



Teacher-to-Teacher

Video Series
for Secondary Educators

TITLE: Writing a Critical Response to Literature Using Compare/Contrast Format

PRIMARY SUBJECT AREA: ELA Writing Component Standards 2 & 3

GRADE LEVELS: 8 (adaptable to higher and lower grades)

OVERVIEW: Students will read, analyze and comprehend two poems – Emily Dickinson’s *I’m Nobody* and Walter de la Mare’s *Me*. Students will then write a brief essay in which the two poems are compared/contrasted. Students will use appropriate methods of supporting elaboration. Students will evaluate and revise essays using a rubric/checklist. This activity is aligned with ELA Content Standards 2 and 3.

APPROXIMATE DURATION: 2 fifty minute class periods

LOUISIANA CONTENT STANDARDS:

<http://www/DOE/assessment/standards/ENGLISH.pdf>

Standard Two: Students write competently for a variety of purposes and audiences.

- ELA-2-M1 Writes a composition that clearly implies a central idea with supporting details in logical, sequential order.
- ELA-2-M2 Uses language, concepts, and ideas that show an awareness of the intended audience and/or purpose.
- ELA-2-M3 Applies the steps of the writing process
- ELA-2-M5 Recognizes and applies literary devices;
- ELA-2-M6 Writes as a response to text.

Standard Three: Students communicate using standard English grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and handwriting.

- ELA-3-M1 Writes Legibly;
- ELA-3-M2 Demonstrates use of punctuation, capitalization and abbreviations
- ELA-3-M4 Demonstrates understanding of the parts of speech;
- ELA-3-M5 Spells accurately

GLEs Addressed:

Grade 8

15. Write complex, multiparagraph compositions on student- or teacher-selected topics organized with the following:
 - a clearly stated focus or central idea
 - important ideas or events stated in a selected order
 - organizational patterns (e.g., comparison/contrast, order of importance, chronological order) appropriate to the topic
 - elaboration (anecdotes, relevant facts, examples, and/or specific details)
 - transitional words and phrases that unify ideas and points
 - an overall structure (e.g., introduction, body/middle, and concluding paragraph that summarizes important ideas and details) (ELA-2-M1)
16. Organize individual paragraphs with topic sentences, relevant elaboration, and concluding sentences (ELA-2-M1)
17. Develop grade-appropriate compositions on student- or teacher-selected topics that include the following:
 - word choices (diction) appropriate to the identified audience and/or purpose
 - vocabulary selected to clarify meaning, create images, and set a tone
 - information/ideas selected to engage the interest of the reader
 - clear voice (individual personality)
 - variety in sentence structure (ELA-2-M2)
18. Develop grade-appropriate compositions by identifying and applying writing processes such as the following:
 - selecting topic and form
 - prewriting (e.g., brainstorming, researching, raising questions, generating graphic organizers)
 - drafting
 - conferencing (e.g., peer and teacher)
 - revising based on feedback and use of various tools (e.g., LEAP21 Writer's Checklist, rubrics)
 - proofreading/editing
 - publishing using technology (ELA-2-M3)
21. Develop writing using a variety of literary devices, including understatements and allusions (ELA-2-M5)
22. Write for a wide variety of purposes, including:
 - persuasive letters that include appropriate wording and tone and that state an opinion
 - evaluations of advertisements, political cartoons, and speeches
 - text-supported interpretations of elements of grade-appropriate stories, poems, plays, and novels (ELA-2-M6)
23. Use standard English capitalization and punctuation consistently (ELA-3-M2)
25. Apply knowledge of parts of speech in writing, including:
 - infinitives, participles, and gerunds

- superlative and comparative degrees of adjectives
 - adverbs (ELA-3-M4)
26. Spell high-frequency, commonly confused, frequently misspelled words and derivatives (e.g., roots and affixes) correctly (ELA-3-M5)
27. Use a variety of resources (e.g., glossaries, dictionaries, thesauruses, spell check) to find correct spellings (ELA-3-M5)

TECHNOLOGY STRATEGIES:

<http://www.louisianaschools.net/DOE/LCET/curric/k12stand.pdf>

Technology Communication Tools (*Communication Foundation Skill*)

Students use telecommunications to collaborate, publish, and interact with peers, experts and other audiences.

