

The Starlit Observatory: A Reading Comprehension Challenge

Learning objective: To retrieve and infer information from a narrative text, and to justify responses using evidence from the passage.

Read the story below carefully. Think about the descriptive language used and how the characters interact. Answer the questions in full sentences, using evidence from the text where possible.

Nova the owl perched atop the highest branch of the Great Oak, her amber eyes scanning the velvet canvas of the night sky. Beside her, Leo the lion sat patiently, his golden mane catching the faint, silvery glow of the moon. They were preparing for the annual Stargazers' Gala. Nova adjusted her brass telescope, its polished surface reflecting the distant, twinkling light of the stars. 'Look closely, Leo,' Nova whispered, her voice barely a rustle against the quiet breeze. 'The constellation of the Great Bear is shifting position. It is a reminder that the universe is in constant motion.' Leo nodded, his expression thoughtful. He opened his leather-bound journal and began to compose a poem about the stillness of the woods compared to the vast, swirling galaxies above. Together, they watched as the night deepened, finding beauty in the silent, luminous dance of the cosmos.

Word bank: astronomy · constellation · luminous · telescope · perspective · nocturnal

1. Identify two pieces of evidence from the text that suggest Nova is well-prepared for her evening of stargazing. (2 marks)

2. Explain why the author describes the sky as a 'velvet canvas'. What does this tell us about the appearance of the night sky? (2 marks)

3. Compare and contrast how Nova and Leo engage with the night sky. How are their methods of observation different? (3 marks)

4. Justify why the author chose to set this scene in the Great Oak at night. How does this setting affect the mood of the story? (2 marks)

5. What might happen if the weather turned cloudy during the Stargazers' Gala? Predict how Nova and Leo might adapt their activity. (2 marks)

Draw: Draw your own version of the night sky as Nova and Leo see it from the Great Oak. Include the constellation of the Great Bear and add your own imaginative celestial patterns in the background.



Extension challenge: Research a real constellation found in the Northern Hemisphere. Write a short, creative myth explaining how that constellation was formed, ensuring you use at least three words from the word bank in your story.