

## OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/GRADE 9 AND 10 WRITING/HANDOUT 7

### COMPARE AND CONTRAST: LOOKING FOR A VALID BASIS OF COMPARISON

(Adapted from <http://web.cerritos.edu/jswanson/SitePages/Compare-Contrast.htm>)

You may already know that comparing and contrasting are writing strategies; however, they are such good writing strategies because they emulate the way people think. We compare and contrast the new to what we already know in order to understand the new and to sharpen our understanding of the old.

Let me give you an example. Have you ever heard of the British game of cricket? It's like our baseball. Those who play cricket play with a bat and a ball; they have a guy, like our pitcher, who throws the ball toward the batter, trying to get it by him. And, if the batter hits the ball, he takes off running, just like our baseball players do.

Notice, here, to explain it to you, I began with points of comparison — that is, the points on which the two games are similar. What I've done is to have begun with a **VALID BASIS OF COMPARISON**. This valid basis of comparison is the first feature of comparing and contrasting.

Now that you have a rough idea about cricket — that it's a game in some ways like our baseball — I, the comparer and contraster, go on to show the specific differences. (And if I knew more about cricket, I'd have this better organized, but...)

I'd talk to you about the specific differences between the bats and the balls. Baseball uses a cylindrical bat, tapered at the grip, getting fatter toward the end that hits the ball. Cricket, on the other hand, uses a bat that has a cylindrical handle for the grip, but then flattens out to look like a long, thick, wooden paddle. The baseball is smaller and harder than the cricket ball....

My point here is that comparison/contrast consists of two features:

1. A valid basis of comparison
2. A narrow focus on specific and related differences

Let me get away from my area of ignorance (cricket) and into another example. Have you ever heard of the expression "apples and oranges"? "Ah," someone might say, "That's like apples and oranges." What it means is that the two things being talked about are so different that they can't be compared. But watch what you can do with a valid basis of comparison...

Suppose you've won the lottery, and you buy your mansion on a huge piece of land, on which there are two orchards: one apple, the other orange. Say each orchard occupies about 1000 acres. Nice, right? Well, because money has been on your mind lately, you begin to wonder: which one yields more profit?

Ah-ha! What you have there is a valid basis of comparison. That is, both your apple orchard and your orange orchard yield profit. With this, you can develop a comparison/contrast analysis. With "profitability" as your basis for comparison (just as cricket and baseball had valid bases of comparison), you then move on to **CONTRAST SPECIFIC DIFFERENCES**. For

example, you could build a paragraph for each of the following:

- Demand — which crop has a greater demand?
- Maintenance — which crop costs more to maintain?
  - water
  - pesticides
  - labor costs
- vulnerability to climate — which is heartier
- Production — which produces more?

Now, if you were so inclined, you could begin your comparison/contrast analysis of your orchards as follows:

Introduction: Something about how lovely your trees are, how rich you are, and how you've embarked on this work to find out which of your two orchards make you richer.

[Here, you've established your VALID BASIS OF COMPARISON.]

In the body of your work, you would CONTRAST SPECIFIC DIFFERENCES:

Maintenance...

Production...

Demand...

And, in your conclusion, you would assert which crop is more profitable.

### Reflection

In your own words, explain why it is important to find the basis of comparison when writing a compare and contrast essay. In addition, find an example of a comparative analysis that can have different bases of comparison (like the apple and orange orchards example above).

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**Read the following two stories. What would be a good basis for comparing them?**

(Web resource: <http://www.scaryforkids.com/horror-stories/>)

**Story One****Digital Camera**

One of my relatives passed away suddenly. I never met the woman. She had a daughter who was four years old. The little girl's name was Yuki. Her father wasn't able to raise her on his own, so he asked my aunt to take care of her.

The little girl refused to be left alone and never left my aunt's side. It started to become a problem. My aunt couldn't go anywhere without Yuki. She constantly needed attention. Even my aunt's own daughter started to get jealous.

One day, my aunt told me she had to go out of town for a couple of days and asked if I would babysit the little girl for her. I said it would be my pleasure. I lived alone and I could do with some company.

A few days later, my aunt dropped Yuki off at my apartment. As she was leaving, she took the little girl aside and said, "Yuki, please be good. Behave yourself."

