Chapter 23

Comparison and Contrast
Showing Similarities and Differences

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WHEN TO USE COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

FOR COLLEGE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

• For good reasons, comparison-and-contrast topics for tests and special assignments are commonplace across the curriculum. They require the student to acquire, organize, and evaluate ideas. The sources on either side of a comparison and contrast may be abundant in the library and especially on the Internet, but usually the precise relationship of ideas must be established by the student writer.

• A comparison-and-contrast statement for a test or special assignment can be a paragraph or an essay.

IN CAREERS AND AT THE WORKPLACE

• At the workplace, employees prepare comparison-and-contrast studies in anticipation of modifying, acquiring, inventing, or discontinuing products, services, or procedures. The forms for such studies are likely to be standardized and computer-generated, but they use many of the same principles presented in this chapter.

• In determining career direction while still in college or on the job you may use comparison and contrast to assess job descriptions, employment opportunities, and personal satisfaction in different fields.
Comparison and contrast is a method of showing similarities and dissimilarities between subjects. Comparison is concerned with organizing and developing points of similarity; contrast has the same function for dissimilarity. Sometimes a writing assignment may require that you cover only similarities or only dissimilarities. Occasionally, an instructor may ask you to separate one from the other. Usually, you will combine them within the larger design of your paragraph or essay. For convenience, the term comparison is sometimes applied to both comparison and contrast, because both use the same techniques and are usually combined into one operation.

This chapter will help you find topics and choose strategies in writing comparison and contrast.

Generating Topics and Working with the 4 P’s

Comparison and contrast is basic to your thinking. In your daily activities, you consider similarities and dissimilarities between persons, things, concepts, political leaders, doctors, friends, instructors, schools, nations, classes, movies, and so on. You naturally turn to comparison and contrast to solve problems and to make decisions in your actions and in your writing. Because you have had so many comparative experiences, finding a topic to write about is likely to be only a matter of choosing from a great number of appealing ideas. Freewriting, brainstorming, and
clustering will help you generate topics that are especially workable and appropriate for particular assignments.

Many college writing assignments will specify a topic or ask you to choose one from a list. Regardless of the source of your topic, the procedure for developing your ideas by comparison and contrast is the same as the procedure for developing topics of your own choosing. That procedure can be appropriately called the “4 P’s”: purpose, points, pattern, and presentation.

**PURPOSE**

Purpose indicates what you want to accomplish. Are you trying just to give information about the two parts of your subject, showing how they are similar and dissimilar; or are you trying to argue that one side is better than the other, therefore, ranking the two?

For this unit of instruction, the demonstration paragraph and essay were written by Brittany Markovic when she was a student pilot in the Aeronautics Department at Mt. San Antonio College. Her English instructor provided her with a topic of comparison and contrast about two aspects of something within her intended career field. Markovic selected two training aircraft she had flown: the Piper Cherokee and the Cessna 172. Her purpose was to show that one was better than the other for the beginning pilot.

**POINTS**

After you determine your purpose, you might brainstorm by listing the points, or ideas, that can be applied somewhat equally to the two parts of your subject. From such a list, you would then select the points that would be most relevant for your purpose.

Here is Brittany Markovic’s list for her topic of ranking the Piper Cherokee and the Cessna 172. Notice that she first lists possible points and then selects the ones that relate most directly to her central idea of safety inherent in the features of the two airplanes.

- power design
- landing gear
- cabin space affordability
- air frame communication devices
- fuel system steering controls

**PATTERN**

You will now decide on the better way to organize the points as you apply them somewhat equally to the twin parts of your topic: subject by subject (Figure 23.1) or point by point (Figure 23.2). You will use the same information in each pattern, but the pattern, or organization, will be different. Brittany Markovic chose to use the point-by-point pattern.

See pages 447–448 for an example of a paragraph using a subject-by-subject pattern.
PRESENTATION

For the presentation, you will use your outline (or a list with details) to begin writing your paragraph or essay. For the essay, the Roman numerals in the outline usually indicate topic sentences, and, therefore, paragraphs. The Arabic numerals (details, examples, explanations) indicate more specific support.

The first assignment for Brittany Markovic was a paragraph. Toward the end of the semester she accepted the opportunity to amplify her paragraph into an essay. Both are given here. You will see that the essay allowed her the space to explain her topic in much more detail, but both the paragraph and the essay follow the same basic outline. Annotation in the margins indicate the use of the 4 P’s, topic sentences, and transitional devices. Each assignment is career-related.
Pilots, especially new pilots, are divided on their ranking of small training airplanes. Most say the two at the top are the Piper Cherokee and the Cessna 172. As a new pilot who has flown in both, I believe the Cessna 172 is significantly better. All three reasons for my decision—power, design, and fuel system—are tied to safety. Of the three, power is the least decisive point. The Piper has 150 horsepower, and the Cessna has 160. That’s not much difference, but in some situations it’s crucial, and any pilot would be happy to have that extra 10 if things become “challenging.” Next, as for design, some pilots would prefer the sleek Piper with its wing under the fuselage, offering a fine view of the sky above. For me, I like the Cessna, with the wing over the fuselage, allowing me to see the ground easily when I’m landing or taking off. The final point is the fuel delivery system. A pilot wants fuel in the tank and fuel in the carburetor. The Piper Cherokee has a highly rated fuel pump, and for some pilots that may be enough for comfort. But the Cessna 172 has the fuel tank in the wing over the fuselage. The fuel delivery system is “powered” by gravity, something that doesn’t malfunction. So I like both the Piper Cherokee and the Cessna 172, but as someone still learning to fly, I feel more secure in the Cessna, and it gets my vote.
Generating Topics and Working with the 4 P's

