Writers Across Time

Compare how two science writers examine human effects on nature.

ELA.6.R.3.3 "Compare and contrast how authors from different time periods address the same or related topics."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline Carson's main concern once and Kolbert's main concern twice. Circle one phrase in each author's paragraph that shows how the author develops that concern, then use your marks to compare their approaches.

Two Writers, One Question

1 Authors often return to the question of how people affect the natural world. In 1962, biologist and writer Rachel Carson published Silent Spring, a book about the dangers of widespread pesticide use. Nearly sixty years later, science writer Elizabeth Kolbert published Under a White Sky. Her book examines human attempts to manage environmental problems, including climate change and endangered species. Both writers use science to ask readers to consider consequences, but they write in different moments and focus on different human choices.

2 In Silent Spring, Carson warns that chemical pesticides can move through food chains and harm birds, fish, and people. She combines scientific findings with vivid scenes, such as a spring landscape made quiet by missing birdsong. Carson's serious, urgent tone challenges the belief that a chemical is safe simply because it kills a pest. She asks readers to look beyond a quick solution and to notice the connected living things that may pay the cost. Her focus is preventing damage before it spreads.

3 Kolbert also investigates human choices, but she writes after environmental harm has become harder to ignore. In Under a White Sky, she visits scientists who use tools such as gene editing, captive breeding, and engineered waterways to respond to damaged ecosystems. Her tone is curious and uneasy. Rather than presenting a simple fix, Kolbert shows that one intervention can create new risks. She asks readers to question whether people can solve problems caused by earlier actions without causing others. Her focus is on the difficult decisions people face after damage has already occurred.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What related topic do Carson and Kolbert both address, and what shared goal do they have for readers?

2. How does Carson's focus on when people should act differ from Kolbert's focus on when people should act?

3. Compare one method each author uses to develop her concern. How do those methods fit her focus?

4. How does the later time period of Kolbert's book help explain a difference between the authors' messages about solutions?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose two books, articles, speeches, or stories from different time periods that address a related topic. Write 4 or 5 sentences that name each author and work, explain the shared topic, compare one difference in approach, and tell how the time periods shape the authors' focuses.

ANSWER KEY

Writers Across Time

GRADE 6 · ELA.6.R.3.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline Carson's main concern once and Kolbert's main concern twice. Circle one phrase in each author's paragraph that shows how the author develops that concern, then use your marks to compare their approaches. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What related topic do Carson and Kolbert both address, and what shared goal do they have for readers?	**Both address how human choices affect the natural world. Both ask readers to consider the consequences of those choices.**
2	How does Carson's focus on when people should act differ from Kolbert's focus on when people should act?	**Carson focuses on preventing damage before it spreads. Kolbert focuses on decisions people must make after damage has already occurred.**
3	Compare one method each author uses to develop her concern. How do those methods fit her focus?	**Carson combines scientific findings with a vivid image of missing birdsong to warn about pesticide harm. Kolbert visits scientists and describes their tools to show that attempts to repair damage can create new risks.**
4	How does the later time period of Kolbert's book help explain a difference between the authors' messages about solutions?	**Carson warns against quick pesticide solutions and urges prevention. Kolbert writes after harm is harder to ignore, so she questions whether interventions can repair existing damage without causing more problems.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Upton Sinclair's The Jungle, published in 1906, and Eric Schlosser's Fast Food Nation, published in 2001, both examine problems in the food industry. Sinclair uses a fictional immigrant family's painful experiences in Chicago meatpacking plants to expose unsafe conditions and worker exploitation. Schlosser uses reporting, facts, and interviews to examine the rise of fast food and its effects on workers, food production, and health. Because Schlosser writes later, he can explore a modern system that grew after the reforms Sinclair's novel helped inspire.

Accept equivalent comparisons supported by details from the passage. For Part 3, accept any accurate pair from different time periods when the response explains a shared topic, a difference in approach, and how time affects each focus.