

Comparison-Contrast Essay

In Unit 3 and in your own life, you have encountered people and situations that can be compared. Identifying similarities and differences between two subjects can help you understand both of them more clearly. In this workshop, you will write a comparison-contrast essay that examines how two subjects are alike and different.



Complete the workshop activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

WRITE WITH A PURPOSE

WRITING PROMPT

Write a **comparison-contrast essay** in which you describe the similarities and differences between two subjects, such as fictional characters, real people, places, or events.

Idea Starters

- two literary characters who confront similar conflicts
- two friends, siblings, or other relatives
- family rituals from two cultures
- the first and last days of school
- your neighborhood and a friend's

THE ESSENTIALS

Here are some common purposes, audiences, and formats for comparison-contrast writing.

PURPOSES	AUDIENCES	GENRES/FORMATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to understand two subjects better • to inform others about two subjects • to decide between two choices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • classmates and teacher • friends • community members • Web users • customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • essay for class • friendly letter or e-mail • review in a newsletter or newspaper • blog • product review • Web site



TEXAS KEY TRAITS

1. FOCUS AND COHERENCE

- identifies the **subjects** being compared and contrasted
- includes a **thesis statement** that identifies similarities and differences
- maintains **focus** throughout the essay

2. ORGANIZATION

- has a logical and consistent **organization**
- uses **transitions** to link ideas

3. DEVELOPMENT OF IDEAS

- examines several **key similarities and differences**
- includes **examples** to support each point

4. VOICE

- has an **engaging tone**
- uses **language** that is appropriate for the audience and purpose

5. CONVENTIONS

- uses sound **sentence structures**
- employs **correct grammar, mechanics, and spelling**

Writing Online



Go to thinkcentral.com.
KEYWORD: HML8-438



Planning/Prewriting



WRITING 14A–B Plan a first draft by determining appropriate topics and developing a thesis; choose an appropriate organizational strategy (compare-contrast). **17A** Write a multi-paragraph essay.

Getting Started

CHOOSE YOUR SUBJECTS

You will find it easiest to compare and contrast two people, places, events, or characters that you have an interest in or know well. Use the Idea Starters on page 438 to help you list possible subjects for your essay. Make sure that you can identify both similarities and differences between each pair of subjects.

▶ WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- my cousin's town and mine
- my two dogs
- two main characters: Joby from "The Drummer Boy of Shiloh" and Sam from "Hallucination"
 - really different lives and situations
 - some of the same traits

THINK ABOUT AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

After you choose your subjects, consider your **purpose** and **audience**. These two considerations will affect every decision you make, from how much background information to include to which similarities and differences to explore.

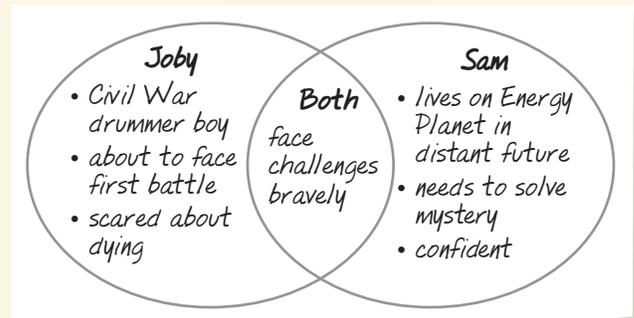
▶ ASK YOURSELF:

- Who is my audience?
- How familiar is my audience with these subjects?
- What background information will my audience need to understand my points?
- Which similarities and differences will my audience find most compelling?

NOTE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Use a graphic organizer, such as a Venn diagram, to record similarities and differences between your subjects. If you have trouble thinking of interesting, important similarities and differences, choose two other subjects.

▶ WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?



STATE YOUR THESIS

Review the similarities and differences that you have identified. What do they help you understand about your subjects? What new insight have you gained? Express this understanding in a **thesis statement**. This sentence should identify your two subjects and your main idea.

