

## Scored Student Responses for Reading for Information Open-Ended Questions

5. Explain how pandas in China are similar to koalas in Australia and how they both are different from pythons. Support your response with information from the article.

### SCORE 2

Pandas in China are similar to koalas in Australia because they are both specialists, meaning they both eat one food almost exclusively. Pandas eat almost nothing but bamboo and the koala bear eats almost nothing but eucalyptus leaves. This means that pandas and koalas can only live in areas w/ their one food. Pythons, on the other hand, are generalists and can live in many places because they eat many different things.

In this well-developed response, the student initially paraphrases paragraph 21 and then uses the information in paragraph 20 to correctly infer that specialists are limited geographically to the area of their exclusive food source. The student further concludes that pythons are thus different in both diet and habitat. Support is more specific in the discussion of similarities between pandas and koalas, but overall the response shows a strong conceptual understanding of both task and text.

### SCORE 2

Pandas in China are similar to koalas in Australia because they are both specialists meaning they don't adapt well to change (both have very limited diets). Pythons, however, adapt very well to change and can thrive in many environments, making them generalists and not confined to any particular specific area to live.

This insightful response is more abstract than concrete, focusing on the idea in paragraph 19 that generalists are favored over specialists. The student carefully and logically develops the idea of adaptability to change through both comparisons. The response is clear, well developed, and shows a strong conceptual understanding of task and text.

## SCORE 2

According to the story, both Pandas and koalas eat only one type of food they are both specialists. Pythons are generalists meaning they can find food anywhere and eat many different kinds of food.

This lower 2-point response provides just enough development of the two comparisons by maintaining a focus on diet throughout the discussion. The student correctly identifies pandas and koalas as specialists. He or she also correctly identifies pythons as generalists and includes specific exploration of text ideas. Although the response has an element of generality, a strong conceptual understanding is demonstrated by an ability to make connections between text ideas.

## SCORE 1

Pandas in China eat almost nothing but bamboo, while an Australian koala bear eats eucalyptus leaves very exclusively. They are both different from pythons because pythons eat very differently and way more aggressively.

This response does not identify koalas and pandas as specialists but does present specific information about their exclusive eating habits. The comparison to pythons, while accurate and still focused on food, is very general. Overall, the response shows some exploration of ideas presented in the text and a fundamental understanding of text information. The response needs more specific development to be eligible for a higher score.

SCORE 1

Pandas in China and Koalas in Australia are both specialist. Pandas eat nothing but bamboo. The koalas eat exclusively eucalyptus leaves. They both stick to one main type of food.

This response presents a well-developed discussion of the similarities between pandas and koalas. The information from paragraph 21 is paraphrased well and extended with a definition of exclusivity. However, the student fails to address the second comparison with the python. Since the explanation remains incomplete, the response shows only some exploration of text ideas. An additional well-developed and relevant discussion of pythons would help move this response to a higher score.

SCORE 1

Pandas in China are similar to koalas in Australia because they are both herbivores and feed off of plants instead of animals. They differ from pythons because pythons feed off of animals like rats and crocodiles, and therefore are carnivores.

This lower 1-point response shows a fundamental understanding of the text ideas presented in paragraphs 19–21. The student uses prior knowledge to correctly identify koalas and pandas as herbivores and pythons as carnivores, and there is specific text about python food (“rats”). That particular comparison is accurate but does not carry the meaning of specialist and generalist, which is the focus of the relevant text information. Overall, the response shows only some exploration of text ideas.

SCORE 0

Chinas panda bears only eat bamboo and  
Korala bears only eat eucalyptus leaves, but  
pythons are able to live in more than  
one area.

In this very brief response, the student shows a limited understanding of task and text ideas. The short description of panda and koala similarity shows some understanding of exclusivity ("only eat"), but the short description of pythons is both vague and lacks any connection to the diet of the koalas and pandas. This response would need to stay focused on diet for all three animals, mention habitat issues for all, or make an explicit connection between diet and habitat to be eligible for a higher score.

SCORE 0

Pandas and koalas both  
thrive on just one type of  
plant found not often in  
other places

In this response, the information about koala and panda similarity is accurate but too limited. To receive credit for discussing only one of the two comparisons, this response would need more specific development, perhaps exploring the idea of specialist in the text. Overall, the response remains undeveloped and shows limited understanding of task and text.

SCORE 0

Panda's a koalas are similar because  
they are both endangered species. However  
they differ from pythons because  
they are mammals, where a python is a reptile. Also  
pythons eat endangered species.

This response explores an idea ("endangered species") that is mentioned in another context in the article but is irrelevant to the task. Mammals and reptiles are terms used in the article, but that difference is only a minor point. It is also unclear if pandas and koalas are endangered, and while the article does state that pythons eat endangered species, this fact is not relevant to the comparison. This response does not focus on the text information pertinent to the requested comparisons and shows little understanding of task or text ideas.