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A Stormy Night Near Milan

As this August, 2014 image of northern Italy brings to light, the white hot lightning generated within storm clouds is quite different than artificially produced city lights.

Light is electromagnetic radiation whose color and temperature are determined by wavelength. Scientists will sometimes use the phrase 'color temperature' when comparing the hue of different light sources.

A bolt of lightning is really just electricity and does not itself have a temperature. The heat actually results from the bolt's interaction with the air that it must pass through in order to complete its circuit between cloud and ground. Air is a poor conductor of electricity, and its resistance to the movement of the bolt's electrical charges generates extreme temperatures of around 50,000 degrees Fahrenheit - five times hotter than the surface of the sun!

By comparison, the 'color temperature' of a typical street lamp is about 5,000 degrees Fahrenheit, which produces a yellowish, amber colored light

