your official source.)

Setup Before class (5 min)

- Count and hand out one **student packet** per student.
- Confirm each student has a **pencil**. No devices or other materials are needed.
- Write the date on the board and remind students to fill in the name line.
- Keep the **answer key** with you — it is a separate file and is **not** in the student packet.

Materials What's needed

- Printed student packet (4–6 pages) per student.
- Pencil per student.
- This guide and the separate answer key (teacher only).
- No technology, no calculator, no special materials.

Timing Suggested pacing (~45–60 min)

Segment	Time	What students do
Start — Notice & Predict	5 min	Q1–Q2 warm-up

Segment	Time	What students do
Build — Read two texts	10 min	Read Text A and Text B, word bank; Q3 retrieval
Apply — Read closely	20 min	Q4–Q8 (central idea ×2, inference, evidence, compare)
Explain — Evidence paragraph	5–10 min	Q9 shared central idea + one piece of evidence from each text
Close — ACE	5 min	Articulate / Connect / Extend
Continue — early finishers	optional ~15 min	Write a headline and a two-sentence caption

Script Read aloud to start

"Today's assignment is a reading and writing activity called *Central Idea and Evidence Across Two Texts*. You will work by yourself with just a pencil — no computers. You will read **two short texts** about the same topic, light pollution. Both texts have numbered paragraphs so you can point to where you found your answers. Every question can be answered from the texts, so if you're unsure, go back and reread. Answer the questions in order; if one is tricky, skip it and come back. Write in complete sentences where it asks you to explain. You may quietly read the texts aloud to yourself. Put your name, class period, and date at the top now. You have about 45 minutes; raise your hand if you need a word read to you or explained."

Support When students ask for help

- **You may read any part aloud** — either text or any question — to a student or the class.
- If they are stuck, point them to the **paragraph numbers** [1]–[3] in each text; every answer is in the texts.
- Remind them a **central idea** is a full sentence about the topic (the main point), not a single topic word — the packet gives an example.
- For the compare item (Q8) and Q9, remind them to answer **only from the texts**, not from what they already know.
- Encourage the printed **sentence stems** and the **word bank** for Q9 and ACE.
- Do **not** give answers; prompt with "Which paragraph shows that?" or "What do both texts say about turning lights off?"
- It is fine if a student cannot finish the optional early-finisher task.

Access Accommodations & language support

- **Read-aloud** of either text or any question is allowed for all students.
- Point students to the **sentence stems** and the **word bank** (definitions provided).
- Extended time is fine; the core can stop after Q9 if time runs short.
- Students may answer in phrases if writing full sentences is a barrier, as long as the idea is clear.
- The packet is grayscale-safe — it prints and reads clearly in black and white.

Tools Allowed & not allowed

Allowed: pencil, the printed packet, quiet self-read-aloud. **Not needed / not allowed:** phones, computers, outside sources (everything is in the two texts).

Collect at the end: Collect every packet, whether finished or not, with names on them. Stack them for the teacher. Note on a sticky how far most students got and any questions that caused confusion.

Answer key: The **answer key is a separate file** (answerkey.html) and is for the teacher only. Please do not hand it to students.

Teacher follow-up (for the returning teacher)

Watch for the common mix-ups of *topic* vs. *central idea* (writing "light pollution" instead of a full sentence stating the main point) and *using only one text* (Q9 asks for evidence from **both** Text A and Text B). A quick next-day mini-lesson turning topic words into central-idea sentences would reinforce this well. The compare item (Q8) and the evidence item (Q7) quickly show who can locate and use text evidence across two sources; the Q9 paragraphs show who can state a defensible central idea and support it from both texts.

G06_RLA_CentralIdea_01 — Central Idea and Evidence Across Two Texts Substitute Guide

Central Idea and Evidence Across Two Texts

Grade: 6 **Subject:** Reading / Language Arts **Time:** ~45 min core + ~15 min extension **Work mode:** Independent · pencil only RLA

Start Here

This is a **reading and writing task**. You will read **two short informational texts** about the same topic, then answer questions and write a short response using a pencil. You do **not** need a computer or any device. Work by yourself and do your best thinking. Every question about the texts can be answered **from the texts themselves** — the answers are on the page. Both texts have their paragraphs numbered **[1], [2], [3]**... so you can point to exactly where you found something. Write in complete sentences where you are asked to explain. If a question is hard, skip it, keep going, and come back. Reading the texts aloud quietly to yourself is allowed and encouraged.

Start Notice & Predict 5 min

Look only at the two titles below before you read: "The Return of the Night Sky" and "Cities That Turned Off the Lights."