The Piper Cherokee, lift 2,400 pounds, has 160 horsepower, and lands at a speed between 60 and 70 knots. All of those factors should be considered in relation to the particular flight. The maximum weight matters little in training flights because they are made without extra passengers and baggage. The landing speeds for the two are also about the same and nonconsequential. The only significant matter is found in the power plant, which favors the Cessna 172 by 10 horsepower, small but in some situations crucial.

That power and speed, of course, must be seen in relation to the design of the aircraft, especially the wing placement. For the Piper Cherokee, the wing is mounted below the cockpit. That design allows for great visibility above the aircraft, which, in turn, is better for observing other aircraft and certain weather conditions. The big problem for the student pilot is that the wing-under arrangement partially blocks the pilot’s view of the runway. On the contrary, the Cessna 172 features a wing over the fuselage, providing the new pilot with a much appreciated better view of the runway. That design allows the student pilot to more easily master the two most difficult maneuvers: taking off and landing.

Another point to consider seriously is the fuel system, for the new pilot has enough things to take care of without having to worry about getting gas to the carburetor. In the wing-under Piper Cherokee, the tanks are in the wing, but because the wings are lower than the engine, the fuel must be pushed to the engine by a fuel pump, and a fuel pump may not work. But that possible problem does not exist in the high-wing Cessna 172. It also has its gas tank in the wing; however, because the wing is above the engine, gravity delivers fuel to the carburetor without need of a pump. When it comes to airplanes, less may be more. We all know that gravity is more reliable than a fuel pump.

The first features, the power for thrust and the landing speed, give the Cessna 172 only a slight edge over the Piper Cherokee. But the other two factors are decisive. Better visibility for takeoffs and landings afforded by the high wing and gas delivered by gravity make the Cessna 172 the better aircraft for student pilots.

When “Either-Or” Matters

Imagine you are on a career quest and you have narrowed vocational fields to two. What is your next step? Naturally you will turn to comparing and contrasting. Or imagine you are at your workplace and you have to decide between two products, two services, two management styles, two labor issues, or two employees for advancement. What pattern of thought does your mind shift to? Of course, again it is comparison and contrast.

Using the 4 P’s System for Speaking and Writing

If your mind sometimes drifts around—going back and forth, up and down, sideways and other ways—as you compare and contrast, then the ideas that come out of your mouth or your computer printer will be jumbled. If, however, you have a system—say, the 4 P’s, with purpose, points, pattern, and presentation—you will
have order, and you can avoid needless repetition, overlooked ideas, and wandering thoughts. In both the written and the oral presentation, the 4 P’s will provide order and a logical arrangement of ideas. The kind of outline you use in writing serves you equally well in speaking, especially as a framework for PowerPoint presentations. You need only consider your audience, organize your thoughts according to your system, and proceed to communicate. Should this be a competitive situation, you will not be the one left coughing in the winner’s trail dust.

**The 4 P’s as an Academic Gift That Is Portable**

In the example shown in the demonstration paragraph and essay on pages 442–443, in which she evaluates the Piper Cherokee and the Cessna 172, student Brittany Markovic writes about aircraft she has flown in a community college aeronautics program. She may continue to fly those models when she moves into her career as a pilot. Her writing is a product comparison. It is a good model for an employee writing a comparative study for the lease or purchase of any vehicle—such as a truck, a pickup, or a forklift. But with little modification it could be a comparison and contrast of two products that are sold or used at a workplace. Markovic was in school when she wrote her essay, but she could just as easily have been already working in aeronautics and studying the same thing concurrently in her college class.

Moreover, the 4 P’s system that Markovic employs can be used both in college career-related areas of study and at the workplace, because it fits so many different situations and needs. This flexible, systematic way for organizing ideas is an academic gift that just keeps on giving as you use it in the classroom, use it at your job, and perhaps use it repeatedly for training and retraining, maybe even at the same college.

**Transitional Words**

Consider using the following transitional words to improve coherence by connecting ideas with ideas, sentences with sentences, and paragraphs with paragraphs.

