

Writing Feedback

DAY 8 | 22nd of April | HOLIDAY WRITING HOMEWORK

Section 1

#1: Opening Paragraphs (First 2 paragraphs)

Strengths:

- Your vivid imagery creates a powerful contrast between past and present skies
- The personal anecdote about the astronomy club effectively establishes the relevance to students

Weakness: Underdeveloped transition between personal observation and environmental issue → The connection between the nostalgic opening and the identification of the specific environmental crisis requires more clarity. Phrases like "This isn't just nostalgia—it's a symptom of something far more serious" introduce the problem but don't fully establish the scope or urgency needed for a feature article introduction.

Perhaps: "This isn't just nostalgia—it's the visible evidence of a serious environmental crisis threatening our community. Scientific measurements show our night sky brightness has increased by 250% in just five decades, while air quality monitors consistently record unhealthy pollution levels, particularly during warmer months."

#2: Middle Section (Paragraphs on health impacts)

Strengths:

- Strong incorporation of student voices through Elena's testimonial
- Effective use of statistics from credible sources

Weakness: Limited expert context for health statistics → You mention "A recent survey by the American Lung Association found that one in five teens in suburban communities now reports regular respiratory issues" but don't provide deeper context about these findings or connect them clearly to your specific community situation.

Perhaps: "The American Lung Association's disturbing findings mirror what's happening in our own hallways. School nurse records show a 35% increase in

respiratory-related visits since 2019, with the highest numbers occurring on days when local air quality monitors show elevated particulate levels."

#3: Conclusion (Final 2 paragraphs)

Strengths:

- Hopeful tone that encourages action without being preachy
- Concrete connection to student experience and wellbeing

Weakness: Vague action steps → Your conclusion uses general phrases like "turn down the lights" and "clear the air" without offering specific, achievable community actions. The inspirational tone is strong, but needs to be anchored in concrete next steps.

Perhaps: "The path back begins with practical steps our school community can take immediately: transitioning to shielded, motion-activated lighting on campus that reduces unnecessary nighttime illumination by 70%; organizing student-led carpooling initiatives that could remove hundreds of vehicles from morning traffic; and working with the town council to establish 'dark sky friendly' lighting ordinances that other communities have successfully implemented."

Your feature article demonstrates strong writing skills with compelling imagery and voices. The twin focus on light and air pollution creates a unique angle that distinguishes your piece from standard environmental reporting. Adding more specific, actionable community solutions would strengthen your conclusion, while incorporating additional local data points would make your argument more persuasive.

You've created a strong foundation by weaving personal observations with expert voices. To elevate your piece further, consider more deliberately connecting each expert quotation to specific conditions in your community. This would strengthen the immediate relevance of the issue to your readers. Additionally, examining successful initiatives from similar communities would provide practical models for the action you're inspiring readers to take.

Score: 46/50

Section 2:

The Sky We Lost: Light and Air Pollution Dim the Future of Our Community

On a clear night decades ago, older residents of our town recall seeing the Milky Way stretch across the sky like a river of diamonds—bright, infinite, and awe-inspiring. Back then, the stars seemed close enough to touch, and the night air carried a stillness that made every breath feel pure and renewing. Today, that same sky is pale and empty, washed out by a yellow haze that dims even the brightest stars. The constellations once etched into memory have faded behind a relentless dome of artificial light. Standing on the school's rooftop last Friday night during our astronomy club's stargazing event, all we could see was a faint pinprick of Venus—and the low, restless glow of streetlights, shopping centres, and the endless pulse of traffic below. The heavens have gone dark, and the air, once crisp and full of night's quiet magic, now feels heavy and metallic on the tongue, thick in the chest. #1

This isn't just nostalgia—it's a symptom of something far more serious. Our community is facing a growing environmental crisis, as light and air pollution continue to degrade the quality of our skies and the breath in our lungs. What was once a serene rural-suburban town is now flickering under relentless artificial light and blanketed by smog that no longer lifts, even with the wind's best efforts. While both problems are often discussed in isolation, here they converge—creating a combined assault on our environment, our health, and our sense of place. The very things that once defined our nights—the quiet, the darkness, the stars, the clean air—are being eroded day by day, bulb by bulb, engine by engine. And though the change has been gradual, its impact has reached a tipping point.