Technology Productivity Tools (*Resource Access and Utilization Foundation Skill*)

Students use technology tools to enhance learning, increase productivity, and promote creativity.

Technology Research Tools (*Linking and Generating Knowledge Foundation Skill*)

Students use appropriate technology to locate, evaluate, and collect information from a variety of sources.

Students use technology tools to process data and report results.

Students evaluate and select new information resources and technological innovations based on the appropriateness to specific tasks.

Social, Ethical, and Human Issues (*Citizenship Foundation Skill*)

Students understand the ethical, cultural, and societal issues related to technology.

Students practice responsible use of technology systems, information, and software.

Students develop positive attitudes toward technology uses that support lifelong learning, collaboration, personal pursuits, and productivity.

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS:

Geography: Physical and Cultural Systems, History: Time, Continuity, and Change

OBJECTIVES:

1. The learner will identify the speaker and speaker's perspective in a poem.
2. The learner will write a critical response that compares/contrasts poetry.
3. The learner will use evidence from the text to support a response.
4. The learner will use a rubric for self-evaluation and revision.

MATERIALS:

- ◆ *I'm Nobody* poem by Emily Dickinson
- ◆ *Me* poem by Walter de la Mare
- ◆ Handouts: Venn Diagram; Y Chart; Comparison Chart; How to Guide; Compare/Contrast Essay Description Sheet, Writing Assignment Guidelines; Compare/Contrast Poetry Chart; Rubrics
- ◆ Paper, pen, pencil

TECHNOLOGY CONNECTION:

Hardware: Computer with Internet, overhead projector, audio cassette player

Software: *Inspirations* Tom Synder

Web Sites: www.poets.org

LESSON PROCEDURES:

1. Use visuals – display an orange and a lemon. Introduce compare/contrast concept by having students respond in journal as to likeness/differences between an orange and a lemon. Students can draw a Venn diagram or a Y chart. Class discusses how to compare/contrast items.
2. Distribute copies of the poems. Tell the students that every poem has a distinct speaker who expresses the poem's thoughts and feelings. Even poems that deal with similar ideas will have different speakers. In *I'm Nobody* and *Me*, the speakers, although different, explore what it means to be unique whether one is feeling large or small.
3. Introduce compare/contrast essay. Review essay description sheet. Distribute writing assignment sheet. Discuss fully referring to the orange and lemon as examples.
4. Have students read/discuss orally the two poems. Record via overhead transparencies/chalkboard/easel chart the similarities and differences between the poems. (Use a Venn diagram or chart.) Elicit responses from students. Have student record responses. Remember this is a teacher-directed modeling exercise.
5. Reread the poems. Refer back to the diagram/chart of similarities and differences. Then make lists summarizing the similarities and differences.
6. Model for students the essay organization plan by writing a rough draft based on the chart info. Use lines from the poems for supportive explanation.
7. Then display a final copy of teacher-written compare/contrast essay.
8. Assign students in pairs to write a brief essay comparing/contrasting two poems. (For example, *A Word* by Emily Dickinson and *A Choice of Weapons* by Phyllis McGinley.)

REPRODUCIBLE MATERIALS:

Copies of the poems
Venn Diagram

Y Chart
Comparison Chart
How to Guide
Compare/Contrast Essay description sheet
Comparing and Contrasting Poems Writing Assignment Guidelines
Compare/Contrast poetry chart
Rubrics (3)

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES: Student's works is assessed through self-evaluation, peer, and product evaluation. Rubrics are provided.

ACCOMMODATIONS/MODIFICATIONS:

The essay can be a collaborative discussion and partner project.