**FOR COMPARISON AND CONTRAST:**

Comparison: in the same way, similarly, likewise, also, by comparison, in a like manner, as, with, as though, both, like, just as

Contrast: but, by contrast, in contrast, despite, however, instead, nevertheless, on [to] the contrary, in spite of, still, yet, unlike, even so, rather than, otherwise

**FOR ALL PATTERNS OF WRITING:** The HOTSHOT CAT words: However, Otherwise, Therefore, Similarly, Hence, On the other hand, Then, Consequently, Also, Thus (See pages 74–75 for additional transitional words.)
EXERCISE 1  A Text-Based Activity for Groups or Individuals

This photo of a Smart Car and a Hummer naturally invites an exercise in using the 4P’s for a comparative study. Keeping your transportation needs and value system in mind and ignoring the purchase price, imagine you are about to buy one of the two vehicles (thereby imposing ranking, or purpose). Then proceed to list possible points, choosing features you could apply for your evaluation. If your instructor requires, continue with pattern and presentation as you select three or more of the points and write a paragraph or an essay.

Answers will vary.

Points, or Features, for Comparative Study

1. Style and image
2. Mileage and maintenance
3. Power
4. Passenger and cargo area
5. Handling in traffic, parking ease
6. Safety

Practicing Patterns of Comparison and Contrast

Shorter compositions such as paragraphs are likely to be arranged subject by subject, and longer compositions such as essays are likely to be arranged point by point, although either pattern can work in either length. In longer works, especially in published writing, the two patterns may be mixed. Being able to organize your material quickly and effectively according to the pattern that is best for your material is important to your success as a writer. Even in a timed assignment, make a simple scratch outline that will guide you in writing a piece that is unified and coherent.
EXERCISE 2 Completing Patterns of Comparison and Contrast

Fill in the blanks to complete the following outlines.

A. Subject-by-subject pattern

Friends: Marla and Justine

I. Marla  
   A. Appearance  
   B.  
   C. Dependability (possible answer)

II. Justine  
   A. Appearance  
   B. Personality  
   C. Dependability (possible answer—should be the same as IC)

B. Point-by-point pattern

Two bosses: Mr. Santo and Ms. Elliott

I. Disposition  
   A. Mr. Santo  
   B. Ms. Elliott

II. Knowledge of business (possible answer)  
   A. Mr. Santo  
   B. Ms. Elliott

III. Intelligence (possible answer)  
   A. Mr. Santo  
   B. Ms. Elliott

C. Subject-by-subject pattern

Two schools you have attended (or another approved topic)

I.  
   A.  
   B.  
   C. 

II.  
   A.  
   B.  
   C. 
D. Point-by-point pattern

Two jobs you have had (or another approved topic)

I. __________________________________________________ (point)
   A. ________________________________________________ (subject)
   B. ________________________________________________ (subject)

II. __________________________________________________ (point)
   A. ________________________________________________ (subject)
   B. ________________________________________________ (subject)

III. __________________________________________________ (point)
   A. ________________________________________________ (subject)
   B. ________________________________________________ (subject)

Readings for Critical Thinking, Discussion, and Writing

READING STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

Underlining and annotating these reading selections will help you answer the questions that follow the selections, discuss the material in class, and prepare for reading-based writing assignments. As you underline and annotate, pay special attention to the author’s writing skills, logic, and message, and consider the relevance of the material to your own experiences and values.

Some selections begin with a Mindset suggestion that can help you create a readiness for connecting with what you are about to read.

PARAGRAPH

The Temple and the Cathedral

LOUISE DUDLEY AND AUSTIN FARICY

Buildings do more than serve as shelter and objects of beauty. They also reflect a society’s values and aspirations. Louise Dudley and Austin Faricy show that it is not a matter of chance that the Greek temple and the medieval cathedral have certain characteristics.

The Greek temple is classic and the medieval cathedral is romantic. Both are religious edifices, but they show a difference in the attitudes that created them, a difference far deeper than the dissimilarities of construction and mechanics. The Greek temple is hard, bright, exact, calm and complete; the walls and the columns are no higher than will stand of their own strength; the lintels and the roof are simple, sane, and sensible. Nothing more is attempted than can be accomplished and the result is a perfect building, finished and finite. Anyone can understand its main construction at a glance. The Gothic cathedral, on the other hand, is built on the principle of balance. The openings are not made with lintels but are arched. One stone is held in place only by
its relation to the other stones. The walls will not stand alone; they must be buttressed. As the walls go higher the arches become more pointed, the roof becomes steeper, and the buttresses are strengthened with pinnacles and flying buttresses, the whole so carefully and cleverly balanced that a fault in one stone might cause a wall or even the entire building to collapse. The whole cannot be grasped at a glance; one is conscious only of its great complexity, its infinite variety, its striving upward and beyond.

EXERCISE 3 Discussion and Critical Thinking

1. Does this selection stress comparison or contrast?
   Contrast

2. Is the purpose mainly to inform or to persuade?
   To inform

3. What are the points (there may be only one) in this study?
   Construction and mechanics

4. Is the pattern mainly subject by subject or point by point? Make a simple outline of the pattern here.
   Subject by subject
   I. Greek
      A. Built on principle of strength
      B. Simple to grasp
   II. Gothic
      A. Built on principle of balance
      B. Not simple to grasp

ESSAYS

From B’wood to the ‘Hood
RYAN J. SMITH
A Los Angeles Times researcher, Ryan J. Smith writes about living on the different sides of town: South Los Angeles and the Westside. His relocation is more than geography. This article was published in the Los Angeles Times on February 19, 2006.