When my aunt was gone, I tried to talk to Yuki and play some games with her, but the little girl's behavior was very strange. She had a teddy bear tucked tightly under her arm and never let go of it. She never smiled. She never spoke. All she ever did was sit quietly in the corner and stare at the wall. It made me kind of uneasy.

I was trying to find something that would entertain her. I had just bought a new digital camera and I decided to let Yuki play with my old one. When she saw the camera, her eyes lit up. I showed her how to use it and she went around my apartment taking pictures of everything. There was a bright smile on her face.

That evening, I discovered how difficult Yuki was to deal with. Whenever I tried to leave the room, she started crying and screaming out my name. I couldn't leave her alone or she would create a huge fuss. She even insisted on going to the bathroom with me, which was very embarrassing.

At bedtime, she refused to stay in the spare room and insisted on sleeping in my bed. I read her a bedtime story and after a while, I managed to get her to go to sleep. That was when I noticed her teddy bear. One of its legs was charred and blackened, as if it had been burned. It made me wonder.

In the middle of the night, I was awoken by a strange noise. When I turned over, I saw that there was something wrong with Yuki. The little girl's body was trembling and shaking. Her eyes were wide open, her teeth were chattering and tears were streaming down her cheeks. I held her close and asked her what was wrong.

"She's looking at me again," she mumbled.

"Who is?" I asked in surprise.

"The dark woman," replied Yuki.

She wouldn't say anything more. I tried to tell her it was just her imagination, but she kept shaking her head and whimpering. It took me a long time to get her to go back to sleep.

The next day, Yuki was fine again. She loved playing with my digital camera. When it was time for her to go home, I told her she could keep it. Yuki hugged me. Although she didn't say anything, I could tell she was overjoyed.

I dropped the little girl off at my aunt's house and stayed to have a cup of tea. My aunt thanked me for taking care of Yuki we spent a while chatting at the kitchen table.

"Poor little thing," said my aunt. "She hasn't said a word since her mother died."

I couldn't contain my curiosity. "How did Yuki's mom die?" I asked.

A strange look came over my aunt's face. "She died in a fire..."

"How did the fire start?" I asked.

"Well..." my aunt hesitated, unwilling to talk about it. "It's a very sad story. She committed suicide. Yuki's mother was a very troubled woman. She poured gasoline over herself and lit a match. She burned herself alive."

"OMG!" I exclaimed. "How horrible!"

"Yes," said my aunt. "Her family was so shocked, they hushed it up and pretended it was an accident. We had a small funeral but only close relatives were invited. Yuki wasn't there. She doesn't even know her mother is dead. She thinks her mother is just on a long holiday. We haven't had the heart to tell her the truth."

"Poor Yuki," I murmured.

My aunt nodded her head sadly. "Poor Yuki."

A few days after that, Yuki died.

My aunt was trying to change Yuki's behavior. At night, she forced the little girl to sleep in her own bedroom. Even though Yuki screamed and cried, my aunt left her there alone and locked the door. In the morning, she found Yuki lying motionless in bed. The poor little girl was dead.

Nobody could understand what had happened. The coroner couldn't determine a cause of death. There wasn't a mark on her body. She was perfectly healthy. She had just mysteriously died during the night. There was no explanation.

After the funeral, I went back to my aunt's house. Everyone was very sad. She returned the digital camera I had given to Yuki. I took it home with me. It was something to remember her by.

The memory card was full of random photos that Yuki had taken. I browsed through them, wiping a tear from my eye. There were pictures of my apartment, pictures of my aunt's house, pictures of flowers, dogs, toys, candy... Silly pictures that a child would take.

Then, I came to the last picture and it made my blood run cold.

My hands were trembling.

I wanted to scream, but nothing would come out.

The timestamp on the photo showed that it had been taken on the night Yuki died.

Here is the last picture that poor little girl ever took with my digital camera:



## Story Two

### Writing on the Wall

When I was younger, there was a ruined building at the bottom of our street. All of the kids in the area kept well away from it, because the rumor was that it was haunted.

The concrete walls of the old two-story building were cracked and crumbling. The windows were broken and shards of glass lay all over the floor inside.

One evening, as a test of courage, my best friend and I decided to explore the creepy old place.

We climbed in through a window at the back of the building. The whole place was dirty and there was a layer of mud on the wooden floor. As we dusted ourselves off, we looked up and were shocked to see that someone had written the words "I AM DEAD" on the wall near the ceiling.

