Comparing poetry

1. Read the following two poems at least 3 times each. Make notes as you read and circle/underline words or phrases that stand out to you.
2. For **each** poem, make notes according to the “Exploding a Poem” handout.
3. When you are finished, complete the instructions on the reverse of this page for comparing poetry.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Blessing*  The skin cracks like a pod.  There never is enough water.  Imagine the drip of it,  the small splash, echo  in a tin mug,  the voice of a kindly god.  Sometimes, the sudden rush  of fortune. The municipal pipe bursts,  silver crashes to the ground  and the flow has found  a roar of tongues. From the huts,  a congregation: every man woman  child for streets around  butts in, with pots,  brass, copper, aluminium,  plastic buckets,  frantic hands,  and naked children  screaming in the liquid sun,  their highlights polished to perfection,  flashing light,  as the blessing sings  over their small bones.  *Imtiaz Dharker* | *Plenty*  I have plenty of everything  but want.  I try to imagine hunger.  Try to imagine that I have not eaten today,  That I must stand in line for a bowl of soup.  That my cheekbones angle out of my hollowed face;  But I smell the roast in the oven.  I hear the laden refrigerator hum.  I think of people whose walls are made of wind.  I stand outside in the cold.  I tell myself I am homeless and dressed in rags;  But my shiver lacks conviction.  I stand in fleece-lined boots and winter coat.  Home is a block away.  I leave my wallet at home.  Pretending I have no money,  I walk past stores and wish.  “I have no money, no money at all, no money-”  I turn my head in shame as I pass the bank.  I pay for a parcel of food. I gather clothes.  I adopt a child under a foster parent plan.  I do what I can. I am generous. I am kind –  I still have plenty of everything  but want.  Jean Little |

Comparing poetry

**When you are comparing and contrasting poems, you are looking for similarities and differences in order to gain a better understanding of how poets apply poetry techniques and address various themes or topics.**

**Steps for comparison and contrast: Make notes in response to each of the following prompts. USE EVIDENCE from the poems to support your conclusions.**

1. **Decide on the “who, what, where, when, why, and how” of each poem.**
2. **Fill in a Venn diagram or other type of graphic organizer to show what is different and similar about the two poems you have read. Consider the following:**
   1. **The TOPIC or THEME of the poems (Death? Love? War?)**
   2. **The STRUCTURE of the poems (Stanzas? Rhyme? Length of lines?)**
   3. **The LANGUAGE of the poems (Imagery? Metaphor? Symbols? Onomatopoeia?)**
3. **Summarize in one or two sentences the differences and similarities and why they are important to the meaning of the poem.**

**For example: Both poems address the theme of war. However, the first poem uses violent language and imagery to captivate the horrors of the battlefield, whereas the second poem uses natural images to contrast the effects of war on its victims.**

1. **Find two or three specific lines or words from each poem that are interesting to compare because of similarities or differences in language, structure, or theme. Explain these comparisons, and explain how they add meaning to the poems.**
2. **Make a personal connection. What is your opinion of the poems? Why? Do you think one was more effective than the other? What is the message of each poem?**

**Sample Venn diagram:**

“Plenty”

“Blessing”