

LIGHTS OUT: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

ABOUT THE BOOK

Lights Out

by Marsha Diane Arnold

Illustrated by Susan Reagan

Published by The Creative Company

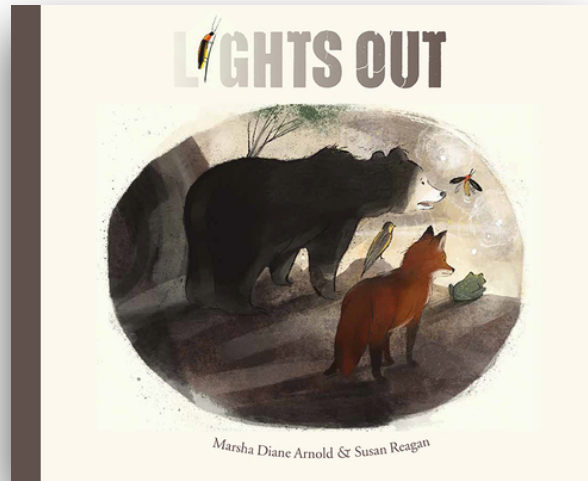
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Age Range: 6-10 Years

In a world marred by light pollution, this quest for true darkness is a clarion call to turn out the lights—so that all may see.

“The closing spreads with the dark sky and natural, nocturnal lights are enchanting.

Stars twinkle, and the moon glows, as Mother Nature would have it. The fade-in title design on the book’s cover is especially smart, communicating much about the story. An author’s note kicks off the book, noting how little we hear about light pollution. Illuminating.” —*Kirkus Reviews*



ABOUT THE LESSON PLANS

Explore these English Language Arts lesson plans created by author Marsha Diane Arnold.



Reading Comprehension

Explore the Book’s Structure
Summarize the Book

Writing Activities (With Math)

Four-Line Poem
Haiku Poetry, Counting Syllables, and Structure

Writing Activities

Point of View and Haiku
Persuasive Letter or Story

Writing Activity (With Science)

Thinking About Rhythm and Patterns
Observe and Write

LIGHTS OUT: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

READING COMPREHENSION

EXPLORE THE BOOK'S STRUCTURE

All things have a structure, an overall design. In **Lights Out**, you see a natural structure in the spider's web, the flower, and in the stars. The **Lights Out** story also has a structure. The author has used a rhythmic repeating refrain: "*Across the wide, wide world...*" There are also two spreads near the beginning and end of the story, in rhyme, which contrast artificial and natural light.

The physical book has a structure too. Let's explore it. Before reading **Lights Out** identify the book jacket, jacket flaps, the front cover, back cover, title page, spine, and end papers.

The Book Jacket, Front Cover and the Title Page

- What do you see on the front book jacket?
- What do you think the animals see?
- What do you think the story is about?
- Take the book jacket off. How are the illustrations different on the front and back covers from the book jacket front and back?

The Jacket Flap

- After replacing the book jacket, open the book to see the jacket flaps. This is the part of the book jacket that folds into the book.
- Read or listen to the short summary of the book on the front jacket flap.
- Read or listen to the short biographies of the author and illustrator on the back jacket flap.
- What kind of work did the author do to make the book? What did the illustrator do?

The End Papers

- Open the book to the very first page, before the story begins. These are the endpapers.
- Are there endpapers at the back of the book too?
- What is on the endpapers?
- Do you think these animals might be an important part of the book?

The Copyright Page

- What is on this page besides the copyright?
- How does the illustration compare with the cover?

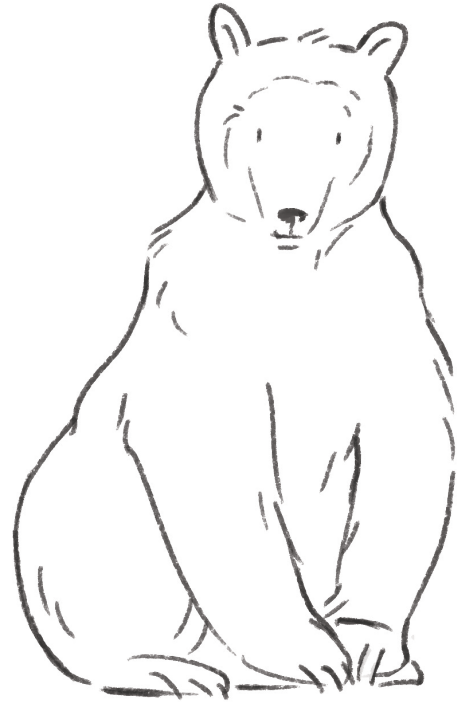
The Author's Note

- Often the Author's Note is at the end of the book, but this Author's Note is at the beginning. Why do you think the publisher put it at the beginning?
- Read the Author's Note and share what part you think is most interesting.