1From the **two titles alone**, write **one thing you notice** and **one thing you predict** both texts might be about.

2The **central idea** of a text is the most important point the writer wants you to understand about the topic — not just the topic word itself. In your own words, what is the difference between a **topic** (like "dogs") and a **central idea** (like "dogs can be trained to help people")?

Build Read Two Texts 10 min

Words to know (from the texts)

artificial

made by people, not natural.

glare

strong, harsh light that is hard to look at.

migrate

to travel from one place to another, often with the seasons.

ordinance

a local law or rule made by a city or town.

shield

a cover that blocks or aims light in one direction.

Text A: "The Return of the Night Sky" — an original informational text

[1] On a clear night far from any city, you can see thousands of stars. Closer to town, most of those stars disappear. The reason is *light pollution* — the extra brightness that fills the sky when *artificial* lights from streets, signs, and buildings shine upward. Scientists say the glow now hides the stars from most people who live in or near cities.

[2] Light pollution is not only a problem for stargazers. Many animals depend on natural darkness. Baby sea turtles hatch at night and crawl toward the brightest light, which used to be the moon reflecting on the ocean. Near lit-up beaches, they crawl the wrong way and never reach the water. Birds that *migrate* at night can become confused by bright city lights and crash into buildings.

[3] The good news is that this kind of pollution is one of the easiest to fix. Unlike smoke in the air or trash in a river, extra light disappears the instant a bulb is switched off or pointed downward. A simple *shield* on a streetlight can send light to the ground, where it is needed, instead of up into the sky. When people aim lights carefully, the stars begin to return — sometimes within a single night.

Text B: "Cities That Turned Off the Lights" — an original informational text

[1] Some communities have decided to take action against light pollution. In 2001, the town of Flagstaff, Arizona, passed one of the first "dark sky" *ordinances* in the world. The rules limit how bright outdoor lights can be and require many lights to point downward. Today Flagstaff is known as a place where visitors can still see the Milky Way stretch across the sky.

[2] Cutting light does more than reveal stars. A light that shines sideways into your eyes creates *glare*, which can actually make it harder to see at night. Lights that are shielded and aimed down light the sidewalk without blinding drivers. Cities that switched to these lights report that streets feel safer and easier to see, not darker.

[3] There is another reason cities act: money. A light pointed at the sky wastes the electricity used to make it. When a town replaces old fixtures with shielded, lower-power lights, it can cut its energy bill by a large amount each year. For many city leaders, saving money is the argument that finally turns off the extra lights — and gives the night sky back at the same time.

3Retrieval. According to **Text A, paragraph [1]**, what causes light pollution? Answer using details from the text.

Apply Read Closely 20 min

Every answer in this section is in one or both texts. Point to the paragraph in your head before you write.

4Central idea — Text A. What is the **central idea** of Text A? Write it as a full sentence (not just a topic word), and name one paragraph that helped you decide.

5Central idea — Text B. What is the **central idea** of Text B? Write it as a full sentence, and name one paragraph that helped you decide.

6Inference. In **Text B, paragraph [3]**, the writer says money "is the argument that finally turns off the extra lights." What can you **infer** about why some city leaders act on saving money more than on saving the stars? Explain your thinking.

7Text evidence. Which sentence **best** supports the idea that light pollution is easier to fix than other kinds of pollution? Fill in the circle for ONE choice.

- "On a clear night far from any city, you can see thousands of stars." (Text A [1])
- "Extra light disappears the instant a bulb is switched off or pointed downward." (Text A [3])
- "Birds that migrate at night can become confused by bright city lights." (Text A [2])
- "Today Flagstaff is known as a place where visitors can still see the Milky Way." (Text B [1])

7b. In one sentence, explain why the sentence you chose supports that idea.

8Compare the two texts. Use the chart to compare. Answer **only from the texts** and name a paragraph for each.

What both texts AGREE on

One idea both Text A and Text B share (with a paragraph from each):

How the two texts are DIFFERENT

One thing each text focuses on that the other does not (name the text and paragraph):

Explain Write an Evidence-Based Paragraph 5–10 min

Question 9. Both texts share a **central idea** about light pollution. Write **one sentence stating that shared central idea**, then support it with **one piece of evidence from Text A AND one piece of evidence from Text B** (name the paragraph for each), and explain how your evidence supports the idea. Use the frame below.

Sentence stems you may use: "A central idea shared by both texts is..." · "Evidence from Text A is... (paragraph ____)." · "Evidence from Text B is... (paragraph ____)." · "This evidence supports the central idea because..."

