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**Course Title:** Comparison and Contrast Essays

**Reference:** Belkhir, F.Z., & Messaoudi, Y.(2018-2019). *Comprehension and Written Expression-LMD2*. Pedagogical handout. University of Tlemcen, Algeria.

**Unit 4 Comparison and Contrast Essays**

**4.1 Definition**

A comparison and contrast essay focuses on how two items or texts are similar, different, or similar in some ways and different in others. You can compare and contrast any number of items including theories, events, books, or people. Comparison focuses on the ways in which these two things or ideas are similar to; Contrast deals with how these two elements are different from one another.

By mastering such type of essay, you are going to make connections between texts or ideas, engage in critical thinking, and go beyond mere description or summary to generate interesting analysis: when you reflect on similarities and differences, you gain a deeper understanding of the items you are comparing, their relationship to each other, and what is most important about them.

**4.2 Sample**

*(In the following page)*

**My Two Homes**

There are two places that have had a profound impact in my life. One of them in New York City, and the other one is Quetzaltenango, Guatemala. When you compare them, they seem dramatically different places, but they have some things in common, and I love them both.

There are many reasons why New York seems like my home away from home. Both cities are striking and distinctive. For example, each has its own nickname. Everyone knows New York is “the Big Apple”. Quetzaltenango is known as “Xela” (pronounced as shey-la), which is a lot easier to say! Second, both cities have a “Central Park” where people like to go and walk. Although Central Park in Xela is smaller, its tropical flowers and colonial architecture mean it is just beautiful as New York’s. Furthermore, when you walk around Xela, you find many tourists and people from other countries, just like in New York. For me, this means conversations in Xela are just as interesting as conversations in New York.

Despite their similarities, these cities are different. Life in Xela is more colorful and the pace of life is slower. For this reason, whenever I return to Xela, it is like an escape. When I arrive, the first thing I notice is the color. In New York, many people wear black to be stylish, but in Xela stylish clothing is the rainbow-colored clothing of the indigenous people. And because Xela is smaller, the beautiful green mountains outside the city are always visible. The second thing I notice is the pace of life. They say New York never sleeps, and it must be true, because I always see people walking and cars on the streets, even late at night. In the evening, my Guatemalan city definitely sleeps. Some younger people go out dancing and some families take a walk in the city’s Central Park, but by ten o’clock the streets are pretty deserted. On the other hand, New Yorkers are often in such a hurry, they don’t even stop to eat. For breakfast they buy food on the street, and eat it while they are walking or on the subway. At lunch they order food from work and eat it at their desks. In Xela people eat their breakfast at home and most come home from work for a much more relaxed and longer lunch.

In conclusion, these are the two cities I love. For me, both are home, are unique, and filled with interesting people. These places represent the best of both worlds. New York is more hurried and rushed when I need energy, and Xela gives me a slower pace when I need to relax. Together they keep me balanced.

**4.3 Organisation**

There are two ways to organize a comparison and contrast essay: The first (and often the clearest) method is the **Point-by-Point** method, and the second method is called the **Block** method.

*A. Introduction*

In both methods, the introduction

* presents the subject that is to be compared or contrasted.
* ends with a thesis statement that focuses the comparison or contrast.

*B. Body Paragraphs*

* *Body Paragraphs for Point-by-Point Essays*
* There are two body paragraphs, each with a clear topic sentence.
* Each body paragraph presents one main point to be compared or contrasted between the two subjects.
* Within each body paragraph, the topic sentence states the point of comparison or contrast between the subjects. The supporting sentences that follow provide two or three examples.
* The body paragraphs use sequence transitions, such as first, second, furthermore, etc., to connect the point-by-point analysis within the paragraph.
* *Body Paragraphs for Similarities and Differences Essays*
* There are two body paragraphs, each with a clear topic sentence.
* One body paragraph is devoted to similarities between the two subjects and one body paragraph is devoted to differences.

