

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.