Imagine you have had a change in fortune and are now about to return to your roots. How do you expect to feel there?

1. When I broke the news to my mother that I was moving from Brentwood to the ‘hood, she immediately began praying for my protection. When I told friends and colleagues at work of my planned move toward South L.A., they would pause and whisper, “Oh.” Not just any “Oh,” mind you, but one freighted with “Good luck, hope you don’t get shot.” Strangers thought I was living out the pilgrimage of a young black man who, after a stint on the “outside,” was returning to his roots.

2. That couldn’t be further from the truth. I was raised by my mother in Culver City before it became “on the Westside.” I attended UCLA and settled in
Brentwood after graduation. But I needed to escape a bad roommate situation, and my father, separated from my mom, offered me his vacant apartment near Jefferson Park in the Crenshaw district.

At first I thought I couldn’t survive a move south. I’d tried the ‘hood in the early 1990s, when the movie “Malcolm X” came out and my mother decided I needed to know “my people.” So I bypassed my usual summer YMCA experience for a camp close to Baldwin Village known as the “Jungles” because of the rampant gang activity nearby. I was called everything in the book. “Why do you talk so white, white boy?” was a frequent question as I was being punched. At night, I cried, but I never told Mom about my camp experiences. One day, though, she coyly smiled and asked, “Black folks sure can be mean, can’t they?”

Older, more culturally aware and growing ever more desperate to leave Brentwood, I decided to face my childhood demons and take my father up on his offer. The area seemed no different than other urban landscapes in Los Angeles. But adjustments needed to be made. I soon got used to the nighttime “ghettobirds” (helicopters) that plagued the community, and the annoying chime of ice cream trucks that made their neighborhood rounds at midnight. To better fit in, I walked around with a no-nonsense ‘hood face—which only made it more obvious that I was not from the neighborhood.

“Why did you do that, baby? You have to make sure all your doors are locked!” Aunt Cathy playfully chided me when I told her I didn’t regularly lock my car. Note to self: Lock everything! My parents also reminded me of the do’s and don’ts when (not if) the police pulled me over. Their advice came in handy one Halloween night when two officers cuffed me and put me in the back of a squad car while they scanned my nonexistent record. Only my embarrassing temptation to blurt out that I grew up on the Westside contained my rage.

More discomfiting than the dangers I have to be wary of are the conveniences I miss. I yearn for Jamba Juice and La Salsa—anything but Jack in the Box or McDonald’s. A privilege I took for granted—anytime access to an ATM—ends after 10 p.m. on Crenshaw Boulevard. Nighttime jogging is also out in my new neighborhood. But the Magic Johnson theater at Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza is as good as the Century City cineplex. The smothered chicken and greens at Chef Marilyn’s 99-Cents-and-Up Soul Food Express makes me quickly forget the lack of sushi eateries nearby. My neighbors ask how my family and I are doing, a social custom rare on the Westside.

I also have become reacquainted with my younger half-brother, who lives nearby. After being shot in a gang altercation, he speaks of his struggle to stay off the streets. His dreams are often tarnished by his quest to avoid jail, drugs and death—a story I hear from too many young men his age.

Far more consequential, my color is not what defines me. I’m not seen as a tall black guy, lanky black man or the loud black dude. No woman clutches her purse when she sees me approaching. No walker quickens his step when I am spotted behind him. No one rushes to open a door when I walk down a hall. In my mostly black and Latino neighborhood, my race is no longer a prelude to my being.

I don’t ache for the conveniences and glamour of my former “home.” I drink coffee in Leimert Park. I cruise Crenshaw Boulevard instead of Pacific Coast Highway, enjoying the comforts of my newfound home—doors locked, of course.
EXERCISE 4 Discussion and Critical Thinking

1. What is Smith’s subject of this comparison and contrast?
   His move from the Westside to South Los Angeles.

2. What is his purpose?
   He shows the differences of the two areas. But he and his readers can easily imagine the differences. We are especially interested to see his reaction to the new conditions in South Los Angeles, following his residence in the Westside.

3. Does Smith use a point-by-point or a subject-by-subject pattern?
   Point-by-point.

4. What points does he use for his comparison and contrast?
   I. Camp experiences
      A. Summer YMCA
      B. Baldwin Village
   II. Atmosphere in the two locations
      A. Westside
      B. South Los Angeles
   III. Conveniences
      A. Westside
      B. South Los Angeles
   IV. Associates
      A. Westside
      B. South Los Angeles
   V. Reactions to his color
      A. Westside
      B. South Los Angeles

5. In his conclusion (last paragraph), does Smith seem to prefer the Westside or South Los Angeles for a home neighborhood? Discuss.
   Answers may vary. He does not “ache for the conveniences and glamour of [his] former ‘home.’” He enjoys the comforts of South Los Angeles, but he keeps his doors locked.