The twin threats of light and air pollution may not roar like a wildfire or crash like a hurricane, but their presence is no less destructive. Unlike dramatic natural disasters, these forms of pollution seep into daily life slowly and subtly, becoming part of the background until we forget what we're missing. Ridgewood, once known for its quiet skies and wooded paths, is now steadily losing those natural assets. According to a 2023 report from the National Centres for Environmental Information, the night sky in suburban regions like ours is now 250% brighter than it was 50 years ago. That means stars once visible to the naked eye are now invisible, buried beneath layers of man-made light.

But the consequences aren't limited to aesthetics. "People don't realize that excessive light is more than an aesthetic issue. It alters ecosystems—migratory birds get confused, nocturnal insects decline, and even trees suffer when they're bathed in artificial light year-round," explains Dr. Amelia Feng, an environmental science professor at the nearby state university. Animals depend on darkness for their natural rhythms—hunting, breeding, feeding—and we humans do too, though we rarely acknowledge it. Artificial light at night (ALAN) has been linked to increased rates of insomnia, mood disorders, and even chronic illnesses, as circadian rhythms fall out of sync.

Meanwhile, Ridgewood's air quality has quietly deteriorated to worrisome levels. The town's air quality index (AQI) now frequently registers in the "moderate" to "unhealthy for sensitive groups" range—especially during the summer and early autumn, when heat intensifies the formation of ground-level ozone. The causes are numerous: a rise in vehicle traffic, increased suburban construction, and nearby industrial operations that emit a steady stream of pollutants. PM2.5 particles—tiny, inhalable fragments produced by combustion—pose one of the greatest risks. Though invisible, they penetrate deep into the lungs and bloodstream, triggering respiratory and cardiovascular problems that can last a lifetime.

"I run cross-country, and last season I had to start using an inhaler," says sophomore Elena Ramirez, shaking her head. "It's not asthma—at least, it wasn't. My doctor said the air quality here just isn't what it used to be. Some days, even walking outside makes my chest feel tight." #2

Her experience is becoming increasingly common among students. A recent survey by the American Lung Association found that one in five teens in suburban communities now reports regular respiratory issues, many of which are new or worsening symptoms tied directly to air pollution. These aren't just numbers—they represent young people like Elena, struggling with basic things like exercise, concentration, and sleep. Ridgewood High's school nurse has reported a noticeable uptick in visits related to breathing problems, headaches, and fatigue, all of which correlate with spikes in local pollution data.

Mr. Ray Chen, a veteran biology teacher at Ridgewood High and a long-time observer of local environmental changes, connects the dots. "What we're seeing is slow, cumulative damage. It's not dramatic, so it gets ignored. But over time, it changes everything—health, sleep, learning capacity, and mental well-being.

Students are more tired. Teachers are reporting more headaches. It adds up, even if it doesn't scream for attention."

The psychological toll of losing the night sky is difficult to quantify, but its absence is deeply felt. For many in the community, especially the young, the sky no longer offers mystery or beauty—it's just a blank, glowing ceiling. "There's a real grief that comes with this kind of loss," says Dr. Naomi Patel, a psychologist specialising in eco-anxiety. "When we can't see the stars, we feel more disconnected—from nature, from each other, from ourselves. That darkness we've pushed away was actually grounding us."

She explains that for adolescents, who are already navigating the pressures of school, identity, and a turbulent world, the loss of connection to nature—especially the calming ritual of stargazing—can contribute to rising anxiety and feelings of isolation. "It's not about romanticising the past," Dr. Patel says. "It's about reclaiming something that's vital to our psychological health."

Light and air pollution are reversible—but only if we choose to see them, acknowledge their toll, and act accordingly. The stars haven't vanished; they're simply waiting behind the veil we've created. Imagine stepping outside on a crisp October evening and seeing the Milky Way arch over the football field once again. Imagine breathing deeply and feeling clarity instead of weight in your lungs. #3

The path back to a clearer sky and cleaner air isn't paved with grand gestures—it starts with awareness, advocacy, and action. Let's turn down the lights. Let's clear the air. Let's bring back the sky—not just for beauty, but for the health and hope of generations to come.