Claim (the shared central idea)

Evidence (one from Text A, one from Text B, with paragraph #)

Reasoning (how the evidence supports the idea)

Close ACE Wrap-Up 5 min

Articulate

Say the **shared central idea** of the two texts in your **own words**, in one sentence, as if telling a friend the main point.

Connect

Point to **one sentence** in either text (name the text and paragraph) that shows that central idea most clearly.

Extend

Name **one thing your school or town could do** about light pollution, based on what you read.

Continue Early Finisher optional · ~15 min

If you finish early (no new materials needed):

Write a headline and a caption. On the back of this page, write a **newspaper headline** (one line) that captures the shared central idea of both texts. Then write a **two-sentence caption** that uses one detail from Text A and one detail from Text B. Underline the two details you borrowed and label each with its text and paragraph number.

Turn in: Hand in this whole packet with your name, class period, and date filled in. Make sure questions 1–9 and the ACE box are answered. The early-finisher headline is optional but turn it in too if you did it.

G06_RLA_CentralIdea_01 — Central Idea and Evidence Across Two Texts Student Packet



TEACHER ANSWER KEY FOLLOWS

Do not copy the pages after this divider for students.

Answer Key: Central Idea and Evidence Across Two Texts

Grade: 6 **Subject:** Reading / Language Arts **For teacher use only** RLA

How to use this key

Answers are grouped by section and question number. Many items are open-ended; accept any response that shows correct reasoning and cites the texts, even if the wording differs. Notes flag where more than one answer is defensible and list common misconceptions to watch for. Paragraph numbers below refer to the bracketed markers [1]–[3] in **Text A** ("The Return of the Night Sky") and **Text B** ("Cities That Turned Off the Lights"). Estimated grading time: ~5–7 min per packet.

Start Notice & Predict grade for effort · ~2 min

1 Notice / predict from the two titles.

Full credit for any reasonable notice + prediction. Examples — Notice: "both titles are about the night sky / lights / stars." Predict: "both texts are about why we lose the stars and how to get them back," or "cities are turning off lights to see stars again." Any on-topic prediction is acceptable; no single answer is required.

2 Topic vs. central idea, in own words.

Accept any answer showing that a **topic** is what the text is about (a word or short phrase, e.g., "light pollution"), while a **central idea** is the main point the writer makes about that topic, stated as a full sentence (e.g., "light pollution harms animals but is easy to fix"). Effort credit if the idea is close even if wording is rough.

Build Read Two Texts ~1 min

3 Retrieval — cause of light pollution (Text A [1]).

From **Text A, paragraph [1]**: light pollution is the extra brightness that fills the sky when **artificial lights** from streets, signs, and buildings **shine upward**. **Ideal:** man-made lights pointing up into the sky. Accept any answer naming artificial/city lights aimed upward.

Apply Read Closely ~2 min

4 Central idea — Text A (full sentence + paragraph).

A defensible central idea for Text A: "**Light pollution hides the stars and harms wildlife, but it is one of the easiest kinds of pollution to fix.**" Accept variations that capture the harm-and-easy-fix combination, or a narrower but accurate main point (e.g., "Light pollution is a problem we can undo by aiming lights down"). Supporting paragraph most often [3] (the fix) or [2] (the harm). Reject a bare topic word ("light pollution") or a single supporting detail treated as the whole idea.

5 Central idea — Text B (full sentence + paragraph).

A defensible central idea for Text B: "**Cities are passing rules to cut light pollution because doing so brings back the stars, improves nighttime safety, and saves money.**" Accept variations that capture that communities act against light pollution and gain multiple benefits. Supporting paragraph [1] (ordinances), [2] (safety), or [3] (money). Reject a bare topic word or a single detail as the whole idea.

6 Inference — why money persuades leaders (Text B [3]).

Reasonable inferences: city leaders are responsible for budgets, so a benefit that **saves money** is easier to justify than one that is mainly about beauty/stars; the money argument convinces even people who don't care about stargazing; saving on energy bills is a concrete, practical result that voters and officials value. **Ideal:** money is a practical reason that appeals to more decision-makers, so it "finally" tips the decision. This is an inference because the text does not state the reason outright. Accept any logical inference tied to the text.

7 Text evidence — best support that light pollution is easy to fix.

7a — B. "Extra light disappears the instant a bulb is switched off or pointed downward." (Text A [3]) — this directly shows the fix is fast and simple.

Why the others are wrong: **A** describes a starry sky, not a fix; **C** describes harm to birds, not ease of fixing; **D** describes a result in one city but not *why* the problem is easy to fix. Only **B** states how quickly the light can be removed.