EXPLORATION AND EXTENSION:

1. The poems address the topics of identity, but each expresses different feelings and uses different poetic rhythms. Choose a piece of music to accompany each poem. Match the rhythm and feelings to the music to the rhythm and feelings of the poem. Share with class.
2. Do a web search for information about Emily Dickinson and Walter de la Mare. Compare their lives. Could they have known each other? Write a brief comparison of their careers.
3. Create timelines for de le Mare and Dickinson.
4. Use compare/contrast format for comparing genres. Use an apple and orange for the visual.

RESOURCES: Jacobs, Heidi Hayes, Richard Lederer and Sharon Sorensen. *Literature Bronze*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall. 2000. Bradby, Marie. *Momma, Where Are You From?* New York: Orchard Books. 2000. Columbia Granger's Index of Poetry. Norton 1983.

www.bartleby.com/verse/

www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/rp/intro.html

www.favorive.poem.org/archive/liang.html

www.dickinsonhomestead.org/

www.kirjasto.sci.fi/delamare.htm

www.geocities.com/spanoudi/poems/delamare.html

www.recmusic.org/lieder/m/mare/

www.weeklyreader.com/read

REFLECTIONS:

At first, my students struggled with the compare/contrast essay that required elaboration from text. They wanted to use personal statements rather than text.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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HOW TO ORGANIZE A COMPARISON-CONTRAST ESSAY

In a comparison-contrast essay, you can either

- **compare and contrast each subject separately** *or*
- **discuss each similarity and difference between each subject point by point.**

Here are two examples:

SUBJECT-BY-SUBJECT ORGANIZATION

In the following model, topics are compared and contrasted by first discussing the details of one subject and then the other.

The main ingredient in a **frittata** is eggs. Cheese, vegetables, and potatoes may be added. A **frittata** is cooked in a frying pan over Low heat for a long time. It is not folded before serving.

Eggs are *also* the main ingredient in an **omelette**. *Although* cheese and vegetables may be added, potatoes usually are not. An **omelette** is cooked in a frying pan over high heat for a short period of time. Just before being removed from the pan, it is folded over.