*C. Conclusion*

In both cases, the conclusion of a comparison/contrast essay allows the writer to summarize the differences and similarities and state his/her feeling about the topic.

**4.4 Language**

* **Using Comparison and Contrast Connectors**

In comparison and contrast essays, connectors help create coherence by indicating the relationship between ideas and sentences.

* *Connectors that Show Similarity*

Use connectors such as *like* (+ noun phrase) or *similarly* to show similarity.

E.g.:

-*Like* her sister, Angela was very tall.

-I grew up overseas in Shanghai. *Similarly*, my wife spent her childhood abroad in Laos.

* *Connectors that Show Contrast*

Use connectors like *unlike* (+ noun phrase), *in contrast*, *on the one hand* … *on the other hand* to show contrast

E.g.:

-*Unlike* the fathers in Morella, the fathers in Houston do not watch their teenagers carefully.

-The pace of life in New York is very rapid. *In contrast*, life in Xela is slower.

-*On the one hand*, I enjoy the fast pace of New York. *On the other hand*, the pace of life in Xela relaxes me.

**4.5 Practice**

**Activity 1: Re-write the following sentences to show similarity or contrast. Choose the correct connector in parentheses to add more coherence.**

a. Lemons are yellow. Limes are green. (unlike/similarly)

b. Many families can live in apartment building. Only one of two families usually live in a house. (on the one hand … on the other hand/ like)

c. A frog can live in water or on land. A fish cannot. (like/unlike)

d. A parrot can fly. An ostrich cannot. (similarly/in contrast)

e. Rome is a city rich in history. Athens is too. (like/ in contrast)

f. Mozart composed his first opera at the age of 12. Mendelssohn composed his first masterpiece in his teens. (in contrast/similarly)

**Activity 2: Complete the paragraph. Write *like, similarly, on the one hand… on the other hand,* or *in contrast* in the blanks.**

The Eiffel Tower in Paris, France, and the Statue of Liberty in New York City may seem to be very different structures. However, they have many similarities, ………………………(1) the Eiffel Tower, the Statue of Liberty was designed by a French architect. …………………….(2), the Statue of Liberty and Eiffel Tower, represented great advancement in metalwork. The Eiffel Tower, however, is taller that the Statue of Liberty. The Eiffel Tower measures 986 feet. …………………………….(3), the Statue of Liberty is only305 feet from the water to the top of his torch. ……………………………..(4) you have the elegant black frame and sharp point of the Eiffel Tower, and …………………………….(5) you have the long, flowing robe and lifelike torch of the Statue Liberty. Both monuments are equally beautiful.

* **Writing a Comparison/Contrast Essay**

*Step 1: BRAINSTORMING*

Consider a comparison between two people you know. First, write down ideas and vocabulary for your brainstorm on a separate piece of paper.

*Step 2: OUTLINING*

Write an outline for your essay. Decide if you want to use a similarities and differences essay or a point-by-point essay. Use the appropriate outline for the body paragraphs.

**Introduction**

Hook: ………………………………………………………………………………………..………………………………………………………………………………

Background Information:

……………………………………………………………..………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Thesis Statement:

……………..………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

**Body Paragraph 1 (Block Comparison)**

Topic sentence about *similarities*:

……………………………..…………………………...………………………………………………………………………………………………

Details: ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

**Body Paragraph 2 (Block Comparison)**

Topic sentence about *differences*:

……………………..…………………………………………………………..……….………………………………………………………………………………

Details: ……………………………………………………………………………………………...………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Or,

**Body Paragraph 1 (Point-by-Point Comparison)**

Topic sentence about *point of comparison 1*:

………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Details: ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

**Body Paragraph 2 (Point-by-Point Comparison)**

Topic sentence about *point of comparison 2:*

……………………………………………..………………………………………………………………………………………………

Details: ……………………………………………………………………………………….………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

**Conclusion**

Summary of points of comparison and contrast:

………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

*Step 3: WRITING*

Use your brainstorming notes and outline to write your essay on a separate piece of paper.