



MODUL *ESSAY WRITING*
(PBI225)

MODUL SESI 5
COMPARISON/CONTRAST ESSAY

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COMPARISON/CONTRAST ESSAY

A. The Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, students are expected to be able to

1. generate a list of similarities and differences,
2. decide which similarities and differences to focus on, and
3. organise a clear and effective comparison/contrast essay

B. COMPARISON/CONTRAST PARAGRAPHS

To **compare** means to discuss how two people, places, or things are *similar*:

- *Both teachers and students need to spend a lot of time preparing for classes.*

To **contrast** means to discuss how two people, places, or things are *different*:

- *One main advantage of a bicycle over a car is that a bicycle does not create any pollution.*

In a **comparison/contrast** essay, you explain the similarities and the differences between two items. Comparison and contrast is a very common pattern in most academic fields. It is also a common type of essay test question.

For example:

- Compare and contrast methods for promoting a new business, product, or service.
- Compare the forms of government of Great Britain and the United States.

To start writing, generate a huge list of similarities and differences. Next you must decide which of them are interesting, important, and relevant enough to be included in your paper. Ask yourself these questions:

- What's relevant to the assignment?
- What's relevant to the course?
- What's interesting and informative?
- What matters to the argument you are going to make?
- What's basic or central (and needs to be mentioned even if obvious)?

- Overall, what's more important—the similarities or the differences?

In order for your essay to be a success, you need to have a basis of comparison about the things that you are comparing. Do the things have enough in common for it to make sense to write about them in a compare and contrast essay? Sometimes a particular point of comparison or contrast might be relevant but not terribly revealing or interesting. Choose the points that are more interesting than others. First, you must find a basis of comparison to be sure that the two things have enough in common. After that, you identify their differences. Here is the example of comparison/contrast essay.

Japan and the United States: Different but Alike¹

1 The culture of a place is an integral² part of its society whether that place is a remote Indian village in Brazil or a highly industrialized city in Western Europe. The culture of Japan fascinates people in the United States because, at first glance, it seems so different. Everything that characterizes the United States—newness, racial heterogeneity,³ vast territory, informality, and an ethic of individualism⁴—is absent in Japan. There, one finds an ancient and homogeneous⁵ society, an ethic that emphasizes the importance of groups, and a tradition of formal behavior governing every aspect of daily living, from drinking tea to saying hello. On the surface at least, U.S. and Japanese societies seem totally opposite.

2 One obvious difference is the people. Japan is a homogenous society of one nationality and a few underrepresented minority groups, such as the ethnic Chinese and Koreans. All areas of government and society are controlled by the Japanese majority. In contrast, although the United States is a country with originally European roots, its liberal immigration policies have resulted in its becoming a heterogeneous society of many ethnicities—Europeans, Africans, Asians, and Latinos. All are represented in all areas of U.S. society, including business, education, and politics.

3 Other areas of difference between Japan and the United States involve issues of group interaction and sense of space. Whereas people in the United States pride themselves on individualism and informality, Japanese value groups and formality. People in the United States admire and reward a person who rises above the crowd; in contrast, a Japanese proverb says, "The nail that sticks up gets hammered down." In addition, while North Americans' sense of size and scale developed out of the vastness of the continent, Japanese genius lies in the diminutive and miniature.⁶ For example, the United States builds airplanes, while Japan produces transistors.

4 In spite of these differences, these two apparently opposite cultures share several important experiences.

5 Both, for example, have transplanted cultures. Each nation has a "mother" society—China for Japan and Great Britain for the United States—that has influenced the daughter in countless ways: in language, religion, art, literature, social customs, and ways of thinking. Japan, of course, has had more time than the United States to work out its unique interpretation of the older Chinese culture, but both countries reflect their cultural ancestry.

6 Both societies, moreover, have developed the art of business and commerce, of buying and selling, of advertising and mass producing, to the highest levels. Few sights are more reassuring to people from the United States than the tens of thousands of busy stores in Japan, especially the beautiful, well-stocked department stores. To U.S. eyes, they seem just like Macy's or Neiman Marcus at home. In addition, both Japan and the United States are consumer societies. The people of both countries love to shop and are enthusiastic consumers of convenience products and fast foods. Vending machines selling everything from fresh flowers to hot coffee are as popular in Japan as they are in the United States, and fast-food noodle shops are as common in Japan as McDonald's restaurants are in the United States.

