

English 4/5/6 Level

Readiness Assessment Test

Modified for Social Studies and Academic Elective Courses

Thank you for considering this course for your student. Here are some tips for success in the Readiness Assessment process.

* Please do not provide your student this assessment or its contents until you are ready for him or her to complete it in a single sitting with no books, notes, or outside help. It is intended to be a spot check of retained knowledge and skill.
* Make sure you have the latest version of this assessment. Ideally, please download it and have your student complete it within one week prior to enrollment.
* Completed Readiness Assessment materials for a course should be submitted immediately after you enroll in the course.
* **Readiness Assessment materials must be submitted by uploading from the Family Account in the Enrolled Courses view**. Readiness Assessment materials are not accepted through email.
* Visit Live Chat, or email TPS Support ([support@pottersschool.org](mailto:support@pottersschool.org)) for questions or assistance.

**Part I: Academic Background** (to be completed by the parent)

**Age/Grade**

1. How old will your student be as of **October 1st** of the academic enrollment year?
2. What grade will your student be in **at the start of this course**?

**Related Coursework**

1. Please provide the title of the most recently completed (or in-progress) course in the same subject area or related subject area that might help assess academic readiness for this course:

Course Name:

* 1. What is the student’s in-progress or final course grade (numeric grade if available)?
  2. What is the name of the course provider (e.g., online provider, taught at home, local college)?
  3. What is the name of the course curriculum (title and name of publisher of primary text if known)?
  4. Is the student on-track to complete the entire course/curriculum by the end of the current year (if in-progress)?
  5. How is the course evaluated? Is the work self-checked, parent-checked, or evaluated outside the home?
  6. What percentage (if any) of the student’s grade is based on assessments that are completed without access to notes or outside resources and completed in a single sitting without the opportunity for rework to improve the grade?

**Additional Academic Background**

1. Is your student’s first language English or a different language? If different, what is his or her language background? (**Note:** Most TPS classes are designed for native English speakers, but we also provide support at several levels for students whose first language is not English.)
2. Is there additional information that might help us better know your student and understand his or her unique abilities and needs for the best course placement and academic outcome?

**Part II: Readiness Test** (to be completed by the student)

1. Read the nonfiction essay excerpt from Verlyn Klinkenborg’s “Our Vanishing Night” found at the end of this document. Look up any words you do not understand.
2. Take your time to thoughtfully respond to the **Prewriting Questions**.
3. Follow the **prompt** and write a four-paragraph analytical essay in the space provided.
4. Use the **Revision Checklist.**

**Prewriting Questions**

* The questions will help you think about the essay and prepare information for your essay.
* Write your answers in complete sentences.
* Feel free to copy/paste specific examples from the text into your answer.

1. What does Klinkenborg say about human beings and their relationship to light and darkness in paragraph 1? Why might he begin his essay this way? How might you also indicate the importance of the subject in your own introductory paragraph?
2. How does he define “light pollution” in paragraph 2? What does he compare it to? What are some of its immediate effects?
3. What are some examples of diction (word choices) that Klinkenborg uses in paragraph 3 to underscore his point? Find at least three examples.
4. Logos is the rhetorical appeal to logic, often incorporating data, research, and examples to support an argument. Where does Klinkenborg utilize *logos* in paragraphs 4-6? Find at least three examples.
5. What are some of the serious consequences of light pollution described by Klinkenborg in paragraphs 8 and 9? Why do you think the author uses *similes* (comparative statements using “like”/“as”) as well as distinct *imagery* (vivid sensory details) to emphasize these consequences?
6. Pathos is the rhetorical appeal to the emotions where an author powerfully prompts the reader to reflect, normally through vivid or engaging word choice and argumentation. How does Klinkenborg utilize *pathos* in paragraph 10 to successfully conclude his essay and solidify his message? What is he trying to get the reader to feel and understand? How might you also do the same in your own conclusion paragraph?

**Prompt Question:**

**What message** does Verlyn Klinkenborg communicate about the impact of light pollution and **how** does he communicate this message?

* Compose a four-paragraph analytical essay that answers the prompt.
* Craft an introductory paragraph that establishes the importance of the topic and includes a thesis statement. Your thesis should state the author’s message and what he is using to communicate that message. Please underline your thesis statement.
* Each of your two body paragraphs should include a clear claim statement (topic sentence) that supports your thesis, 1-2 examples from the text that support your claim (you may quote directly or paraphrase), several sentences of analysis that explain how your example proves the claim, and a concluding sentence. Each paragraph should be 6-10 sentences long.
* Include a conclusion paragraph that restates your main points, reiterates your thesis in a unique way, and explains why Klinkenborg’s message is both important and relevant.
* You do not need to include any citations.