LIGHTS OUT: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

SUMMARIZE THE BOOK

- Why do you think the story is called **Lights Out**?
- If you were an animal, would you have gone on the journey with Fox and Beetle to find “the Dark of Night?”
- Take a “Picture Walk” through the book. Look at the illustrations as you page through the book. Talk about what the animals are doing, feeling, and thinking. Here are some examples:
- On the first page what do you think Fox is thinking? From his face, how do you think he feels?
- Find the pages with the turtle hatchlings. How do you think Bear feels?
- Look at the final page. Have the expressions on the animals’ faces changed? How do you think they are feeling now?
- Were you surprised by the change in “Beetle?” Would he have realized what he was if he hadn’t found “the Dark of Night?”



WRITING ACTIVITIES (WITH MATH)

FOUR LINE POEM

This is a fun way to begin writing poetry - a short four-line poem. Marsha Diane Arnold sometimes calls this the “four-line special person” poem. She has shared it with many children around the world. Usually, it’s written about a friend, family member, or pet.

We’re going to write it about an animal affected by light pollution, one of the animals in **Lights Out** or another animal you know. The poem can include how light pollution affects the animal, but it doesn’t need to.

- 1) Think of the animal you want to write about.
- 2) Choose three short phrases that describe the animal.
- 3) The fourth line will name the animal to honor it. For example, you might say, “The flashing firefly” or “The hopping frog” or simply “Bear.”
- 4) Have fun writing your poem.
- 5) After you finish your four-line poem, draw a picture of your animal.
- 6) Share your poem with someone.

LIGHTS OUT: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Here is an example of a four-line poem Marsha Diane Arnold wrote about her dog.

A muddy paw
A wagging tail
A slobbery kiss
My dog, Ali

Here is an example of a four-line poem about an animal affected by light pollution:

Swooping in darkness,
Eating one thousand insects!
Staying away from lights
Thank you, Little Brown Bat

HAIKU POETRY, COUNTING SYLLABLES, AND STRUCTURE

Counting is fun! Young children begin counting early – toes, bananas, family members. This is the foundation for more complex skills and understandings later. It's especially fun when we can combine counting with writing.

Haiku is a form of Japanese poetry with a very specific structure. The first line has 5 syllables, the second line has 7 syllables, and the last line has 5 syllables. Traditionally, haikus are written about nature.

Look at the first page of the **Lights Out** story. Count the syllables of each line.

- Which of the four lines could be part of a haiku poem?
- Could you add or subtract a word to the other three lines to make them have the right number of syllables for a haiku poem?

Little Fox peeks out from her den.
Beetle flits above her.
“Lights Out!” she barks.
But the lights stay on.

Write a haiku about one of the animals in **Lights Out**. It can be about their journey or light pollution or simply about the animal.

One way to approach haiku is to first choose what you'd like to write about. You might look through the pictures in **Lights Out** first. Something may catch your attention or inspire you. You might read about your chosen animal in a book or on the internet. Something in what you read may inspire you.

After you have your subject or idea, brainstorm some words that relate to what you'll be writing about. Make a list of these words. Try to use descriptive words. Write the number of syllables beside each word.

LIGHTS OUT: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Now write your haiku. You don't need to use all the words on your list, but they may be helpful. Write Line 1 with 5 syllables, then Line 2 with 7 syllables, then Line 3 with 5 syllables.

You can repeat words, if you like. You can capitalize and punctuate as you like. Traditionally, the last line is an observation or a surprise, but you don't need to do this.

Here is an example from a haiku master, Matsuo Basho (1644-1694):

An old silent pond...
A frog jumps into the pond,
splash! Silence again.

Here is an example that Marsha Diane Arnold wrote:

Birds migrating north
Bright city lights confuse them
"Which way do we go?"



WRITING ACTIVITIES

POINT OF VIEW AND HAIKU

It might be fun to write a haiku from the Point of View or Viewpoint of one of the animals in *Lights Out*.

- What do we mean by viewpoint or point of view? Viewpoint is simply the way each of us sees the world. Each of us has a view of the world that's not like anyone else's.
- Look up toward the ceiling. What do you see? That's an interesting viewpoint.
- If you are telling a story from an ant's point of view, you will need to think like an ant. What are some of the things you'd see as an ant that would be different from what you see now? How does a cup look to an ant? How long does it take an ant to cross the room?

Now that we've explored viewpoint a little, let's write.

- Choose the animal from **Lights Out** that you want to write about.
- Think about that animal: what the animal looks like, where the animal lives, what he eats, feels, thinks.
- Write your haiku as if you are that animal, speaking as that animal would speak.