7 A final similarity is that both Japanese and people in the United States have always emphasized the importance of work, and both are paying penalties for their commitment to it: increasing stress and weakening family bonds. People in the United States, especially those in business and in the professions, regularly put in twelve or more hours a day at their jobs, just as many Japanese executives do. Also, while the normal Japanese workweek is six days, many people in the United States who want to get ahead voluntarily work on Saturday and/or Sunday in addition to their normal five-day workweek.

8 Japan and the United States: different, yet alike. Although the two societies differ in many areas such as racial heterogeneity versus racial homogeneity, individualism versus group cooperation, and informal versus formal forms of behavior, they share more than one common experience. Furthermore, their differences probably contribute as much as their similarities toward the mutual interest the two countries have in each other. It will be interesting to see where this reciprocal fascination leads in the future.

Writing Technique Questions

- 1) In which paragraph(s) are the similarities discussed? In which paragraph(s) are the differences discussed?
- 2) What is the function of paragraph 4?

C. ORGANISATION OF COMPARISON/CONTRAST PARAGRAPH

The first key to writing a successful comparison/contrast essay is to organize it carefully. There are two methods of organising comparison/contrast paragraph:

- i. Point-by-point model
- ii. Block model

a. Point-by-point Organization

Compare or contrast one point about the two topics, then a second point, then a third point, and so on. This type of organisation in a paragraph could be outlined like this:

<p>Topic sentence comparing or contrasting two topics (A and B)</p>	<p>Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana lived at different times in different countries, but their lives had some surprising similarities. First of all, both women had a difficult childhood. Monroe spent many years without parents in an orphanage, and Diana's mother left the family when she was only six. Later in their lives, both women married famous men. Princess Diana married Prince Charles, and Marilyn Monroe married a famous baseball player and later a famous writer. They also had difficult marriages and eventually separated from their husbands. Another similarity between Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana was that they were both very popular. Diana was called 'The people's princess' because she was so friendly. Although Monroe was famously sexy, she was well-liked because she seemed very innocent. However, although they both seemed to have very happy lives, both women actually had emotional problems and often felt sad and depressed. Monroe went through serious depression and had to go to a hospital for treatment. Likewise, Diana suffered from an eating problem and was depressed during parts of her marriage. A last similarity between Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana was their deaths at an early age. In fact, they were both thirty-six years old when they died, Monroe in 1962 and Diana in 1997. Maybe their similar life circumstances and lifestyles explain why Princess Diana and Marilyn Monroe also had similar personalities.</p>
<p>First point of comparison / contrast (A1, B1)</p>	<p>parents in an orphanage, and Diana's mother left the family when she was only six. Later in their lives, both women married famous men. Princess Diana married Prince Charles, and Marilyn Monroe married a famous baseball player and later a famous writer. They also had difficult marriages and eventually separated from their husbands. Another similarity between Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana was that they were both very popular. Diana was called 'The people's princess' because she was so friendly. Although Monroe was famously sexy, she was well-liked because she seemed very innocent. However, although they both seemed to have very happy lives, both women actually had emotional problems and often felt sad and depressed. Monroe went through serious depression and had to go to a hospital for treatment. Likewise, Diana suffered from an eating problem and was depressed during parts of her marriage. A last similarity between Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana was their deaths at an early age. In fact, they were both thirty-six years old when they died, Monroe in 1962 and Diana in 1997. Maybe their similar life circumstances and lifestyles explain why Princess Diana and Marilyn Monroe also had similar personalities.</p>
<p>Second point of comparison / contrast (A2, B2)</p>	<p>Prince Charles, and Marilyn Monroe married a famous baseball player and later a famous writer. They also had difficult marriages and eventually separated from their husbands. Another similarity between Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana was that they were both very popular. Diana was called 'The people's princess' because she was so friendly. Although Monroe was famously sexy, she was well-liked because she seemed very innocent. However, although they both seemed to have very happy lives, both women actually had emotional problems and often felt sad and depressed. Monroe went through serious depression and had to go to a hospital for treatment. Likewise, Diana suffered from an eating problem and was depressed during parts of her marriage. A last similarity between Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana was their deaths at an early age. In fact, they were both thirty-six years old when they died, Monroe in 1962 and Diana in 1997. Maybe their similar life circumstances and lifestyles explain why Princess Diana and Marilyn Monroe also had similar personalities.</p>
<p>Third point of comparison / contrast (A3, B3)</p>	<p>and Princess Diana was that they were both very popular. Diana was called 'The people's princess' because she was so friendly. Although Monroe was famously sexy, she was well-liked because she seemed very innocent. However, although they both seemed to have very happy lives, both women actually had emotional problems and often felt sad and depressed. Monroe went through serious depression and had to go to a hospital for treatment. Likewise, Diana suffered from an eating problem and was depressed during parts of her marriage. A last similarity between Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana was their deaths at an early age. In fact, they were both thirty-six years old when they died, Monroe in 1962 and Diana in 1997. Maybe their similar life circumstances and lifestyles explain why Princess Diana and Marilyn Monroe also had similar personalities.</p>
<p>Fourth point of comparison / contrast (A4, B4)</p>	<p>both women actually had emotional problems and often felt sad and depressed. Monroe went through serious depression and had to go to a hospital for treatment. Likewise, Diana suffered from an eating problem and was depressed during parts of her marriage. A last similarity between Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana was their deaths at an early age. In fact, they were both thirty-six years old when they died, Monroe in 1962 and Diana in 1997. Maybe their similar life circumstances and lifestyles explain why Princess Diana and Marilyn Monroe also had similar personalities.</p>
<p>Fifth point of comparison / contrast (A5, B5)</p>	<p>deaths at an early age. In fact, they were both thirty-six years old when they died, Monroe in 1962 and Diana in 1997. Maybe their similar life circumstances and lifestyles explain why Princess Diana and Marilyn Monroe also had similar personalities.</p>
<p>Concluding sentence</p>	<p>also had similar personalities.</p>