A Mixed Tex-Cal Marriage

José Antonio Burciaga

A distinguished publisher and writer, José Antonio Burciaga died in 1996, leaving his readers a rich legacy of poems, short stories, and essays. He was a Chicano cultural activist, muralist, humorist, and founding member of the comedy group Culture Clash. His Undocumented Love won the Before Columbus American Book Award for poetry in 1992. This essay, about him and his wife, is included in his book Drink Cultura (1993).

We all carry around a bag of stereotypes that we often open up for our first reactions to whatever we encounter. For example, what do you think of first when you hear the term mixed marriage?

1. According to Cecilia, my wife, we have a mixed marriage. She’s from California, I’m from Texas. Though we have no regrets, this truly proves that love is blind.
2. When Cecilia and I first met, we thought we had a lot in common. As young, professional Chicanos in Washington, D.C., we both supported the United Farm Workers’ grape and lettuce boycotts, the Coors boycott, the Gallo Wine
boycott, the Farah Pants boycott, and the Frito Bandido boycott. We still boycott some of those items, for many reasons: health, habit, nostalgia or plain, ordinary guilt if we indulged in any of these.

3 As first-generation Mexican-Americans, we both spoke Español, graduated from Catholic schools, and had similar politics.

4 But, as we were soon to discover, the vast desert that separates Texas and California also differentiates the culture and style of Chicanos. Because we met far from Texas and California, we had no idea at first of the severity of our differences.

5 We both liked enchiladas—the same enchiladas, I thought, until the first time Cecilia prepared them. They looked like enchiladas, and they smelled like enchiladas. And then I bit into one.

6 “These are good, corazón,” I said. “But these are entomatadas. They have more tomato than chile. Mi Mamá used to make them all the time.”

7 She threw me a piquant stare as I chewed away. “Hmmm, they’re great!” I stressed through a mouthful.

8 Californians, like her parents who immigrated from the coastal state of Jalisco, Mexico, use more tomatoes than Texans like my parents, who came from the central states of Durango and Zacatecas and use more chiles.

9 Cecilia grew up with white menudo, tripe soup. White menudo? How could anyone eat colorless menudo? And not put hominy in it? Ours was red-hot and loaded with hominy. In Texas, we ate our menudo with bread. In California, it’s with tortillas. Texas flour tortillas are thick and tasty, California flour tortillas are so thin you can see through them.

10 She didn’t particularly like my Tony Lama boots or my country-western and Tex-Mex musical taste. I wasn’t that crazy about Beach Boys music or her progressive, California-style country-western.

11 In California, the beach was relatively close for Cecilia. On our first date she asked how often I went to the beach from El Paso. Apparently, geography has never been a hot subject in California schools. That’s understandable considering the sad state of education, especially geography, in this country. But in Texas, at one time the biggest state in the union, sizes and distances are most important.

12 In answer to Cecilia’s question, I explained that to get to the closest beach from El Paso, I had to cross New Mexico, Arizona and California to reach San Diego. That’s 791 freeway miles. The closest Texas beach is 841 freeway miles to the Gulf of Mexico.

13 Back when we were courting, California Chicanos saw Texanos as a little too Mexicano, still wet behind the ears, not assimilated enough, and speaking with either thick Spanish accents or “Taxes acksaints.”

14 Generally speaking, Texanos saw their Califas counterparts as too weird, knowing too little if any Spanish and with speech that was too Anglicized.

15 After our marriage we settled in neutral Alexandria, Virginia, right across the Potomac from the nation’s capital. We lived there a couple of years, and when our firstborn came, we decided to settle closer to home. But which home, Califas or Texas? In El Paso we wouldn’t be close to the beach, but I thought there was an ocean of opportunity in that desert town. There was some Texas pride and machismo, to be sure. It was a tug-of-war that escalated to the point of seeking advice, and eventually I had to be realistic and agree that California had better opportunities. In El Paso, the opportunities in my field were nonexistent.

16 The rest is relative bliss. Married since 1972, I’m totally spoiled and laid-back in Northern Califas, but I still miss many of those things we took for granted in Texas, or Washington, D.C.—the seasonal changes, the snow, the heat, heating systems, autumn colors, and monsoon rains; the smell of the desert after a rain, the silence and serenity of the desert, the magnified
Chapter 23  Comparison and Contrast: Showing Similarities and Differences

EXERCISE 5  Discussion and Critical Thinking

1. Which sentence states the thesis most emphatically (see paragraph 1)? Copy it here.
   “According to Cecilia, my wife, we have a mixed marriage.”

2. In paragraphs 6 through 15, what are the three points used for comparison and contrast?
   Food: Texas hot versus California mild
   Culture: beach versus Texas border town
   Language: Texas with accent versus California assimilated

3. In paragraphs 16 and 17, Burciaga discusses how he has changed. In what ways does that imply comparison and contrast?
   We come to understand the differences between Texas and California regarding weather, scenes, food, and drink.