7b: Accept any sentence explaining that B shows the problem ends the moment a light is turned off or aimed down, so it is easy/fast to fix.

8 Compare the two texts (agree / differ).

Agree (accept any shared idea with a paragraph from each): both texts agree that light pollution **can be reduced by aiming lights downward / turning them off** — Text A [3] ("pointed downward," shields) and Text B [1]–[2] (ordinances requiring lights to point down). Both also treat light pollution as a real, solvable problem.

Differ (accept any accurate contrast): Text A focuses on the **effects on nature/wildlife** (sea turtles, migrating birds — [2]) and on how easy the fix is; Text B focuses on **what communities do about it** and the added benefits of **safety** ([2]) and **saving money** ([3]). Award full credit for one valid agreement and one valid difference, each with a text + paragraph cited.

Explain Evidence-Based Paragraph (Q9) ~1–2 min

9 State a shared central idea; support with evidence from BOTH texts.

Acceptable shared central-idea statements (any one, or similar, stated as a full sentence):

- "Light pollution is a real problem, but people can reduce it by aiming lights down or turning them off."
- "Communities can bring back the night sky by changing how they use outdoor lights."
- "Cutting light pollution helps both the sky and the people below it."

Evidence locations — must include ONE from Text A and ONE from Text B:

- **Text A** [3] — "extra light disappears the instant a bulb is switched off or pointed downward"; or [2] harm to turtles/birds; or [1] artificial light causing the glow.
- **Text B** [1] — Flagstaff's dark-sky ordinance requiring lights to point down; or [2] shielded lights improving safety; or [3] shielded lights saving money.

Reasoning should connect both pieces of evidence to the shared central idea (e.g., both texts show that changing how lights are aimed reduces the problem and brings benefits). **Full credit** requires a defensible shared central-idea sentence + one correctly located piece of evidence from **each** text + reasoning that links them. Deduct if evidence comes from only one text (see misconceptions).

Evidence-paragraph scoring rubric (3 points)

Score	Central idea (claim)	Text evidence	Reasoning
3	Clear, defensible shared central idea stated as a full sentence (not a topic word).	One accurate, relevant piece from Text A and one from Text B, each tied to the correct paragraph.	Clearly explains how the evidence from both texts supports the central idea.
2	Central idea present but partly a topic or slightly off.	Evidence from both texts but with a minor error/vague location, OR two solid pieces from only one text.	Some correct linkage but incomplete.
1	Only a topic word, or a summary of one text instead of a shared central idea.	Evidence weak, off-topic, from only one text, or not from the texts.	Little or flawed reasoning; evidence not connected to the idea.
0	No central idea / incorrect.	No evidence.	No reasoning.

Close ACE ~1 min

ACE Articulate / Connect / Extend.

Articulate: accept any accurate one-sentence shared central idea in the student's own words (see Q9 list).

Connect: the cited sentence must actually match the stated central idea (e.g., Text A [3] "pointed downward," or Text B [1] the dark-sky ordinance).

Extend: any reasonable text-based action for a school or town (e.g., add shields to point streetlights/parking-lot lights down, use lower-power bulbs, turn off outdoor lights when not needed, pass a dark-sky rule). More than one answer is defensible.

Watch Common misconceptions

- **Topic vs. central idea.** A topic is a word or phrase ("light pollution," "stars"). A central idea is a full sentence that says the main *point* about that topic. Push students from "light pollution" to "Light pollution is harmful but easy to fix."
- **Using only one text (Q9).** Q9 and the compare item require evidence from **both** Text A and Text B. A response supported only from one text cannot earn full credit — flag it and prompt "What does the other text add?"
- **Detail mistaken for central idea.** A single supporting fact (e.g., "sea turtles crawl the wrong way") is evidence, not the central idea itself.
- **Summary vs. central idea.** Retelling everything a text says is a summary; the central idea is the one main point the details add up to.
- **Answering from prior knowledge instead of the text.** The compare item (Q8) and Q9 must be answerable from the printed texts only; watch for outside facts about stars or electricity not found in the passages.

Teacher follow-up based on likely errors

If many students write topic words or summarize a single text on Q9, run a 5-minute mini-lesson turning topics into central-idea sentences ("light pollution" → "Light pollution harms nature but is easy to reduce"). If Q9 or Q8 reveals students leaning on one text, model pairing one piece of evidence from Text A with one from Text B. The compare chart (Q8) and the evidence item (Q7) are fast formative checks of who can locate and cite text evidence by text and paragraph.