**Revision & Style Checklist**

* Use no more than 2 BE verbs per paragraph (is, am, are, was, were, be, being, been).
* Write using active verbs, not passive voice.
* Do not use second-person voice (you, your, yourself).
* Do not use first-person voice (I, me, my, mine, we, our).
* Do not use any contractions or parentheses.
* Do not begin any two sentences with the same word.
* Proofread for spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

**Type essay here:**

**Excerpt from “Our Vanishing Night: Most City Skies Have Become Virtually Empty of Stars”**

**By Verlyn Klinkenborg**

**[1]** If humans were truly at home under the light of the moon and stars, we would go in darkness happily, the midnight world as visible to us as it is to the vast number of nocturnal species on this planet. Instead, we are diurnal creatures, with eyes adapted to living in the sun's light. This is a basic evolutionary fact, even though most of us don't think of ourselves as diurnal beings any more than we think of ourselves as primates or mammals or Earthlings. Yet it's the only way to explain what we've done to the night: We've engineered it to receive us by filling it with light.

**[2]** This kind of engineering is no different than damming a river. Its benefits come with consequences—called light pollution—whose effects scientists are only now beginning to study. Light pollution is largely the result of bad lighting design, which allows artificial light to shine outward and upward into the sky, where it's not wanted, instead of focusing it downward, where it is. Ill­-designed lighting washes out the darkness of night and radically alters the light levels— and light rhythms—to which many forms of life, including ourselves, have adapted. Wherever human light spills into the natural world, some aspect of life— migration, reproduction, feeding—is affected.

**[. . .]**

**[3]** Now most of humanity lives under intersecting domes of reflected, refracted light, of scattering rays from overlit cities and suburbs, from light-­flooded highways and factories. In most cities the sky looks as though it has been emptied of stars, leaving behind a vacant haze that mirrors our fear of the dark and resembles the urban glow of dystopian science fiction. We've grown so used to this pervasive orange haze that the original glory of an unlit night—dark enough for the planet Venus to throw shadows on Earth—is wholly beyond our experience, beyond memory almost. And yet above the city's pale ceiling lies the rest of the universe, utterly undiminished by the light we waste—a bright shoal of stars and planets and galaxies, shining in seemingly infinite darkness.

**[4]** We've lit up the night as if it were an unoccupied country, when nothing could be further from the truth. Among mammals alone, the number of nocturnal species is astonishing. Light is a powerful biological force, and on many species it acts as a magnet, a process being studied by researchers such as Travis Longcore and Catherine Rich, co-­founders of the Los Angeles-­based Urban Wildlands Group. The effect is so powerful that scientists speak of songbirds and seabirds being "captured" by searchlights on land or by the light from gas flares on marine oil platforms, circling and circling in the thousands until they drop. Migrating at night, birds are apt to collide with brightly lit tall buildings; immature birds on their first journey suffer disproportionately.

**[5]** Some birds—blackbirds and nightingales, among others—sing at unnatural hours in the presence of artificial light. Scientists have determined that long artificial days—and artificially short nights—induce early breeding in a wide range of birds. And because a longer day allows for longer feeding, it can also affect migration schedules. One population of Bewick's swans wintering in England put on fat more rapidly than usual, priming them to begin their Siberian migration early. The problem, of course, is that migration, like most other aspects of bird behavior, is a precisely timed biological behavior. Leaving early may mean arriving too soon for nesting conditions to be right.

**[6]** Nesting sea turtles, which show a natural predisposition for dark beaches, find fewer and fewer of them to nest on. Their hatchlings, which gravitate toward the brighter, more reflective sea horizon, find themselves confused by artificial lighting behind the beach. In Florida alone, hatchling losses number in the hundreds of thousands every year. Frogs and toads living near brightly lit highways suffer nocturnal light levels that are as much as a million times brighter than normal, throwing nearly every aspect of their behavior out of joint, including their nighttime breeding choruses.

**[7]** Of all the pollutions we face, light pollution is perhaps the most easily remedied. Simple changes in lighting design and installation yield immediate changes in the amount of light spilled into the atmosphere and, often, immediate energy savings.

**[. . .]**

**[8]** Unlike astronomers, most of us may not need an undiminished view of the night sky for our work, but like most other creatures we do need darkness. Darkness is as essential to our biological welfare, to our internal clockwork, as light itself. The regular oscillation of waking and sleep in our lives—one of our circadian rhythms—is nothing less than a biological expression of the regular oscillation of light on Earth. So fundamental are these rhythms to our being that altering them is like altering gravity.

**[9]** For the past century or so, we've been performing an open-­ended experiment on ourselves, extending the day, shortening the night, and short-­circuiting the human body's sensitive response to light. The consequences of our bright new world are more readily perceptible in less adaptable creatures living in the peripheral glow of our prosperity. But for humans, too, light pollution may take a biological toll. At least one new study has suggested a direct correlation between higher rates of breast cancer in women and the nighttime brightness of their neighborhoods.

**[10]** In the end, humans are no less trapped by light pollution than the frogs in a pond near a brightly lit highway. Living in a glare of our own making, we have cut ourselves off from our evolutionary and cultural patrimony—the light of the stars and the rhythms of day and night. In a very real sense, light pollution causes us to lose sight of our true place in the universe, to forget the scale of our being, which is best measured against the dimensions of a deep night with the Milky Way—the edge of our galaxy—arching overhead.

Klinkenborg, Verlyn. “Our Vanishing Night: Most City Skies Have Become Virtually Empty of Stars.” *National Geographic Magazine*. National Geographic Society. Nov. 2008. Web. 23 Jan. 2010.