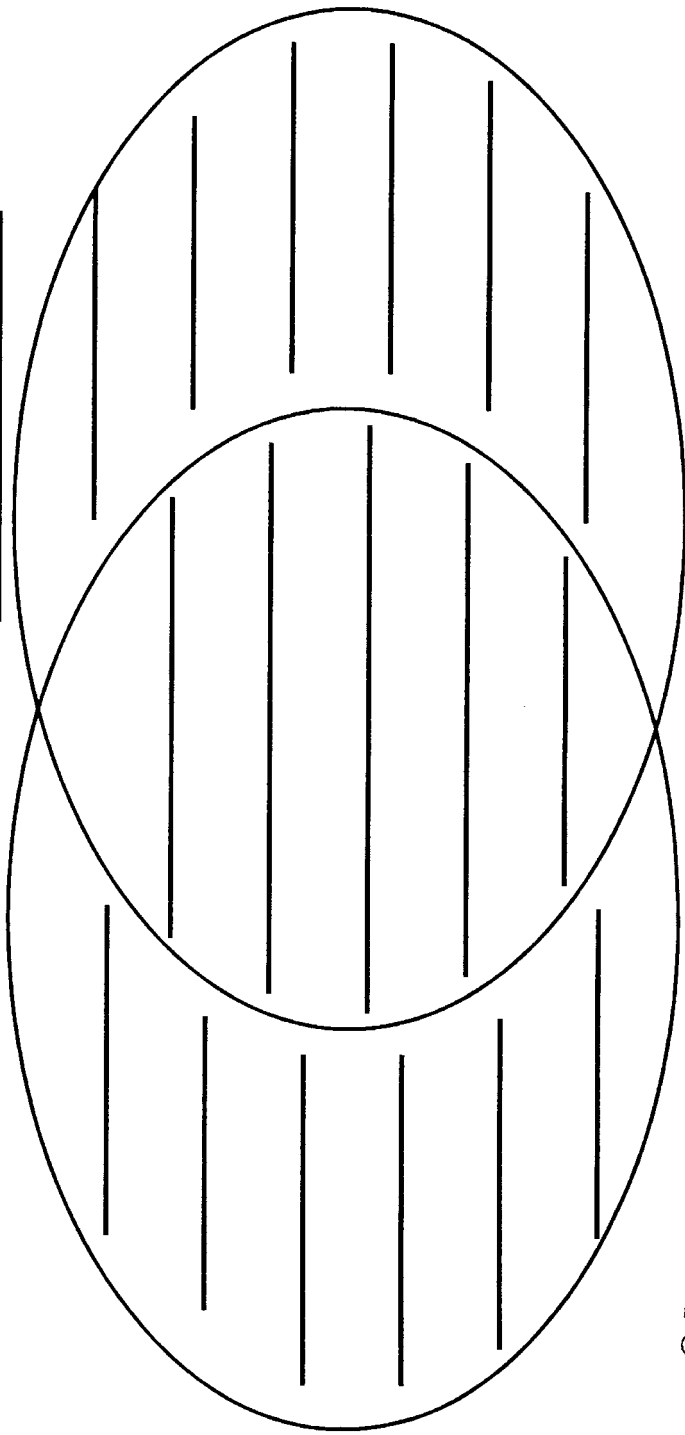
POINT-BY-POINT ORGANIZATION

The following model moves back and forth between two subjects, comparing and contrasting the subjects point by point.

In both **frittatas** and **omelettes**, the main ingredient is eggs. Cheese and vegetables are often added to **omelettes** and **frittatas**. *However*, potatoes are usually added only to **frittatas**.

Both **omelettes** and **frittatas** are cooked in a frying pan. *However*, **frittatas** are cooked for a long period of time over low heat, *whereas* **omelettes** are cooked quickly over high heat. **Omelettes** are folded in the pan before being served, *but* **frittatas** are not.

Comparison/Contrast: Finding Commonalities



COMPARISON

Name _____ Date _____

ITEM A	ITEM B
IN	IN

IS
SIMILAR
TO

Because

Support for item A:

Support for item B:

Concluding Sentence

Compare/Contrast “Y” Notes

Summarizing Differences and Similarities

What it looks like:

Topic: _____

Topic: _____

Similarities:

**I'm Nobody
Emily Dickinson**

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are you—Nobody—too?
Then there's a pair of us!
Don't tell! They'd banish us—you know!

How dreary—to be—Somebody!
How public—like a Frog—
To tell your name—the livelong June—
To an admiring Bog!

**Me
Walter de la Mare**

As long as I live
I shall always be
My self—and no other.
Just me.

Like a tree.

Like a willow or elder,
An aspen, a thorn,
Or a cypress forlorn.

Like a flower,
For its hour
A primrose, a pink,
Or a violet—
Sunned by the sun,
And with dewdrops wet.

Always just me.

Compare/Contrast Essay

Compare means to point out similarities. Contrast means to point out differences. Often in literary response you are asked to compare and contrast two characters or two other related subjects. This helps you to understand each of them better.

A successful comparison/contrast essay should:

- **introduce the subjects being compared**
- **state a clear purpose for the comparison**
- **include both similarities and differences and support each statement with examples and details**
- **follow a clear organizational pattern**
- **include transitional words and phrases to make similarities and differences clear**
- **summarize the comparison in the conclusion**

An essay should have these three parts:

Introduction – introduces the subjects being compared and tells the reason for the comparison

Body – explains similarities and differences

Conclusion – summarizes the comparison and explains new understanding

Transitional Words:

Words that show similarities: also, both, similarly, like, in addition, too, another, just as, in the same way

Words that show differences: but, although, however, yet, still, instead, unlike, in contrast, in spite of, on the other hand

Comparing and Contrasting Poems

Writing Assignment

Write a brief essay in which you compare two poems. Write at least three paragraphs.