▶ WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Subjects: Joby from "The Drummer Boy of Shiloh" and Sam from "Hallucination"

Main idea: They both face challenges with courage.

Thesis statement: Although Joby and Sam, the main characters of these stories, live on different planets during different centuries, both successfully face tremendous challenges.

Planning/Prewriting *continued*

Getting Started

COLLECT SUPPORT

To help your audience understand your subjects more clearly, you need to illustrate their differences and similarities with examples, facts, and quotations. For example, explaining how Joby took the general's words to heart shows how brave he was in the face of war.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Major similarity: Both boys face challenges bravely.

Support: After talking to the general, Joby feels braver. He wants to march into battle calmly. He turns his drum back up.

Support: Sam uses his intelligence to solve the mystery of the hallucinations. He keeps an open mind to help him understand the insects.

ORGANIZE YOUR IDEAS

There are two methods for organizing a comparison-contrast essay:

- **Subject-by-subject organization**—Presents all the points about one subject and then all the points about the other subject. For example, you would discuss the appearance, personality, and actions of one character. Then you would move on to describe those same points for the second character.
- **Point-by-point organization**—Discusses one point at a time, as it applies to both subjects. For example, you would compare the appearances of both characters, then their personalities, and finally their actions. This pattern allows you to examine differences and similarities as you go along.

Try both patterns of organization to see which works better for the content of your essay.

ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS FOR A COMPARISON-CONTRAST ESSAY

Subject by Subject

Subject A

1. Discussion of first point
2. Discussion of second point

Subject B

1. Discussion of first point
2. Discussion of second point

Point by Point

Point 1: Discussion of Subject A
Discussion of Subject B

Point 2: Discussion of Subject A
Discussion of Subject B

PEER REVIEW

Share with a classmate a key point and the evidence you will use to support it. Ask: What additional support might I need to back up my point?



In your *Reader/Writer Notebook*, identify your subjects. Then complete a Venn diagram similar to the one on page 439, identifying key similarities and differences between your two subjects. Write a thesis statement and collect supporting details before you decide how you will organize the body of your essay.



WRITING 14B Develop drafts by building on ideas to create a focused, organized, and coherent piece of writing. **ORAL AND WRITTEN CONVENTIONS 19C** Use a variety of complete sentences that include parallel structures.

Drafting

The following chart shows how to organize your draft effectively.

Organizing a Comparison-Contrast Essay

INTRODUCTION

- Capture your audience's attention with a lively "hook," such as an interesting quotation, a thought-provoking question, or a vivid image.
- Identify your subjects and give any necessary background information.
- State your main idea in a thesis statement.

BODY

- Present your similarities and differences in subject-by-subject or point-by-point order.
- Use transitions, such as *in addition to*, *also*, *however*, and *unlike*, to signal similarities and differences between your subjects.
- Support each key point with examples, facts, or quotations.

CONCLUSION

- Summarize the similarities and differences you discussed.
- Explain why the subjects are important to you.

GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT: PARALLEL STRUCTURE

One way to make sure that your audience can clearly follow your key points is to use parallel structure. **Parallel structure** is the use of more than one word, phrase, or sentence with the same grammatical form. Read the examples in the chart. Not only are sentences that use parallel structure clearer to understand, but they also flow more smoothly.

Mixed Structure

Sam is confident and having determination.

There's not much he can do except worry and wait for morning to come and the beginning of the battle.

Parallel Structure

Sam is confident and determined.

There's not much he can do except worry and wait for morning to come and battle to begin.



Develop a first draft of your essay, following the plan outlined in the chart above. As you write, make sure that you use parallel structure to link related ideas so that you make them easier to understand.

Revising

The revising stage allows you to make changes to your draft that will improve its content and organization. Your goal is to determine if you have shown how your two subjects are alike and different. You must also communicate to your audience why the subjects are important to you. This chart can help you revise your draft.