Topic sentence : Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana lived at different times in different countries, but their lives had some surprising similarities.

First point of comparison- difficult childhood

A1:

B1: Princess Diana- mother left family

Second point of comparison-

A2 : Princess Diana- married Prince Charles, later separated from him

B2 :

Third point of comparison-

A3:

B3:

Fourth point of comparison-had emotional problems

A4: Marilyn Monroe-

B4:

Fifth point of comparison-

A5:

B5 :

b. Block Organization

First, write about supporting points for the first topic. Then compare or contrast those same points to the second topic. This type of organisation could be outlined like this:

Topic sentence comparing /contrasting two topics (A and B)	→ <i>Reading a story in a book is often very different from seeing it as a film. When you read a story, you need to use your imagination. A book usually gives a lot of description about</i>
Points of comparison / contrast about topic A	→ <i>the people, places, and things in the story, so you can create pictures in your mind. In addition, the conversations between people are always written with details that describe how the people look or feel while they are talking. When you read,</i>

<p>Points of comparison / contrast about topic B</p>	<p><i>you use a lot of imagination to help 'see' the characters in the story. However; when you see a film, it is a different experience. When you watch a film, you don't need to use your imagination. The pictures on the screen give all the details about the people, places, and things in the story. The conversations are spoken out loud, so you just listen and watch. The feeling of the people come through their faces, body movements, and voices. Although a book and a film might tell the same story, reading a book and watching a film are very different experiences.</i></p>
<p>Concluding sentence</p>	<p><i>and a film might tell the same story, reading a book and watching a film are very different experiences.</i></p>

Topic sentence: Reading a story in a book is often very different from seeing it as film.

Topic A- reading a book

Supporting points:

1.

2.

Topic B -

Supporting points:

1.

2.

D. REFERENCES

- Zemach, D.E & Rumisek, L.A.(2005). *Academic Writing: from paragraph to essay*. McMillan Publishing
- Oshima, A & Hogue,A. (2006). *Writing Academic English. 4th edition*. Pearson Longman