LIGHTS OUT: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Here is an example from the point of view of a turtle hatchling:

I hatched from my egg
Where to go? So many lights.
There! Into the sea.

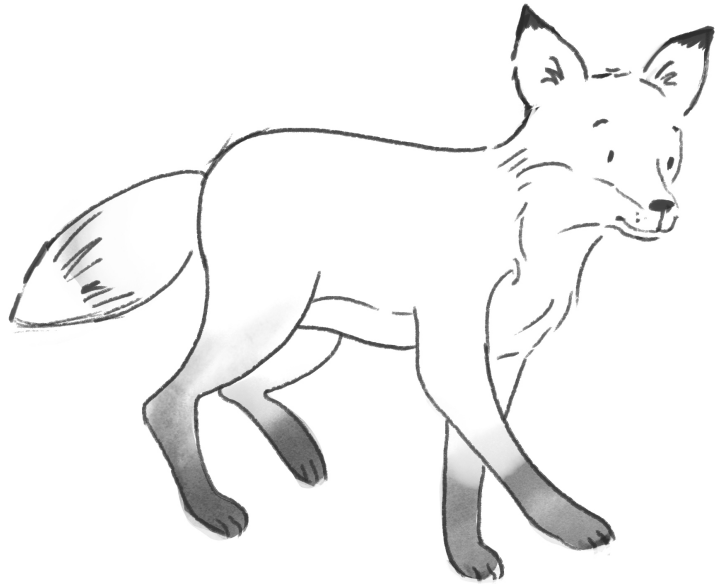
PERSUASIVE LETTER OR STORY

- Do you know what the word “persuade” means? If you’re not sure, can you guess?
- Talk about what it means to persuade.
- Talk about why or when you might want to persuade someone, like persuading your parents to buy you a scooter or let you stay up late.

One guideline on writing to persuade is to first tell the reader what you believe. Then give three reasons why you believe it or think it’s important. Try to have a good ending paragraph to summarize and convince your reader. You can ask for the reader to take action here or present an idea about what they can do.

In **Lights Out**, the author doesn’t tell how the animals are persuaded to join the search for the Dark of Night. They may not have needed much persuading. But if they did, and if you were Fox, how would you persuade the other animals to help you search for Darkness? Let’s write a story showing how one animal persuades another. Have the two animals talk to each other in dialogue, as if they are having a conversation.

For older students, let’s write a persuasive letter. You might use the guideline from above. If you have information about light pollution in your town or city, you could write the mayor. You could try to persuade him to help do something about light pollution. Try to find other towns/cities that



have done things to reduce light pollution and refer to them in the letter. Here’s a link to two towns recognized by the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA), one in [Arizona](#) and one in [Colorado](#).

LIGHTS OUT: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

WRITING ACTIVITIES (WITH SCIENCE)

THINKING ABOUT RHYTHM AND PATTERNS IN NATURE AND BOOKS

Science, art, and writing are all creative processes. They are all exciting and unpredictable. Scientific conclusions are always revisable, if there is new evidence, just as the draft of a story is revisable when a writer thinks of a different way to tell it, just as a painting can be changed with the stroke of a brush.

Rhythm weaves through nature and through books. It holds things together. In **Lights Out** this recurring phrase gives structure to the story.

Across the wide wide world,
they search...
For the Dark of Night.
But everywhere – Lights!

Patterns also weave through nature and books. Near the end of *Lights Out*, as the animals swim away from the lights, we read: “**Patterns of the Night emerge.**”

- Look at the images on this and the following pages.
- How are these “patterns of the night” similar and different?
- Arrange the images into categories: plant, animal, sky.

Some of the patterns are star constellations. Let’s explore star constellations more. Below are five well-known constellations.

URSA MAJOR: “Great Bear” This constellation contains The Big Dipper and points to the north. It is mentioned in the poem at the end of *Lights Out*.

URSA MINOR: “Little Bear” This constellation contains The Little Dipper and Polaris, known as the North Star. It is also mentioned in the poem at the end of *Lights Out*.

ORION: Orion is known as “the Hunter” because the star patterns resemble a hunter with a bow.

CANIS MAJOR: “Greater Dog” This constellation is considered the larger of Orion’s two hunting dogs. It has Sirius, the brightest star in the night sky.


CASSIOPEIA: Cassiopeia is known for its “W” shape. There are 5 stars in the constellation.

There are many ways to have fun designing constellations. Look for the Ursa Minor Activity Sheet at MarshaDianeArnold.com.

