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Glow Your Own Way

Somewhere over southeast Asia a powerful electrical storm erupts in a vivid display of intense light. Nearby, the collective night lights of sleepy cities glow with an intensity of their own, although with visibly different results.

The hotter the source, the closer the light's color will be to the blue end of the spectrum. Amber-yellow hues are typical of common sodium vapor street lights, which have a color temperature of around 2,500 to 3,000 degrees Kelvin. The color temperature of lightning, on the other hand, is somewhere in the 5,000 to 6,000 degree Kelvin range.

The same is true for stars. Red dwarf stars are at the cooler end of the stellar spectrum - under 3,500 Kelvin. The yellow-white light of our own star, the Sun, results from its somewhat cozier temperature of around 5,700 Kelvin. The blue supergiant star Rigel in the constellation of Orion produces temperatures closer to 12,000 Kelvin.