"Probably just some teenagers trying to scare kids", I said. "Yeah, probably...", replied my friend nervously.

We explored more of the rooms on the ground floor. In a room that appeared to have once been a kitchen of sorts, we found more writing on the wall.

It read "I AM IN A ROOM UPSTAIRS."

We walked up the creaking stairs to the second floor. I led the way and my friend followed close behind. I wasn't scared, but he was beginning to get a little jittery.

When we came to the top of the stairs, we turned left and walked cautiously down the narrow hallway. At the end of the hallway was a closed door with some more ominous writing on it.

"YOU WILL FIND ME IN THIS ROOM."

By now, my friend was shaking with fear. I was quite creeped out too, but I didn't want to show it. He told me he didn't want to go any further, but I insisted, telling him there was nothing to be afraid of.

I turned the handle and the door creaked open. We stepped into the room and found it empty. There were two closed doors on either side. There was more creepy writing on the wall.

It read "MY HEAD IS ON THE LEFT AND MY BODY IS ON THE RIGHT."

As soon as my friend saw this, he completely lost his nerve. He gave a yelp and turned to run away. I caught hold of his arm, but he shook me off and fled out through the open door. I heard his footsteps disappearing off down the hallway.

I held my ground. I was determined to be brave and overcome my fear. Mustering all my courage, I opened the door on the right and walked inside. I walked to the other side of the room and on the wall, written in tiny letters were the words "MY BODY IS UNDERNEATH."

I looked down at the floor. I was standing on some more writing on the floorboards. I stepped back and saw the words "MY HEAD IS COMING FROM THE ROOM BEHIND YOU. TURN AROUND."

I heard the door behind me creaking and quickly turned. There was a shadow moving behind the door. Suddenly something rolled into the room and came to a rest against the wall.

It was my friend's severed head.

His dead, sightless eyes seemed to stare at me. Screaming in horror, I flung myself out through the open window and fell two stories to the ground.

I landed on my side, breaking my arm. In horrible pain, I ran home, crying and yelling for my parents.

The police were called and they searched the old ruined building. At first, they didn't find anything. There wasn't even any writing on the wall. They combed the house from top to bottom, but didn't find any traces of my friend.

Then they pried up the floorboards. His body was lying underneath. They never found his head.

## ACTIVITY

Read the first part of William Faulker's Gothic short story, "A Rose for Emily." (We will compare and contrast the Gothic elements this short story and the elements of horror in the two short stories from page 3 to 7 of this handout.)

### First Two Parts of "A Rose for Emily"

#### I

WHEN Miss Emily Grierson died, our whole town went to her funeral: the men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument, the women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house, which no one save an old man-servant--a combined gardener and cook--had seen in at least ten years.

It was a big, squarish frame house that had once been white, decorated with cupolas and spires and scrolled balconies in the heavily lightsome style of the seventies, set on what had once been our most select street. But garages and cotton gins had encroached and obliterated even the august names of that neighborhood; only Miss Emily's house was left, lifting its stubborn and coquettish decay above the cotton wagons and the gasoline pumps--an eyesore among eyesores. And now Miss Emily had gone to join the representatives of those august names where they lay in the cedar-bemused cemetery among the ranked and anonymous graves of Union and Confederate soldiers who fell at the battle of Jefferson.

Alive, Miss Emily had been a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town, dating from that day in 1894 when Colonel Sartoris, the mayor--he who fathered the edict that no Negro woman should appear on the streets without an apron--remitted her taxes, the dispensation dating from the death of her father on into perpetuity. Not that Miss Emily would have accepted charity. Colonel Sartoris invented an involved tale to the effect that Miss Emily's father had loaned money to the town, which the town, as a matter of business, preferred this way of repaying. Only a man of Colonel Sartoris' generation and thought could have invented it, and only a woman could have believed it.

When the next generation, with its more modern ideas, became mayors and aldermen, this arrangement created some little dissatisfaction. On the first of the year they mailed her a tax notice. February came, and there was no reply. They wrote her a formal letter, asking her to call at the sheriff's office at her convenience. A week later the mayor wrote her himself, offering to call or to send his car for her, and received in reply a note on paper of an archaic shape, in a thin, flowing



calligraphy in faded ink, to the effect that she no longer went out at all. The tax notice was also enclosed, without comment.

