

# Reading Comprehension — Dancing Lights

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## Dancing Lights

On a cold, clear night in Canada's north, the sky can suddenly come alive. Ribbons of green, pink and purple light begin to shimmer and sway overhead, as if a giant invisible hand were painting the darkness. These are the northern lights, also called the aurora.

For thousands of years, people gazed up at these lights in wonder, and many told stories to explain them. Some Indigenous peoples saw them as the spirits of ancestors, or as torches lighting the way.

Today, scientists can explain what causes the aurora. It begins with the Sun, which constantly throws out tiny particles into space. When these particles reach Earth, our planet's magnetic field guides many of them towards the north and south poles. High in the atmosphere, the particles crash into gases such as oxygen and nitrogen, making them glow — much like the gas inside a glowing sign. Different gases produce different colours, which is why we see greens, pinks and purples.

The best place to see the aurora is far from city lights, on a dark, clear night in the far north. Canada, with its vast northern lands, is one of the finest places in the world to witness this natural wonder.

Whether seen as spirits or science, the dancing lights remain one of the most beautiful sights in all of nature.

## Questions

1. What are the northern lights also called? (1 mark)
2. Name two colours the aurora can be. (1 mark)
3. What does everything begin with? (1 mark)
4. Find and copy a word in paragraph 1 meaning "to shine with a soft, trembling light." (1 mark)
5. How did some Indigenous peoples explain the lights? (2 marks)
6. Explain in your own words what causes the aurora. (3 marks)
7. Why is Canada one of the best places to see the aurora? (2 marks)
8. Why might the writer end by mentioning both 'spirits' and 'science'? (2 marks)

## Answer Key / Mark Scheme

1. The aurora.
2. Any two: green, pink, purple.
3. The Sun.

**4.** "shimmer."

**5.** As the spirits of ancestors, or as torches lighting the way.

**6.** The Sun throws out tiny particles; Earth's magnetic field guides them to the poles; high up they crash into gases like oxygen and nitrogen, making them glow in different colours.

**7.** It has vast northern lands far from city lights, where the aurora is often visible.

**8.** To show the lights can be understood through both old stories and modern science, and remain wonderful either way.