

Comparison and Contrast

1. List some specific purposes for using comparison or contrast in one's composition.
2. Could you compare two small concrete objects such as eggs without discussing aspects? What does "aspect" refer to here?
3. If you stated that a robot is superior to an egg or a man is superior to a broom, would another person know what aspects of the two objects were being compared? If not, how do you make this comparison valid?
4. Any two subjects may be compared by either difference **in kind** or **in degree**. Decide whether the differences mentioned in the following statements are of kind or of degree:
 - (A) At the present time, you must use the library to obtain information; in the year 2000 you will be able to obtain the information in your home through connection with a central computer system.
 - (B) You will be able to obtain information much more quickly and efficiently than at present.
 - (C) Obtaining information electronically, however, will probably be more costly for the individual in the future.
 - (D) Obtaining information today involves being with other people, working with books, using physical activity on your part and possibly on the part of a reference librarian; obtaining information electronically, on the contrary, will involve no use of books and no dealings with other people.
5. What words help to distinguish a statement of difference in degree from a statement of difference in kind?
6. For students, summer is generally a time of leisure and recreation; winter, on the contrary, is a time of attending classes, carrying out research, and endless studying. Is this a statement of comparison? Is this statement a significant comparison?
7. What is *literal similarity*? Suppose that you wished to note similarities between eggs and poetry. Could literal comparisons be drawn between them?
8. What is *figurative similarity*?

Examples:

The verbal world ought to stand in relation to the extensional [objective, physical] world as a map does to the territory it is supposed to represent.

—Hayakawa

9. What is analogy? What is the function or use of analogy? (You are to provide one example in class.)
10. Try writing an analogy involving poetry and eggs. (Write one or two examples and show it/them in class.)
11. Is the following passage an analogy?

A man may take to drink because he feels himself to be a failure, and then fail all the more completely because he drinks. It is rather the same thing that is happening to the English language. It becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts.

—from "Politics and the English Language" by George Orwell

12. What types of similarity are the following examples, literal or figurative?

- (A) The living language is like a cowpath: it is the creation of the cows themselves, who, having created it, follow it or depart from it according to their whims or needs.
—E. B. White
- (B) At sixty-five Knute was like one of his own cottonwoods, his roots deep in the soil, his trunk weathered by rain and blizzard and baking August noons, his crown spread to the wide horizon of day and the enormous sky of a prairie night.
—Sinclair Lewis
- (C) He saw himself as ridiculous, a ponderous, oldish man among clean-limbed youths, like a dusty cottonwood among silver birches.
—Sinclair Lewis
- (D) Say, look here, Axelbrod; I've been thinking about you.... We ought to know each other. We two are the class scandal. We came here to dream.... You may not agree with me, but I've decided that you and I are precisely alike.

13. We have now discussed the types of similarities. As a review, list them.



14. What is so-called *alternating pattern*? What is *divided* or *subject by subject pattern*?

Alternating pattern: comparing or contrasting point by point

Divided pattern: listing all the qualities of one subject and then all the qualities of the other.

15. Read the given article and find good examples which you think are worth discussing in class.