COMPARISON-CONTRAST ESSAY		
Ask Yourself	Tips	Revision Strategies
1. Does the introduction grab the audience's attention?	▶ Put stars next to questions, quotations, or details that would interest the audience.	▶ Add a surprising or interesting detail to the beginning of the introduction. Rearrange sentences to place the most attention-grabbing sentence first.
2. Does the introduction have a clear thesis statement?	▶ Underline the thesis statement. Ask a peer to read it and summarize the main idea of your essay.	▶ Add a thesis statement, or replace the existing thesis to more clearly describe the main idea of your essay.
3. Does the essay discuss several similarities or differences? Do they support the thesis?	▶ Write an <i>S</i> over ways in which the subjects are similar; write a <i>D</i> over their differences.	▶ Eliminate similarities or differences that do not support the thesis. Add others that do.
4. Do examples, facts, and quotations support key points?	▶ Circle evidence that supports each similarity or difference.	▶ Add evidence as needed to support each similarity or difference.
5. Does the essay have a logical and consistent organization?	▶ In the margin, label the organization as subject-by-subject or point-by-point. Write <i>1</i> above each point about the first subject and <i>2</i> above each point about the second subject.	▶ If necessary, rearrange points to follow a consistent organizational pattern.
6. Does the conclusion show why the subjects are important to the writer?	▶ Put a check mark next to the sentences that explain the subjects' significance.	▶ Add an explanation, if necessary. Revise your conclusion to clarify the importance of your subjects.



PEER REVIEW

Exchange essays with a classmate. As you read your partner's essay, focus on the development of key points and the clarity of the organization. Provide a brief comment sheet, referring to revision strategies from the chart that might help improve the essay.



WRITING 14C Revise drafts to ensure precise word choice and vivid images.

ANALYZE A STUDENT DRAFT

Read this student's draft and the comments about it. Use it as a model for revising your own comparison-contrast essay.

Different Worlds, Similar Challenges

by Tyler Kurcewski, West Fairview Intermediate School

1 I am comparing the short stories “The Drummer Boy of Shiloh” by Ray Bradbury and “Hallucination” by Isaac Asimov. Although Joby and Sam, the main characters of these stories, live on different planets during different centuries, both successfully face tremendous challenges.

2 The situations that these characters encounter are quite different, at least on the outside. Joby is a drummer boy in the army during the Civil War. His unit is camped on the field near where the battle will take place the next day. As a drummer boy, he could be hurt or even killed in the battle. In contrast, Sam, the main character of “Hallucination,” is on a futuristic planet somewhere in the universe. He has been sent there by the Central Computer. His own life is not in danger, but he must solve the mystery of the hallucinations if the project is to succeed.

3 The way they handle their problems is also very different at first. Joby seems weak and frightened. He's afraid to die and lies crying in the dark. There's not much he can do except worry and wait for morning to come and battle to begin. Unlike Joby, Sam is confident and determined. He ignores the assignment he's been sent to work on and investigates the hallucinations on his own.

Tyler's first sentence simply states the titles and authors of the stories he will compare. To make his introduction more interesting, he needs to add an **attention grabber**.

Tyler ends his introduction with a strong **thesis statement**.

For his essay, Tyler has chosen a **point-by-point organization**.

LEARN HOW Use **Attention Grabbers to Add Interest** Tyler's first sentence states his purpose, but it does not necessarily make the audience want to read further. To interest his readers, Tyler needs to add an **attention grabber**, such as a telling quotation, a vivid image, a thought-provoking question, or a universal statement. Notice how Tyler rewrote his introduction below. What makes this opening more compelling than the original?

TYLER'S REVISION TO PARAGRAPH 1

Nobody ever said life was easy. In fact, it's really about proving that you can face challenges. This is clear in

^ I am comparing the short stories “The Drummer Boy of Shiloh” by Ray Bradbury and “Hallucination” by Isaac Asimov.