They called a special meeting of the Board of Aldermen. A deputation waited upon her, knocked at the door through which no visitor had passed since she ceased giving china-painting lessons eight or ten years earlier. They were admitted by the old Negro into a dim hall from which a stairway mounted into still more shadow. It smelled of dust and disuse--a close, dank smell. The Negro led them into the parlor. It was furnished in heavy, leather-covered furniture. When the Negro opened the blinds of one window, they could see that the leather was cracked; and when they sat down, a faint dust rose sluggishly about their thighs, spinning with slow motes in the single sun-ray. On a tarnished gilt easel before the fireplace stood a crayon portrait of Miss Emily's father.

They rose when she entered--a small, fat woman in black, with a thin gold chain descending to her waist and vanishing into her belt, leaning on an ebony cane with a tarnished gold head. Her skeleton was small and spare; perhaps that was why what would have been merely plumpness in another was obesity in her. She looked bloated, like a body long submerged in motionless water, and of that pallid hue. Her eyes, lost in the fatty ridges of her face, looked like two small pieces of coal pressed into a lump of dough as they moved from one face to another while the visitors stated their errand.

She did not ask them to sit. She just stood in the door and listened quietly until the spokesman came to a stumbling halt. Then they could hear the invisible watch ticking at the end of the gold chain.

Her voice was dry and cold. "I have no taxes in Jefferson. Colonel Sartoris explained it to me. Perhaps one of you can gain access to the city records and satisfy yourselves."

"But we have. We are the city authorities, Miss Emily. Didn't you get a notice from the sheriff, signed by him?"

"I received a paper, yes," Miss Emily said. "Perhaps he considers himself the sheriff . . . I have no taxes in Jefferson."

"But there is nothing on the books to show that, you see We must go by the--"

"See Colonel Sartoris. I have no taxes in Jefferson."

"But, Miss Emily--"

"See Colonel Sartoris." (Colonel Sartoris had been dead almost ten years.) "I have no taxes in Jefferson. Tobe!" The Negro appeared. "Show these gentlemen out."

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## II

So SHE vanquished them, horse and foot, just as she had vanquished their fathers thirty years before about the smell.

That was two years after her father's death and a short time after her sweetheart--the one we believed would marry her --had deserted her. After her father's death she went out very little; after her sweetheart went away, people hardly saw her at all. A few of the ladies had the temerity to call, but were not received, and the only sign of life about the place was the Negro man--a young man then--going in and out with a market basket.

"Just as if a man--any man--could keep a kitchen properly," the ladies said; so they were not surprised when the smell developed. It was another link between the gross, teeming world and the high and mighty Griersons.

A neighbor, a woman, complained to the mayor, Judge Stevens, eighty years old.

"But what will you have me do about it, madam?" he said.

"Why, send her word to stop it," the woman said. "Isn't there a law? "

"I'm sure that won't be necessary," Judge Stevens said. "It's probably just a snake or a rat that nigger of hers killed in the yard. I'll speak to him about it."

The next day he received two more complaints, one from a man who came in diffident deprecation. "We really must do something about it, Judge. I'd be the last one in the world to bother Miss Emily, but we've got to do something." That night the Board of Aldermen met--three graybeards and one younger man, a member of the rising generation.

"It's simple enough," he said. "Send her word to have her place cleaned up. Give her a certain time to do it in, and if she don't. .."

"Dammit, sir," Judge Stevens said, "will you accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad?"

So the next night, after midnight, four men crossed Miss Emily's lawn and slunk about the house like burglars, sniffing along the base of the brickwork and at the cellar openings while one of them performed a regular sowing motion with his hand out of a sack slung from his shoulder. They broke open the cellar door and sprinkled lime there, and in all the outbuildings. As they recrossed the lawn, a window that had been dark was lighted and Miss Emily sat in it, the light behind her, and her upright torso motionless as that of an idol. They crept quietly across the lawn and into the shadow of the locusts that lined the street. After a week or two the smell went away.