4. Because all of us are culturally complex, being the products of many cultures, we frequently blend and clash with others in matters of age, ethnicity, gender, sexual preferences, religion, and so on. As for the broad concept of “mixed marriage,” were Cecilia and José fairly typical compared with other marriage partners you know? Do you have some examples of those more extreme and less extreme? You might also discuss this topic in connection with friendships you have or know about.
   Answers will vary.

STUDENT PARAGRAPH AND ESSAY

Writing Process Worksheet

Name  Charles Yang  Title  Chinese Parents and American Parents  Due Date  Tuesday, March 27, 1 p.m.

Use the back of this page or separate paper if you need more space.

Assignment

In the space below, write whatever you need to know about your assignment, including information about the topic, audience, pattern of writing, length, whether to include a rough draft or revised drafts, and whether your paper must be typed.
Compare and contrast two kinds of families according to parenting styles. The styles may come from cultural backgrounds or individual philosophies. Submit this completed worksheet, a rough draft marked for revision, and a typed final draft of about 250 words.

**Stage One**

**Explore** Freewrite, brainstorm (list), cluster, or take notes as directed by your instructor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>—showing love</td>
<td>—showing love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—saying “I’m sorry”</td>
<td>—saying “I’m sorry”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—attitude toward school</td>
<td>—attitude toward school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—teaching right from wrong</td>
<td>—teaching right from wrong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Stage Two**

**Organize** Write a topic sentence or thesis; label the subject and the focus parts.

Parents from different cultures have different ways of expressing love. 

I. Chinese
   A. Way of relating to children
   B. Way of guiding children

II. American
   A. Way of relating to children
   B. Way of guiding children

**Stage Three**

**Write** On separate paper, write and then revise your paragraph or essay as many times as necessary for coherence, language (usage, tone, and diction), unity, emphasis, support, and sentences (CLUESS). Read your work aloud to hear and correct any grammatical errors or awkward-sounding sentences.

Edit any problems in fundamentals, such as capitalization, omissions, punctuation, and spelling (COPS).

**CHINESE PARENTS AND AMERICAN PARENTS**

*Charles Yang*

We Chinese are brought up with the idea that all parents are good. Therefore, I never doubt the love my parents feel for me. However, now that I am in the United States, I can see that parents from different cultures have different ways of expressing love. The Chinese way is protective and directive. Chinese parents express their love by caring about what their children are becoming. They seldom say “I love you” to their children because within our traditional culture it would be undignified to do so. They also do not want to say they are sorry because that might imply that they have been bad parents. They want their children to be well educated so that they will be successful as adults. They are strict in teaching right from wrong, and they dictate the highest standards of achievement in school, often even selecting career paths for their children. The American parents, on the other hand, treat their
children differently. They are more open with them and more democratic. They say “I love you” and even “I’m sorry.” They give their children many choices about studying and choosing careers. They try to teach their children how to make good choices and how to be personally responsible. Thus, in many cases, the American children have greater opportunities than Chinese to be what they wish. American pressure is especially from within, and Americans delight in “finding” themselves. Chinese children respond well to the pressure from their families and statistically do better on tests and in qualifying for top universities. Both Chinese and American parents love their children, but each culture provides its own expression.

EXERCISE 6 Discussion and Critical Thinking

1. Is the purpose of this comparison and contrast to inform or to convince?
   To inform.

2. Is this paragraph organized as point by point or subject by subject?
   Subject by subject.

3. What are the main points in Yang’s study?
   Ways of relating to children, ways of guiding children.

4. Does Yang seem to express a preference for one type of family? Explain.
   Answers will vary.

5. Do you think Yang will embrace the traditional Chinese family attitudes or the typical American ones when he has his own family? Explain.
   Answers will vary. He will probably be more open with his children than his parents were with theirs.

6. As a point of logic, when Yang refers to “Chinese parents,” “Chinese children,” “American parents,” and “American children,” does he overgeneralize? If he does overgeneralize, how does that flaw in logic damage his paragraph?
   Yang does overgeneralize, damaging his paper significantly. His paragraph would have been stronger if he had written about Chinese who have recently immigrated and Americans he knew from his, say, high school.

7. Who are the Americans?
   He probably has the white middle class in mind.

READING-BASED WRITING

The Orderly, the Disorderly, and the Illogical: A Two-Part Response to “The Messy Are in Denial”

BILL WALKER

Bill Walker’s assignment was to read “The Messy Are in Denial” by Joyce Gallagher and to write a two-part response. The summary part would show Walker’s understanding of the main ideas. The reaction part would present his evaluation of the ideas. The topic was a good one for him because he could easily relate to the subject material. Note that he follows a simple progression: What does the text mean? How logical is it? How does it relate to my experience? The last paragraph includes Walker’s comparison and contrast.
Summary

In “The Messy Are in Denial” Joyce Gallagher explains that there are two kinds of people, the orderly and the disorderly. She discusses them according to their state of mind, behavior, and group history.

As for state of mind, the disorganized people live for tomorrow. They are the daydreamers and seers. They can be creative, sometimes as “artists” and “musicians,” but also “flakes” (285). The orderly, on the other hand, are practical people who put things and keep things in order.