ANALYZE A STUDENT DRAFT *continued*

4 By the end of the stories, though, both Joby and Sam face their challenges with courage. The general stops to talk to Joby, telling him that he is “the heart of the army.” This encouragement changes Joby’s attitude. Turning his drum to face the sky shows that he is no longer afraid of the sound of falling peach stones that earlier reminded him of bullets. He knows he will march calmly and bravely into battle. Sam, too, thinks about stuff. He uses his brains to communicate with the planet’s insect-like things and realizes that “previous attempts at communication had failed because the people . . . had been frightened.” He does well in the end.

5 The two characters in “The Drummer Boy of Shiloh” and “Hallucination” live in different times and places. They have different personalities and appear to be dealing with different problems. However, they are very much alike in the ways that count. Both Joby and Sam learn to face the challenges in their lives. Their courage inspires us. It teaches us to face our own challenges, whatever it is.

To show the audience Joby’s change of heart, Tyler includes **examples** and a **quotation** from the story.

Tyler’s explanation of Sam’s conflict is somewhat vague. He needs to use more **precise words** to convey his meaning.

LEARN HOW Use Precise Words Although Tyler is very familiar with his subject, his audience may not be. For example, the audience may wonder what “stuff” Sam is thinking about. To help them understand exactly what he means, Tyler must replace some of his vague words with more precise terms and phrases. In his revision, he also replaces weak verbs with more powerful ones.

TYLER’S REVISION TO PARAGRAPH 4

Sam, too, ^{confronts his problem.} ~~thinks about stuff.~~ He uses his ^{almost superhuman intelligence} ~~brains~~ to communicate with the planet’s insect-like ^{creatures} ~~things~~ and realizes that “previous attempts at communication had failed because the people . . . had been frightened.” He ^{discovers the mystery behind the hallucinations, helps to cure the Commander, and saves the power station.} ~~does well in the end.~~



Use feedback from your peers and your teacher as well as the two “Learn How” lessons to revise your essay. Evaluate whether your work achieves the purpose of a comparison-contrast essay and uses the appropriate tone for its audience.



WRITING 14D-E Edit drafts for grammar, mechanics, and spelling; revise final draft in response to feedback; publish written work.
ORAL AND WRITTEN CONVENTIONS 19C Use a variety of complete sentences that include correctly identified antecedents.

Editing and Publishing

When you edit, you look over your essay to make sure there are no mistakes, such as grammar or spelling errors. These types of errors diminish the quality of your work.

GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT: PRONOUN-ANTECEDENT AGREEMENT

An **antecedent** is the noun or pronoun to which a pronoun refers. For instance, in the following sentence, the pronoun *their* refers to the antecedent *they*: *They walked their dog around the neighborhood.* Pair singular pronouns with singular antecedents. Pair plural pronouns with plural antecedents.

As Tyler proofread his essay, he realized that his pronouns did not always agree with their antecedents in number. His revisions in blue show how he fixed the problem.

Their **courage** inspires us. **It** teaches us to face our own **challenges**, whatever **it is** they are

[*Courage* is the antecedent of *it*. Both are singular and agree in number. However, the antecedent *challenges* (plural) does not agree with *it* (singular). Tyler fixed this error by replacing *it is* with *they are*.]

PUBLISH YOUR WRITING

Share your comparison-contrast essay with an audience.

- Create a photo essay, inserting photographs or other illustrations into your text. Display your essay on a bulletin board.
- Develop your essay into an article for an appropriate school or community publication.
- Create a discussion **blog**, or Web log, on which you discuss the similarities and differences you highlighted in your essay. Invite other classmates to participate in the discussion.



Correct any errors in your essay by carefully proofreading it. Make sure that your pronouns have clear antecedents and agree with them in number. Then publish your final essay where your audience is likely to see it.



Scoring Rubric

Use the rubric below to evaluate your comparison-contrast essay from the Writing Workshop or your response to the on-demand prompt on the next page.

