

# Comparing Firefly Books

By comparing two texts on the same topic, children can become aware that every author has a purpose. Whether it is to share a story, convey a message, or teach a concept, there is always a reason behind the writing. In this activity, children compare a fictional story about fireflies to a nonfiction book about fireflies. They will discover that even though the topic is the same in the two featured books, the approach and the author's purpose for each are different. They will also discover that reading both kinds of books can provide a richer, deeper experience with a topic than reading just one of them.

## ELA Common Core Connections

Reading: Informational Text – Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

K: RI.K.9. With prompting and support, identify the basic similarities and differences between two texts on the same topic.

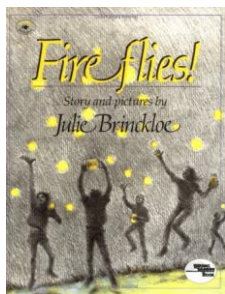
1: RI.1.9. Identify basic similarities and differences between two texts on the same topic.

2: RI.2.9. Compare and contrast the most important points presented by two texts on the same topic.

3: RI.3.9. Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic.

4: RI.4.9. Integrate information from two texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

5: RI.5.1. Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.



### ***Fireflies!* by Julie Brinckloe**

**Aladdin Paperbacks, 1985**

Read the book *Fireflies* aloud to the children. As you read, pause to make connections and explore the deeper meaning of the story by asking questions such as the ones below. Depending on the age of the children, they might not be able to answer some of the questions, but you can model how to use evidence from the text to answer the questions where appropriate:

### **Before Reading:**

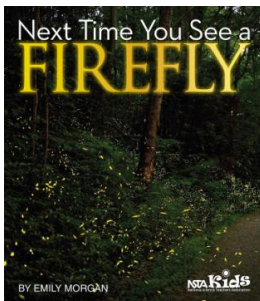
- Have you ever caught fireflies? What was it like? What time of year was it? What did you put the fireflies in when you caught them? (Answers will vary.)

### **During Reading:**

- Page 14 – Before showing the illustration, ask the children to close their eyes and imagine what the scene would look, sound, and feel like. Then show the illustration.
- Page 25 – What does the boy mean by “But it was not the same.” (The fireflies were not flying free like they were outside. They were hitting the side of the container.)
- Page 26 – How do you think the boy is feeling right now? (Sad) What in the text makes you think that? (He says, “I tried to swallow, but something in my throat would not go down.)
- Page 27 –Why do you think the fireflies’ light was getting dimmer? (They were trapped in the jar and not able to fly free. They were probably starting to die.)
- Page 32 – Why did the boy cry when he let the fireflies go? (He wanted them to be “his” fireflies.) Why do you think he let them go even though it made him sad? (He knew it was the right thing to do.) What do you think the last line of the book means, “The moonlight swam in my tears, but I could feel myself smiling.”? (Even though he was sad for himself that he couldn’t keep the fireflies, he was happy that they were free and glowing again.)

### After Reading:

- Julie Brinckloe is both the author and illustrator of this book. She chose to illustrate the book with pencil drawings and just a few colors, gray, blue, and yellow. How do the illustrations help tell the story? (The expressions on the boys face help you know how he is feeling. The way the kids are jumping around as they catch the fireflies lets you know how excited they feel.) How do the colors create a setting and mood? (The colors and shading create the look of twilight—the time when day turns into night. The yellow glow of the fireflies on the blue and gray background also gives the book a magical feeling.)
- What do you think is the overall message of this book? (The message the reader receives from a book has to do not only the text, but also their prior experiences, so there is no one right answer to this question. Here are a few possible messages that the reader may take away: Sometimes doing the right thing is difficult. You can feel happy and sad about something at the same time. Things in nature don't "belong" to anyone. And so on.)



### ***Next Time You See a Firefly* by Emily Morgan NSTA Kids, 2013**

Tell the children that you have another book to share about fireflies, but this book is nonfiction. Even though nonfiction authors are limited to writing true facts, they can still be creative in the way they share the information. Nonfiction authors have a purpose and many have a central theme to their books. As you read, *Next Time You See a Firefly* together, stop periodically to discuss the information presented and the author's purpose by asking questions such as the following:

### Before Reading:

- Have you ever wondered why fireflies flash? Is there a reason? (Ask the children to share some possible reasons.)
- What do you wonder about fireflies? (Answers will vary)