Their behavior is consistent with their state of mind. The disorderly collect all kinds of items and do not throw them away. They “run the risk of inundating themselves with their own junk” (285). The orderly are the opposite. They throw things away, clean up, and organize. They make life possible for the disorganized. The author is married to a disorganized person. She understands his nature and her purpose.

Gallagher says that historically these two groups have evolved according to natural selection. She reasons that Neanderthals were too disorganized and were replaced by the better-organized homo sapiens, who are comparatively neat. She says artists’ drawings show the Neanderthals to be messy and poorly dressed. She imagines that throughout history the organized have helped the disorganized in their daily lives.

Reaction

In “The Messy Are in Denial,” Joyce Gallagher has written a mostly thoughtful and often-funny essay. The main flaw in her reasoning is that she gives the impression that people can be grouped as “either/or.” One group is organized and neat; the other is disorganized and messy. Those groups do exist, but they are at the extremes. People can tend toward being messy without being really sloppy and disorganized. The people who cannot throw anything away are sometimes called pack rats. They actually have a psychological problem, and some receive treatment for the condition. They may have a room full of newspapers and another full of candy wrappers.

Other people are at the other end of the spectrum. They cannot stand anything out of order. They will walk across the room of another person’s house and straighten a napkin. I have a neighbor who actually vacuums her driveway to free it of dust. Those people are the germaphobes and other obsessive-compulsives of the world. They are so concerned about order that they can hardly function in society. Between those two groups on the fringes are those of us who just have a tendency toward messiness or neatness. Even then, some people are neat about one thing—their dress or car—and messy about something else—their yard or home.

If we are close to the disorganized fringe group on the scale, we may very well need help from someone from the organized fringe group. Gallagher says her husband brings home mass quantities of junk from yard sales and she donates it to charitable institutions. Her job is “to offset every shopping binge of the sloppy” (285). Yet one may balance the other. She even mentions that the disorganized may be “lovable flakes” (285).

Gallagher is wrong in not considering the huge middle group of people, but she has made me laugh at and think about things in my home life. My wife tends toward the organized, and I tend toward the disorganized. She makes our home livable, and I provide variety and keep away the monotony. After reading “The Messy Are in Denial,” I have become more
aware that both my wife and I do not give each other enough credit for our differences. In appreciation of her neatness, this weekend I will go out to a yard sale and buy her some fine presents.

Work Cited

Suggested Topics and Prompts for Writing Comparison and Contrast

You will find a blank Writing Process Worksheet on page 6 of this book and on your Student Companion Site. It can be photocopied or printed out, filled in, and submitted with your assignment, if your instructor directs you to do so.

READING-BASED WRITING

Reading-based writing requires you to read critically, write a reply that shows you understand what you have read, and give credit for ideas you borrow and words you quote. The form can be a summary, a reaction, or a two-part response (with separated summary and reaction). Documentation, in which you give credit for borrowed ideas and words, can be either formal (MLA) or informal, as directed by your instructor. Both the forms of reading-based writing and documentation are discussed with examples in Chapter 1. Definitions of the three forms follow.

Summary

• The summary is a statement presenting only the main points of what you have read by using different wording without altering the meaning, adding information, or showing bias.
• It is the purest form of reading-based writing.

Reaction

• In the reaction, the meaning of what you have read will be central to the topic sentence of your paragraph or to the thesis of your essay.
• Although the reaction is not a personal narrative by itself, it may include personal experience to explain elements of the text. For example, if your source is about driving styles, your own experiences as a driver or an observer of drivers could be relevant in your analysis of the text.
• The reaction may incorporate a summary to convey a broad view of what you have read, but your summary should never be the main part of your reaction.

Two-Part Response

• The two-part response separates the summary from the reaction.
• This form will give you practice in separating your objective summary in the first part from your more personal evaluation, interpretation, or application in the second part, the reaction.
READING-BASED WRITING TOPICS

“From B’wood to the ’Hood”

1. If you have lived in two different (culturally, economically, socially) parts of a city and struggled with your own adjustments, write about those experiences. Consider trailer-park units and townhouses, company houses and private neighborhoods, barrios and places like Smith’s Westside, apartment buildings and private homes, car or camper living and house living, and homeless living and home (of any kind) living. Refer to and quote from the article by Smith to connect his insights with yours, in either agreement or disagreement.

2. Write a two-part response to Smith’s essay. Separate your summary from your reaction in which you evaluate his views or relate them to your own experiences. Use quotations and direct references.

“A Mixed Tex-Cal Marriage”

3. Using the structural points and insights of this essay for direction, write about a marriage or relationship between two individuals who are significantly different from each other. Consider making a list of their possible differences (such as religion; education; country, regional, city, or suburban background; politics; ethnicity; and preferences for food, activities, or behavior). In your discussion, do not overlook the common characteristics that have brought and kept them together, and briefly discuss how each person has compromised. Explain how your subject couple is different from and similar to Burciaga and his wife. Use references and quotations.

