

Essay #5—In-Class—Compare/Contrast—Bring a large yellow book and a reliable blue or black pen to class on this day. You may also bring a dictionary, thesaurus, and notes or an outline, which must be turned in with the essay. If you do any outside reading in preparation for your essay, you must turn in a list of outside sources which you used (on the day the essay is written).

Your task in this essay is to consider two or more things in order to find (and subsequently analyze) similarities or differences between them. You are welcome to be creative in what you choose to compare and contrast; however, it is important in this essay to compare and contrast things that share at least some common similarities, such as baseball and basketball (sports), anger and love (emotions), San Francisco and San Jose (major California cities), Windows and Linux (operating systems).

The topics for this kind of an essay are fairly endless. You can compare and contrast emotions, personal experiences, life in various cities, countries, or circumstances, foods, pets, cars, books, music, movies, songs, phenomena in nature, etc. Just make sure that your subject is of interest to you, as you may have to do research on it. I would like you to both compare and contrast in your essay, discussing similarities as well as differences. Detail is important in this essay; often, the differences or similarities between things come down to small, fine details.

For those of you who would like a prompt, please choose two of the essays or stories we have read in class so far this semester, and write a compare/contrast paper on them. It would be a good idea for you to choose essays that have some common ground. Make sure to compare and contrast the writing styles, images, and the emotional tone of the two pieces, as well as the essays' subjects.

(MORE ON BACK)

There are two common approaches to this type of essay which help to keep the writing organized. The first approach is to structure your paper point by point. Let's say you were going to compare and contrast a Waterman fountain pen and a Bic ballpoint pen. Your outline could look like this:

- A) Introduction in which you state your purpose, to compare and contrast a Waterman pen and a Bic ballpoint pen.
 - 1) Waterman pen—describe this type of pen
 - 2) Bic pen—describe this type of pen
 - 3) You could discuss some common similarities here.
- B) Type of ink
 - 1) Waterman and Bic both use ink, obviously
 - 2) Waterman—uses a water-based ink, in cartridges or a bottle
 - 3) Bic ballpoint—uses oil-based ink in a prefilled tube
- C) Price
 - 1) Both the Waterman and Bic will set you back monetarily
 - 2) Waterman—can be very expensive
 - 3) Bic ballpoint--cheap
- D) Conclusion—sums up the major differences, similarities, benefits and less desirable aspects of each, etc.

Another approach to this kind of essay is to use what is called a block structure. This is when you discuss first one of the things you are comparing/contrasting, and then the other. Let's use the pen example again:

- A) Introduction in which you state that you will be comparing and contrasting Waterman fountain pens and Bic ballpoint pens.
- B) Waterman pens—describe this type of pen
 - 1) Type of ink
 - 2) price
- C) Bic ballpoint pens—describe this
 - 1) type of ink
 - 2) price
- E) Discuss the similarities and differences of these pens
- D) Conclusion sums up the major differences, similarities, desirable and less desirable aspects of the pen, etc.