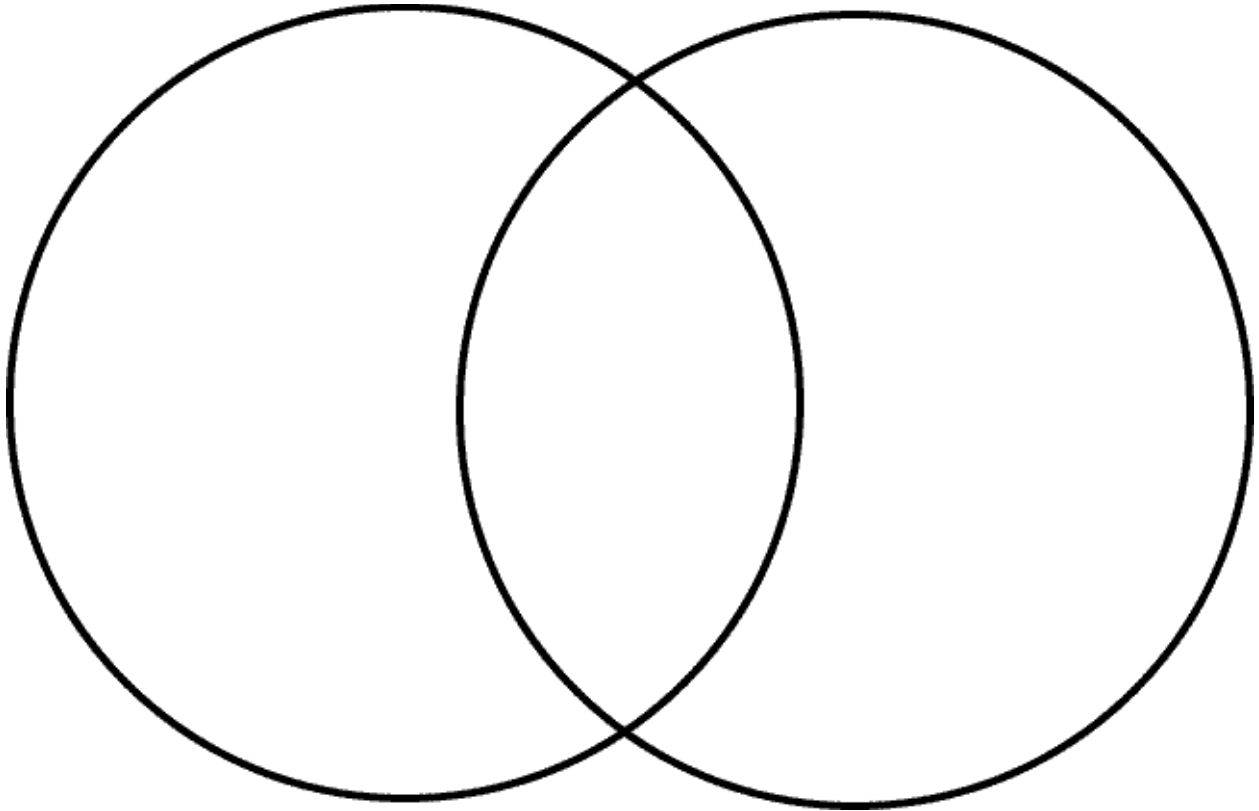
That was when people had begun to feel really sorry for her. People in our town, remembering how old lady Wyatt, her great-aunt, had gone completely crazy at last, believed that the Griersons held themselves a little too high for what they really were. None of the young men were quite good enough for Miss Emily and such. We had long thought of them as a tableau, Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the background, her father a spraddled silhouette in the foreground, his back to her and clutching a horsewhip, the two of them framed by the back-flung front door. So when she got to be thirty and was still single, we were not pleased exactly, but vindicated; even with insanity in the family she wouldn't have turned down all of her chances if they had really materialized.

When her father died, it got about that the house was all that was left to her; and in a way, people were glad. At last they could pity Miss Emily. Being left alone, and a pauper, she had become humanized. Now she too would know the old thrill and the old despair of a penny more or less.

The day after his death all the ladies prepared to call at the house and offer condolence and aid, as is our custom Miss Emily met them at the door, dressed as usual and with no trace of grief on her face. She told them that her father was not dead. She did that for three days, with the ministers calling on her, and the doctors, trying to persuade her to let them dispose of the body. Just as they were about to resort to law and force, she broke down, and they buried her father quickly.

We did not say she was crazy then. We believed she had to do that. We remembered all the young men her father had driven away, and we knew that with nothing left, she would have to cling to that which had robbed her, as people will.

Use a Venn Diagram to compare the Gothic elements in Faulkner's writing and the elements of horror in the other two short stories, "Digital Camera" and "Writing on the Wall."



Basis of comparison: \_\_\_\_\_

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