4. Write a two-part response to Burciaga's essay. In your reaction, explain how Burciaga makes a powerful and colorful statement that does much to counteract the stereotyping of ethnic groups, saying in effect, “He’s just like the rest of us.” Document it.

“Chinese Parents and American Parents”

5. Write a reaction to Yang’s paragraph in which you examine it for logic. He writes about “Chinese parents” and “Chinese children” and about “American parents” and “American children.” Does he overgeneralize? What are the differences among Chinese parents and among children living in America, especially those from different generations and from different social and economic groups? Are the differences among Americans, parents and children, also likely to be significant? Moreover, how do you think Yang defines “American”? To what extent does his failure to qualify words damage his paragraph, which happens to provide some good insights and is related with remarkable balance of preference?

“The Orderly, the Disorderly, and the Illogical”

6. Use ideas about orderly and disorderly people found in Walker’s two-part response to write a comparison-and-contrast paragraph or essay about a neat person and a messy person. Refer to and quote from Walker’s response.
Chapter 23 Comparison and Contrast: Showing Similarities and Differences

**GENERAL TOPICS**

7. Write a paragraph or an essay of comparison and contrast about two churches or temples as you explain how their structures reflect different religious views of what human beings are and what they should be. For a useful model of form on a similar subject, review “The Temple and the Cathedral” on pages 447–448.

8. Write a paragraph or an essay of comparison and contrast about how the design and structure of a particular mall versus randomly spaced or a cluster of neighborhood stores in terms of how they represent different attitudes toward what society wants and needs. Include your views on what you think is best. For a useful model of form on a similar subject, review “The Temple and the Cathedral” on pages 447–448.

9. Narrow one of the following topics for a paragraph or short essay. For example, “Methods of Disciplining Children” may be too broad, but “Two Parents, Two Styles of Discipline,” with names given, might work well.
   a. Romantic attachments
   b. Methods of disciplining children
   c. Courage and recklessness
   d. Hope and expectations
   e. Relatives
   f. Passive student and active student
   g. Two dates
   h. Two bosses
   i. Married and living together
   j. Two malls

**CROSS-CURRICULAR TOPICS**

10. In the field of your interest or involvement, compare and contrast two theories, two prominent people, two practices, two products, or two services.

11. In the fields of nutritional science and health, compare and contrast two diets, two exercise programs, or two pieces of exercise equipment.

12. Compare and contrast your field of study (or one aspect of it) as it existed some time ago (specify the years) and as it is now. Refer to new developments and discoveries, such as scientific breakthroughs and technological advances.

**CAREER-RELATED TOPICS**

13. Select two competing businesses, such as Home Depot and Lowes, and write a paragraph or an essay to show that one is better. Support should come from your experience, independent judgment, and, perhaps, from the
Internet or library sources. Use points that apply somewhat equally to both businesses. You will see that those are the same kinds of points that would be used as talking points for a PowerPoint presentation at the workplace. For a helpful model for form, review the paragraph and the essay on the Piper Cherokee and the Cessna 172 on pages 442–443.

14. Write a paragraph or an essay on two cars, two pickups, or two motorcycles to show that one is better than the other for particular needs or purposes (such as everyday driving or certain kinds of work or recreation). Use the Internet or library sources to collect specific information. Give credit to your source(s). For a helpful model for form and similar subject material, review the paragraph and the essay on the Piper Cherokee and the Cessna 172 on pages 442–443.

15. Compare and contrast two products or services, with the purpose of showing that one is better.

16. Compare and contrast two management styles or two working styles.

17. Compare and contrast the operations of a public school and a business.

18. Compare and contrast the operations of an athletic team and a business.

**WRITER’S GUIDELINES**  **Comparison and Contrast**

1. Work with the 4 P’s:
   - **Purpose:** Decide whether you want to inform (show relationships) or to persuade (show that one side is better).
   - **Points:** Decide which ideas you will apply to each side. Consider beginning by making a list to select from. Order can be based on time, space, or emphasis.
   - **Pattern:** Decide whether to use subject-by-subject or point-by-point organization.
   - **Presentation:** Decide to what extent you should develop your ideas. Use references to the other side to make connections and use examples and details to support your views.

2. Your basic subject-by-subject outline will probably look like this:
   I. Subject 1
      A. Point 1
      B. Point 2
      C. Point 3
   II. Subject 2
      A. Point 1
      B. Point 2
      C. Point 3

3. Your basic point-by-point outline will probably look like this:
   I. Point 1
      A. Subject 1
      B. Subject 2
II. Point 2
   A. Subject 1
   B. Subject 2
III. Point 3
   A. Subject 1
   B. Subject 2

4. Use the 4 P's for cross-curricular and career-related writing.
   • Adapt it for different topics.
   • Use the outline entries for points in PowerPoint.

5. Write and revise.
   • Write and then revise your paragraph or essay as many times as necessary for coherence, language (usage, tone, and diction), unity, emphasis, support, and sentences (CLUESS). Read your work aloud to hear and correct any grammatical errors or awkward-sounding sentences.
   • Edit any problems in fundamentals, such as capitalization, omissions, punctuation, and spelling (COPS).