



⚡ The Energy Debate

Grade 6

Name: _____

Read the passage carefully. Then answer each question in a full sentence, citing evidence from the text. Use quotation marks when quoting directly.

Willow Creek's Energy Dilemma



The air in Willow Creek's community hall buzzed with anticipation.

Mayor Thompson tapped the microphone, ready to address the town's most pressing issue: how to power their growing community. Two proposals were on the table, each with passionate supporters, representing a critical moment in the town's energy **transition**. The first was a plan to build a large solar farm on the outskirts of town, promising clean, renewable energy. The second was an upgrade to the aging natural gas power plant, a reliable fossil fuel source that had served Willow Creek for decades.

Sarah Chen, an environmental advocate, spoke first, her voice clear and firm. "Investing in the Willow Creek Solar Farm means a future with significantly reduced **carbon emissions**," she explained. "Solar energy is a truly renewable source, harnessing the sun's power without burning fuels. While the initial investment might seem higher, a state Clean Energy Incentive Program offers substantial subsidies, bringing the cost down to an estimated 7 cents per **kilowatt**-hour over its lifespan. This project would also create over 100 construction jobs and 15 permanent maintenance positions, moving us towards a sustainable energy **grid**."

Next, Mark Davies, a local business owner and engineer, presented the case for upgrading the natural gas plant. "Our existing plant is a proven asset, already connected to the grid, ensuring constant, reliable power," he argued. "Natural gas, though a fossil fuel, is far cleaner than coal and provides a stable energy supply regardless of weather. The upgrade would cost less upfront, around 9 cents per kilowatt-hour, and secure the



jobs of 50 plant workers, preventing economic disruption. While we acknowledge the need for a long-term transition, this upgrade offers immediate stability and keeps our energy infrastructure robust."

The debate highlighted the complex trade-offs. The solar farm would require a significant amount of land, raising concerns about local wildlife habitats and agricultural space. Its output would also vary with daylight and weather, potentially requiring backup solutions. The natural gas plant, while reliable, would continue to produce carbon emissions, contributing to climate change, even if at a lower rate than older fossil fuel technologies. Mayor Thompson noted that the town also had to consider the broader goals of the Paris Agreement, which encourages nations to reduce their carbon footprint.

As the meeting concluded, the residents of Willow Creek understood that their decision was not simple. It involved balancing environmental responsibility with economic stability, and the promise of new technologies with the reliability of established ones. The path forward for Willow Creek, like many communities, was a complex puzzle of energy choices.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

(1) What two main energy proposals were being discussed in Willow Creek?

(2) What does the word "transition" mean as it is used in the first paragraph?



(3) What is the core disagreement or central issue facing Willow Creek regarding its energy future?

(4) Does the author of the passage favor one side of the energy debate, or does the passage remain neutral? Use evidence from the text.

(5) What is the strongest argument presented in the passage for building the solar farm?

(6) What is the strongest argument presented in the passage against building the solar farm?



(7) Based on the passage, which argument, the solar farm or the natural gas plant upgrade, is better supported by evidence of immediate reliability? Explain fully.

