

# Table of Contents

*Introduction* ..... *v*

## **English/Language Arts**

1. Making Connections to Real Life ..... 7

2. Mostly the Same or Mostly Different? ..... 12

3. Sorting Things Out Using Graphic Organizers ..... 17

4. Comparing and Contrasting: The Vocabulary. .... 25

5. Writing Essays to Compare and Contrast: Model 1 ..... 29

6. Writing Essays to Compare and Contrast: Model 2 ..... 35

7. Same Story, Different Version ..... 41

8. How Is One Poem Like Another? ..... 46

9. Same Author, Different Story ..... 50

10. I Can Relate! ..... 55

11. What’s Missing or Different? ..... 60

## **Social Studies**

12. Dear Editor..... 65

13. Who’s the Hero?..... 70

14. Same Place, Different Map ..... 76

15. Who’s Who?..... 80

## **Mathematics/Science**

16. Comparing and Contrasting in Math and Science. .... 85

17. Temperatures Rising ..... 89

## **Career and Life Skills**

18. What to Buy? ..... 93

19. You Are What You Eat..... 98

20. I Know What I Like!..... 103

## Introduction

Effective instruction in adolescent literacy does not rely on one strategy alone. Reading, writing, listening, and speaking all contribute to vocabulary acquisition. The subtleties of vocabulary development do, however, lend themselves to both direct and indirect instruction. Most struggling readers can, and do, read printed words. Their difficulty is not articulating, or even spelling, the printed text. The challenge to this learner is an inability to understand, process, and communicate the ideas expressed by the words.

The nature of this problem in adolescent literacy reaches deeper than a student's comprehension. The inability to comprehend text impacts a learner's ability to actively learn new words. The result is that a student will struggle to understand, learn, and communicate concepts in all subject areas. This is our call to action. This is the rationale for providing teachers like you with the resources you need not only to provide students with direct, explicit vocabulary instruction, but also to provide you with the materials for students to transfer strategies to the content areas.

This title focuses on helping students to develop their ability to understand, analyze, and compare two or more ideas expressed in various kinds of texts and images. Comparative reading involves applying skills of comparison, contrast, generalization, and synthesis to the texts, images, and ideas. Comparative reading requires students to think about texts beyond isolated comprehension. Instead, this skill requires an additional effort from the student to comprehend multiple ideas and to provide analysis, synthesis, and evaluative insight into the texts considered.

The 20 lessons set forth in this book will provide students with models for instruction and application of comparative reading in a variety of contexts organized around core content areas as well as real-life situations. Used to extend and enhance your existing curriculum, each lesson is intended to target instruction of a specific type of comparison, contrast, generalization, or analysis. Activities and instruction range from 15 minutes to 60 minutes to complete.

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# Writing Essays to Compare and Contrast: Model 1

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## Class Configuration

Time required:

50 minutes (one class period)

Structure:

Individual (activity sheet), group (class discussion)

Materials:

- activity sheet (one copy per student)
- two items to compare and contrast (Teacher's choice—select things that will engage students, but not detract from the focus on how to write the draft of the essay. The items may be text selections, ideas, or objects.)

Learning objectives:

- Students will write a draft of a two-paragraph essay that compares and contrasts two things.

## Standards

IRA/NCTE

4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

McREL

Language Arts: Standard 2. Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing

## Laying the Groundwork

Assessing students' prior knowledge will help them to develop new skills. Before starting this lesson, make sure your students understand that:

- The ability to compare and contrast things is both a life skill and an academic skill.
- The skills presented in the previous three activities in this book are applied in this activity.

Vocabulary that students should be familiar with includes:

- **analyze:** Examine a thing or idea carefully to break it into its critical elements.
- **compare:** A comparison of two or more things explains how they are alike.
- **contrast:** Contrasting two or more things explains how they are different.

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## Writing Essays to Compare and Contrast: Model 1

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### Teaching Tip

This activity includes both individual and class work. Determine the amount of time students spend on each part of this activity based upon your observations of students as they work. It is possible that students will not complete their drafts in one period. If this is the case with your class, students can finish their drafts as a homework assignment.

### Instructional Guide/Procedure

- Distribute a copy of the activity sheet to each student.
- Review the directions at the top of the activity sheet. Spend a few minutes introducing the items (texts, objects, or ideas) you have chosen for students to compare and contrast.
- Have students work individually to complete the graphic organizer.
- Lead a class discussion about the similarities and differences students identified on their graphic organizers. As a group, decide which of the two items (text, object, or idea) will be described in the first paragraph.
- Have students work individually to write an introductory sentence and description of the first item (text, object, or idea).
- Lead a class discussion about their drafts of the first paragraph. Encourage volunteers to read what they've written aloud.
- Have students work individually to write a draft of the second paragraph (may need to be done as a homework assignment).

### Facilitating Learning

As students are completing the activity, remind them to:

- Make specific observations about the similarities and differences between the items when completing the graphic organizer.
- Follow the prescribed format for the essay as described on the activity sheet.
- Use terms that signal comparisons and contrasts while writing the second paragraph.

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## Writing Essays to Compare and Contrast: Model 1

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### Supporting All Learners

- Students who are struggling with this activity will benefit from working with a partner when writing the draft of the first paragraph. If they continue to have difficulty, allow them to work with their partner to draft the second paragraph as well.
- Support English language learners by allowing them to work through this activity in a group. While other students are working individually, guide these students through each step to insure they are not confused.
- Challenge students who are ready for more by asking them to exchange papers, proofread one another's work, and write final drafts of their essays to be kept as samples for future reference.

### Assessment

There are various ways to assess student understanding beyond their completion of the activity sheet. Choose one or more of the following methods to evaluate their learning.

- Assess based on your observations while the students are working.
- Ask students to write a short reflection describing their thought process as they completed this activity.

### Answer Key

Answers will vary. Accept drafts that meet the criteria set forth in the lesson directions.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## Writing Essays to Compare and Contrast: Model 1

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### Activity Sheet

There are two primary models to choose from when writing a compare-and-contrast essay. One model is sometimes called a “block” essay. This activity walks you through how to write a draft for a block essay to compare and contrast two things.

A **block essay** consists of two paragraphs.

The first sentence of the first paragraph introduces the two things being compared and contrasted. The rest of the first paragraph describes the *first thing only*. The second thing is not described yet.

The second paragraph begins with a transition sentence. This sentence tells the reader that focus is shifting to the second thing. The next few sentences describe the second thing *as it relates to the first*. The writer uses vocabulary that signals that comparison and contrast are being used (e.g., *similar, as is the case, however, unlike*).

The final sentence of this paragraph is a concluding statement.

### Directions

Your teacher will provide two items (two text passages, objects, or ideas).

1. Before writing a block essay, carefully analyze the two things being compared and contrasted. Use the graphic organizer provided on the next page to make notes about the similarities and differences between the two things.

*(continued)*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Writing Essays to Compare and Contrast: Model 1

Item 1:		Item 2:
Unique Characteristics	Similar Characteristics	Unique Characteristics
SAMPLE PAGE		

2. Use the space provided here to write a sentence that introduces the two things being compared and contrasted in this essay.

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*(continued)*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## Writing Essays to Compare and Contrast: Model 1

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3. On another sheet of paper, write a description of the first item. Remember that the second item is not mentioned in these sentences.
  
4. Review the class list of vocabulary used to compare and contrast. You will use these terms in the second paragraph.
  
5. On another sheet of paper, write several sentences that compare and contrast the second item to the first. Remember to describe *both* similarities and differences.
  
6. Combine the two paragraphs to form a block essay. Write a concluding sentence about the two items you have compared and contrasted.