LIGHTS OUT: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

- You can simply draw the constellation outline and draw dots or place stickers for the stars.
- You can shape them out of pipe cleaners or Wikki Stix.
- You can place beads on the pipe cleaners to represent stars and bend the pipe cleaners into shape.
- If you want to simply draw the constellation, you can use crayons or pencils to draw the shape of the constellation and then add the animal or person we think of it as. You can use star stickers, if you have them, for the stars.

For simple constellation building, materials that might be used:

- Foil/Paper Stars
 - Pen or crayon
 - Construction paper or another type of paper
 - Pipe cleaners
 - Wikki Stix
 - Scotch tape
 - Scissors
 - Printable Constellation Templates or books to view constellations.
 - Beads
- 
- Choose one of the constellations above, to begin. For Ursa Major and Ursa Minor, simply use The Big Dipper and The Little Dipper. You can find simple drawings of these constellations in books or on the internet to use as examples.
 - Place all supplies on a table or a large tray. Look at the constellation template or picture of the constellation.
 - Shape pipe cleaners (or Wikki Stix) into the form of the constellation. You will need more than one to make most constellations. You can tie a knot at the end of two pipe cleaners to make them longer. With help from an adult, you can cut pipe cleaners into the right length. If you have beads, you can place those on the pipe cleaner, at the spots where the stars would be. Voilà. You have a constellation.
 - If you are not using beads, place your constellation on a sheet of paper. You may need scotch tape to hold pipe cleaners in place.
 - Count how many stars are in the constellation.
 - On the sheet of paper, make round dots along the pipe cleaner to represent the stars. If you have star stickers, you can place them on top of the dot.

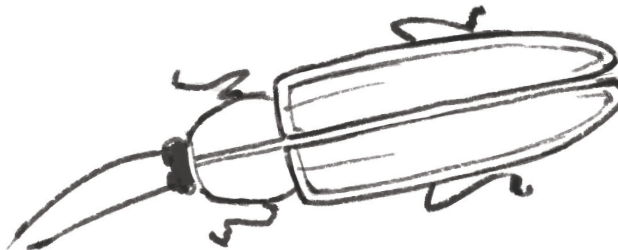
Be creative. You may have other small items in your house that you can use to represent the stars. You don't need to keep the constellation on the paper. If it's sturdy, you may want to hang it somewhere.

LIGHTS OUT: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

OBSERVE AND WRITE

To be a good writer, you need to observe. There are other things good writers do: find important information about what they want to write about, recognize and create patterns, and communicate feelings. These are all things scientists do to. Let's do some observing, thinking, and writing.

- Plan to journal in a notebook for at least two days. You may wish to journal for a week or more.
- At dusk and night time, look out your window, step outside your house, or, if it is safe, take a short walk with your parent. Make a list of the artificial lights you see around you. Make another list of the natural lights you see. Most of the natural lights will probably be in the night sky, but you may see bioluminescent animals, like fireflies. You may see flowers that seem to glow. Some people enjoy planting moon gardens to enjoy at night, filled with white flowers and silver foliage which seem to illuminate the dark. You can include the glowing eyes of any animals you see too. You may not see plant or animal lights during your observation. That's okay. These are more unusual to see.
- Note any animals you see and how they react to the natural or artificial light.
- Note how *you* react to natural and artificial lights.
- At the end of your journaling, count the different types of natural lights you saw and the different types of artificial lights you saw. You may not be able to count all of the lights, but try to count the different types – streetlights, house lights, airplanes, etc. Depending on where you live you may see hundreds of artificial lights or just a few. The same for natural lights.
- Make a simple bar graph. Here's a link on how to [make bar graphs](#) that may be helpful.



LIGHTS OUT: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

- To make a bar graph, have a sheet of paper. It works best to have the longer side on the bottom. Along the left edge, vertically, write numbers (Count by 10 up to 100, if possible. If you saw a clear sky full of stars, you will not be able to show that number on the bar graph. It will be “off the charts.” You can draw a line to the top of the chart with an arrow.) At the bottom, horizontally, write the different types of light you saw – moon, fireflies, streetlights, car lights, etc. (If you run out of room, use only the first letter or letters of each type). If you have streetlights as the first category at the bottom and you saw 9 streetlights, color a wide line (the bar) up to the number “9.” Do the same for the rest of the categories.
- Which type of natural light did you see the most of? The least? Which type of artificial light did you see the most of? The least? Does the bar graph show any surprises?
- During all the observations, did you see any problems? How might those problems be addressed? What might be done about them?

Write three paragraphs on your observations. Use your journal and graphs as your guide. This would be considered non-fiction writing.

- Now switch into fiction writing mode. Write a poem or a short story about the most interesting thing you saw during your journaling or how you felt during your observations.