### During Reading:

- Pages 10-11 – Why do fireflies flash? (To signal a mate.) How can you tell males from females? (The males fly and flash. The females perch in the grass or on a bush and flash.)
- Pages 12-13 – What is special about a firefly's flashing pattern? (Each kind, or species, has its own flashing pattern. The fireflies must look for the flashing pattern of their species to mate.)
- Pages 14-15 – How does the time a firefly spends as a larva compare to the time it spends as an adult? (A firefly is a larva for about two years and an adult for only about two weeks.)
- Pages 18-19 – Why is it important to be gentle when you catch fireflies? (Their wings are not as hard as other beetles' wings. This makes them more fragile than most beetles.)
- Pages 20-21 – Does this photograph remind you of a picture in the book *Fireflies!*? (Page 17 of *Fireflies!* shows the boy looking at his fireflies in the same kind of jar.)
- Page 22-23 – Why do fireflies have such large eyes? (For seeing at night.)

### After Reading:

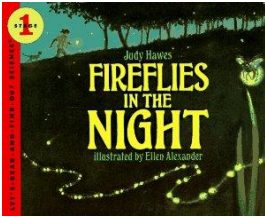
- What did you learn about fireflies from this book? (They flash to find a mate, they are a type of beetle, they spend most of their lives as larvae, and so on.)
- How do you think the author of this book feels about fireflies? (She thinks they are amazing insects.) What evidence from the book makes you think that? (She uses words like “fascinating” [p. 9], “interesting” [p. 14], “extraordinary” [p. 26], and “remarkable” [p. 29].)
- Point out how the book both begins and ends with the same line as the title, “Next time you see a firefly. ...” What do you think the author wants you to do the next time you see a firefly? (Take time to really observe it [p. 7] and remember some of the remarkable things they learned about it [p. 29].)
- Read the last paragraph of the “Note to Parents and Teachers” aloud. Tell students that this is a note from the author herself. Ask, what do you think she means by the line, “My wish is that after reading this book, you and your child feel a sense of wonder the next time you see a firefly”? (She hopes that reading the book will make a firefly more special to you the next time you see one.)

### Comparing the Two Texts

Depending on the age of your students, you can choose to do this next part as a discussion or have the students answer the questions in writing. If you choose to have them answer in writing, use the Comparing Two Texts student page.

- How are the books different?
  - One is fiction, and one is nonfiction.
  - One tells a story, and the other teaches facts.
  - One is illustrated with pencil drawings, and the other is illustrated with photographs.
- What do the two books have in common?
  - Both have the same topic—fireflies.
  - Both show children catching fireflies.
  - Both describe poking holes in the jar so the fireflies can breathe.
  - Both discuss setting fireflies free.
- How is the author’s purpose different for each book?
  - In *Fireflies!*, the author’s purpose is to tell a story that has a message.
  - In *Next Time You See a Firefly*, the author’s purpose is to teach about fireflies.
- What do you think the authors of these two very different books might have in common? What evidence from the texts makes you think that?
  - They are probably both fascinated by fireflies. They both convey positive feelings about fireflies in the language they used in their books. For example, Julie Brinckloe writes about the “joy” of catching fireflies, and Emily Morgan uses words such as “interesting,” “fascinating,” and “remarkable” when writing about fireflies.
- How did reading two very different books on the same topic affect the way you think about the fireflies?
  - Answers will vary, but they might include some ideas about how reading the two texts allowed them to experience feelings associated with watching and catching fireflies and learn some facts about them as well.

## More Firefly Books to Read

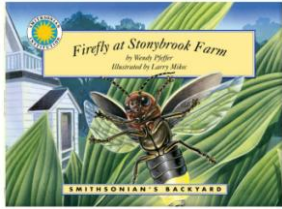


*Fireflies in the Night* (Let's-Read-and-Find-Out Science series)

By Judy Hawes

Illustrated by Ellen Alexander

HarperCollins, 1991



*Firefly at Stonybrook Farm* (Smithsonian's Backyard series)

By Wendy Pfeffer

Illustrated by Larry Mikec

Soundprint, 2004

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Comparing Texts

1. Use the Venn Diagram below to show the similarities and differences between *Fireflies!* By Julie Brinckloe and *Next Time You See a Firefly* by Emily Morgan.



2. How is the author's purpose different for each book? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What do you think the authors of these two very different books might have in common? What evidence from the texts makes you think that?

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4. How did reading two very different books on the same topic affect the way you think about the fireflies?

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