Background

When you compare two poems (or stories or plays), you tell how they are alike. When you contrast two works, you point out the ways in which they are different. Poems can be compared and contrasted if they have at least one thing in common—a similar subject, perhaps, or similar images or figures of speech or ideas. You can recognize similarities and differences by focusing on the elements in each poem.

Prewriting

Reread both poems, and fill in a chart such as the one that follows. When you've completed your chart, indicate in some way the similarities and differences. You can put a + sign next to things the poems have in common, and a 0 next to the things that are different. Or you can use highlighters to color code similarities and differences. You could mark the similarities with pink, for example, and the differences with yellow.

Your last Prewriting step is to make two lists summarizing the similarities and differences.

Similarities

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Differences

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Writing

Follow this plan in organizing your essay:

Paragraph 1: Mention the titles and authors of the poems. Tell about at least two similarities. Cite lines from the poems.

Paragraph 2: Tell about at least two differences.

Paragraph 3: Restate your main ideas about the poems' similarities and differences.

Elements of Poetry	Title	Title
Subject (What is the poem about?)		
Theme (What does the poem say about the subjects?)		
Figures of Speech (Does the poet use similes, metaphors, or personifications?)		
Sound (Does the poet use rhyme, meter, alliteration?)		
Tone (Is the poem serious, humorous, mocking, mournful?)		

Revising and Proofreading Self-Evaluation Guide

	Yes	No
1. Does the first paragraph mention both poems' titles and authors?		
2. Have I discussed two or three similarities in the first paragraph two or three differences in the second paragraph?		
3. Have I summarized my ideas in the third paragraph?		
4. Does every sentence start with a capital letter and end with a period or other end punctuation mark?		
5. Are my ideas clearly expressed? Have I said everything I want to say?		
6. Do I have any spelling errors?		
7. Did I use transitional words and phrases?		

Peer Evaluation

	Yes	No	Comments
1. Are there any spelling errors?			
2. Are the sentences punctuated correctly?			
3. Are the paragraphs fully developed (at least five sentences long) and indented?			
4. Are any sentences unclear? Do I understand what you are trying to say?			

5. What do I like best about this paper? _____

6. What do I think needs improvement? _____

Title _____

Name _____

Date _____ Period _____

**Compare/Contrast Essay
Rubric**

1. Opening catches reader's interest	0	1	2	3	4
2. Introduces the subjects being compared	0	1	2	3	4
1. State a clear purpose for the comparison	0	1	2	3	4
2. Includes both similarities and differences and supports each statement with examples and details	0	1	2	3	4
3. Follows a clear organizational pattern	0	1	2	3	4
4. Includes transitional words and phrases to make similarities and differences clear	0	1	2	3	4
5. Summarizes the comparison in the conclusion	0	1	2	3	4
6. Uses correct grammar	0	1	2	3	4
7. Uses correct spelling	0	1	2	3	4
8. Uses correct capitalization and punctuation	0	1	2	3	4

Total _____
x 2.5

Grade _____

Title _____ Name _____

Date _____

**Response to Literature
Writing Standard 2**

If you use a number scale, divide the number of points earned by the number of traits.

- 0 = not evident
- 1 = minimal evidence of mastery
- 2 = adequate evidence of mastery
- 3 = strong evidence of mastery
- 4 = outstanding evidence of mastery

Write responses to literature that

_____ Advance a judgment that demonstrates a comprehensive grasp of the significant ideas of works or passages.

_____ Support key ideas and viewpoints through accurate and detailed references to the text or to other works.

_____ Demonstrate awareness of the author's use of stylistic devices and an appreciation of the effects created.

_____ Identify and assess the impact of perceived ambiguities, nuances, and complexities within text.