

Comparison and Contrast Essay

Definition of Comparison and Contrast Essay

A [comparison](#) and [contrast essay](#) compares two similar objects, or contrasts dissimilar objects, in a way that readers become informed about the advantages and disadvantages of both the objects. Readers are then able to weigh pros and cons of the objects compared and contrasted to select a better product. It, however, does not mean that it is only a comparison or contrast of products, it could be a situation after which readers are to make a decision, weighing pros and cons. Although a comparison and contrast essay is set to demonstrate both similarities as well as differences, sometimes it only shows similarities, and at other times, only differences.

Difference Between a Division/Classification and Comparison/Contrast Essay

A division and classification essay, like comparison and contrast essay, is also an analysis essay whose objective is to break a thing or idea, or an essay into bits for analysis. A comparison and contrast essay, however, intends to point out qualities and deficiencies in things, or explain bad and good aspects of an issue. This is mostly done for decision making purposes.

Examples of Comparison and Contrast Essay in Literature

Example #1: *A Slow Walk of Trees* (by Toni Morrison)

“His name was John Solomon Willis, and when at age 5 he heard from the old folks that “the Emancipation Proclamation was coming,” he crawled under the bed. It was his earliest recollection of what was to be his habitual response to the promise of white people: horror and an instinctive yearning for

safety. He was my grandfather, a musician who managed to hold on to his violin but not his land. He lost all 88 acres of his Indian mother's inheritance to legal predators who built their fortunes on the likes of him. He was an unreconstructed black pessimist who, in spite of or because of emancipation, was convinced for 85 years that there was no hope whatever for black people in this country. His rancor was legitimate, for he, John Solomon, was not only an artist but a first-rate carpenter and farmer, reduced to sending home to his family money he had made playing the violin because he was not able to find work. And this during the years when almost half the black male population were skilled craftsmen who lost their jobs to white ex-convicts and immigrant farmers."

This passage compares two types of attitudes about the author's grandfather; one of the black [community](#) and the other of the response of the white to this blackness.

Example #2: *Reality TV: Surprising Throwback to The Past?* (by Patricia Cohen)

"To many critics, Cupid and other matchmaking shows that mix money and real-life marital machinations represent a cynical and tasteless new [genre](#) that is yet another sign of America's [moral](#) decline. But there's something familiar about the fortune hunters, the status seekers, the thwarted loves, the meddling friends, the public displays, the comic manners, and the sharp competitiveness—all find their counterparts in Jane Austen and Edith Wharton. Only now, three-minute get-to-know-you tryouts in a TV studio substitute for three-minute waltzes at a ball. Traditional family values, it turns out, are back on television after all."

In this passage, Patricia Cohen compares two attitudes: one of materialism, and the other of morality. She bemoans moral decline, but praises the literary taste.

Example #3: *Euromail and Amerimail* (by Eric Weiner)

“Euromail is stiff and cold, often beginning with a formal ‘Dear Mr. X,’ and ending with a brusque ‘Sincerely.’ You won’t find any mention of kids or the weather or jellyfish in Euromail. It’s all business. It’s also slow. Your correspondent might take days, even weeks, to answer a message. Euromail is also less confrontational in tone, rarely filled with the overt nastiness that characterizes American e-mail disagreements. In other words, Euromail is exactly like the Europeans themselves. (I am, of course, generalizing. German e-mail [style](#) is not exactly the same as Italian or Greek, but they have more in common with each other than they do with American mail.)”

In this passage, Eric Weiner compares euromail and Amerimail to point out the drawbacks of one, and highlight the qualities of the other.

Functions of a Comparison and Contrast Essay

A comparison and contrast essay helps readers reach a critical decision. It could be a comparison and contrast of two products, two objects, two things, or two issues. Readers read the essays, weigh all aspects, and then decide whether to make a purchase and decide in favor of one thing or not. This type of essay also makes readers more cognizant of the situations or issues discussed.