COMPARISON-CONTRAST ESSAY	
SCORE	TEXAS KEY TRAITS
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus and Coherence Includes a strong thesis statement and interesting introduction; focuses consistently on similarities and differences between two subjects; clearly shows the importance of the subjects; includes a meaningful conclusion• Organization Arranges details in an effective order; signals similarities and differences through transitional words and phrases• Development of Ideas Thoroughly discusses key similarities and differences; includes strong evidence to support each point• Voice Uses language appropriate for the audience and purpose; has an engaging tone• Conventions Shows a strong command of grammar, mechanics, and spelling
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus and Coherence Includes an adequate introduction that has a thesis statement; focuses on the key points with a few lapses; mentions the importance of the subjects; includes an adequate conclusion• Organization Orders details logically with a few exceptions; includes some transitions that show relationships between ideas• Development of Ideas Presents some key similarities and differences supported by examples• Voice Uses appropriate language; tone could be more engaging at times• Conventions Includes minor errors in grammar, mechanics, and spelling
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus and Coherence Deviates from the focus on the two subjects at times; has a weak introduction and/or lacks a thesis statement; has a weak conclusion and lacks an explanation of the importance of the subjects• Organization Shows some organization with noticeable flaws in the arrangement of details; needs more transitions to signal similarities and differences• Development of Ideas Offers similarities and differences that are minor or irrelevant; includes few examples as support• Voice Uses appropriate language inconsistently; tone is rarely engaging• Conventions Shows a limited control of grammar, mechanics, and spelling
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus and Coherence Does not focus on the key points; lacks an introduction and/or a conclusion• Organization Presents details randomly and without apparent organization; lacks transitions, making the essay hard to follow• Development of Ideas Provides few similarities or differences; includes little or no support for general statements• Voice Uses inappropriate language; tone is flat and uninteresting• Conventions Exhibits major problems with grammar, mechanics, and spelling



Preparing for Timed Writing

1. ANALYZE THE PROMPT

5 MIN



Read the prompt carefully. Then read it again, underlining words that tell the topic, the audience, and the purpose.

PROMPT

Write a review for your school newspaper that compares and contrasts two musicians, bands, artists, movies, books, or other subjects in which the members of your school community might be interested. Include specific details and examples to support your points.

↙ Purpose

↙ Topic

↙ Audience

2. PLAN YOUR RESPONSE

10 MIN



Once you have chosen your subjects, ask yourself: What do I want to show by comparing and contrasting these subjects? Then identify the similarities and differences that will help you make your point. List all that you can think of, and then select the two or three that are most important.

Subject A	Subject B
Both:	

3. RESPOND TO THE PROMPT

20 MIN



As you draft your essay, keep these guidelines in mind:

- Write a thesis statement that establishes which subjects you are comparing or contrasting and why.
- Decide on an organizational pattern (either subject-by-subject or point-by-point) and use it consistently throughout your essay.
- Conclude with a restatement of your major points and a clear explanation of why these subjects are important to you.

4. IMPROVE YOUR RESPONSE

5–10 MIN



Revising Go back over key aspects of the essay. Does your introduction capture the attention of your audience? Do you offer significant similarities and differences backed up by examples? Do you tell why these subjects are meaningful to you?

Proofreading Correct errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Make sure your edits are neat and the essay is legible.

Checking Your Final Copy Before you turn in your essay, read it one more time to catch any errors you may have missed and to apply any finishing touches.

Creating a Story Discussion Blog

Discussing or writing about elements of short stories can help you appreciate them more fully. A **blog**, or Web log, enables you to share your ideas with a broader audience and benefit from others' insights into various literary works.



Complete the workshop activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

PRODUCE WITH A PURPOSE



TEXAS KEY TRAITS

PROMPT

Create a **blog** in which you and your classmates share ideas about characters, themes, and other elements of literary works that you have read. With a team, plan and build your blog. Then add posts, or messages, to spark discussion among your online community.

A STRONG CLASS BLOG . . .

- presents content that prompts discussion
- uses a structure that allows for easy navigation
- has a visually appealing home page
- has posts that analyze, compare, and evaluate works of literature
- maintains a respectful tone
- is updated regularly



READING 13D Assess the correct level of formality and tone for successful participation in various digital media.

LISTENING AND SPEAKING 28 Work productively with others in teams; participate in discussions, plan agendas with clear goals and deadlines, take notes, and vote on key issues.

Plan and Produce the Blog

The following guidelines can help you create your blog:

- **Decide on your topics.** Think about which stories you found interesting, confusing, challenging, or meaningful. Then have each team member vote for the stories that he or she wants to discuss. Provide enough choices to encourage Web users to participate, but not too many to keep track of.
- **Determine your discussion threads.** Create a separate **discussion thread**—chain of related posts—for each story. Decide whether you want your threads to be general, allowing users to comment about any aspect of the story, or more focused. Use labels to indicate what readers should expect.
- **Map out your home page.** After settling on labels for your threads, take notes as a team to decide how your home page should look and what information it should include. For instance, you might explain the purpose of the blog or provide rules for participation. Then create a sketch your home page, visually representing how users will link to each thread.
- **Assign roles.** Plan an agenda with the work divided equally. One person might research Web sites that can host your blog. Another might create a logo for the home page. Make sure any images you plan to include are not copyrighted. In addition, each person should be responsible for writing the first post within one thread. Set deadlines for when each assignment should be completed.
- **Build the blog.** With the assistance of your school technology coordinator, assemble your blog using the Web site you chose.

Media
Tools

THINK
central

Go to thinkcentral.com.
KEYWORD: HML8-448



Participate in an Online Discussion

Discussing stories in a blog is different from writing an essay about them. Here are some tips for participating in a meaningful online discussion:

- **Clearly state your main idea.** At the beginning of each post, state your main idea. Then support it with examples, quotations, and other references from the text. End with a question to encourage others to share their opinions, interpretations, or ideas.
- **Make it easy to read.** Use text features, such as bullets or numbered lists, in your post. Boldface key points. This will keep your ideas organized and make the post easier to read.
- **Use a respectful tone.** Your audience cannot see you face-to-face and observe your reactions to their ideas. That is why it is important to be courteous. You don't have to agree with every idea proposed, but you should show that you are open to other perspectives. Use the points that others make as a springboard for deeper analysis of the subject.
- **Keep the discussion going.** Remember that participation is what makes a blog discussion successful. Check the threads frequently and respond to new postings as soon as possible.
- **Invite other classmates into your blogosphere.** Send e-mails with your blog link to other classmates. Try to generate excitement and different points of view.



With your team, plan and produce a blog, using the guidelines on these pages. Once you have launched your blog, take turns posting messages several times a week. After a few weeks, evaluate what you might add or change to make your blog more user-friendly and current.

A screenshot of a web browser window showing a "LEAVE A MESSAGE" form. The form has a title bar with window control buttons. Below the title bar is a header with a notepad icon and the text "LEAVE A MESSAGE". The form content includes a subject line: "Subject: Courage in 'The Drummer Boy of Shiloh' and 'Hallucination'", a date field: "Date: 11/24", and a user name field: "Sally S. said ...". The main text area contains a paragraph: "Reading 'The Drummer Boy of Shiloh' and 'Hallucination' made me think about the different kinds of courage that people can show. Both Joby and Sam are courageous but in different ways." followed by two bullet points: "• Joby faces the upcoming battle calmly. He might die, but he has accepted that. His job is to encourage the other soldiers by his own example as well as by his drumming." and "• Sam is not in danger of his life, but he has to stand up to authority figures and fight for what he believes in. That takes a lot of courage because he might be wrong or make people angry." Below the bullet points is another paragraph: "I can't decide if Joby is more courageous than Sam or vice versa. Or, can courage really be measured? Maybe all courage is equal. What do you think?". At the bottom of the form is a large blue button labeled "PUBLISH YOUR COMMENT".