**Writing a Comparative Essay**

**A comparative essay seeks to illuminate textual elements, themes, ideas, etc. by comparing texts. Compare and contrast writing discusses the similarities and differences between two concepts, issues, people, places, things, etc. This type of writing can be an unbiased discussion, which merely discusses a subject with no argumentation, or it may be an attempt to convince the reader of the writer’s opinion.**

**TASK: Write a literary comparative essay on one of the following topics:**

**1. Discuss whether you believe each protagonist is either a hero or danger to society. Refer to at least two short stories read.**

**2. The protagonists of our short stories struggle with *authority and societal expectations* (rules and order). Compare how they cope with these expectations, and what the results of their choices are.**

**3. Compare how the authors of the short stories we have read use symbols to convey the theme of *isolation*.**

**4. Life is ultimately about choices. Compare the choices made by characters in the short stories read. Consider an important choice made by the protagonists and analyze the impact this choice had overall.**

**5. Your choice! (must be approved by me) Consider an analysis of themes, setting, or character.**

When writing a comparative essay, there are a few points to remember to make sure that your writing is clear and interesting.

1. PLAN FIRST. It is important when writing a comparative essay to clearly structure your comparison, so that each point develops the thesis and all texts are addressed.
2. Consider the following types of organization:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| BLOCK METHOD | ALTERNATING METHOD |
| Thesis: Text A reveals x; however Text B reveals… | Thesis: An examination of the use of symbols in A and B reveal…. |
| Paragraph 1: Text A | Paragraph 1: Point 1, text A and B |
| Paragraph 2: Text B | Paragraph 2: Point 2, text A and B |
| Paragraph 3,4…: Conclusions drawn from comparison | Paragraph 3: Point 3, text A and B |

1. Open with a statement that sets the stage for your thesis. It should give information about the theme or ideas that inspired the thesis statement. NEVER make a broad statement that is impossible to prove. For example, “In society” or “People believe that” – Which society? What people?
2. The thesis and its elaboration must be clearly stated, and each paragraph must have a distinct argument.
3. Use transition statements to build your points, and to show comparison and contrast. Some examples: additionally, above all, as a consequence, although, however, etc. DO NOT start a sentence with “as” or verbs that end with “-ing”.
4. Always start with the text and go back to the text. You must double check the text to make sure that your claims are accurate. **There is no reason to consult outside sources. Don’t be tempted to look online for ideas – this often ends up in unintentional plagiarism.**
5. Never leave a quotation hanging without examining its importance in detail. Even better is to incorporate words and phrases into your own argument.
6. Know who your audience is, and keep the tone appropriate. Use formal language, and avoid being too sarcastic or flippant. Avoid passive language, and wordy phrases such as “it can be seen that”.

Writing a Comparative Essay

**STEPS TO FOLLOW**

**PLAN**

1. Choose a TOPIC, and then a POSITION on the topic (what is your argument?)
2. Draft a SENTENCE (THESIS) stating your position.
3. List (at least) three points that support your position.
4. In point form, outline an explanation and/or example for each point.
5. Organize your points. Place your strongest point last.
6. Find textual evidence to support each point.

**WRITE**

1. Write the body of your opinion piece. State each point, providing explanations and examples for each. Examine each quotation and elaborate on the significance of elements such as diction and rhetorical devices. **Always PEE! (Point, Evidence, Explain)**
2. Write an introduction. Write a lead (opening sentence) to grab the reader’s attention. Include a sentence that states your position (thesis).
3. Write a conclusion: restate your position in different words, and draw a conclusion about the ideas you proposed in your thesis and what can be learned from the exploration of this topic.

**REVIEW**

1. Correct: Make sure each sentence is clear, and there are no spelling or grammar mistakes.
2. Review: Ask yourself, “Does each paragraph develop and support my thesis statement?”

**NB:**

* **Your planning is to be done beforehand, but you will write the essay in class. You may use your notes and copies of the texts, but you may not use a pre-written essay.**
* **You must submit the attached rubric and your planning sheets with your essay.**

Some resources on writing a comparative essay:

Harvard University: <http://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/overview-academic-essay>

University of Toronto:

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/specific-types-of-writing/comparative-essay>

**Rubric – Comparative Essay**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | **Level 4 – A**  80-100% | **Level 3 – B**  70-79% | **Level 2 – C**  60-69% | **Level 1 – D**  50-59% |
| **Knowledge/**  **Understanding**  - handling of argument  - thesis  - logic and skill of arguments  **/20** | * thorough understanding of the text * excellent thesis * arguments very logical and skillful | * + clear understanding of the text   + good thesis * arguments logical and reasonably skillful | * some understanding of the text * weak thesis * some logic and skill in arguments | * limited understanding of the text * very weak thesis * very little logic or skill to arguments |
|  | **(16-20)** | **(14-15)** | **(12-13)** | **(10-11)** |
| **Thinking/Inquiry**  - insight  - analysis  - drawing inferences  - close reading  - interpretation  **/10** | * penetrating insight * excellent analysis * clever inferences drawn * detailed, illuminating close readings * -fine interpretation given | * clear insight * good analysis * fairly good inferences drawn * clear close readings * -reasonable interpretation given | * some insight * some analysis * some inferences drawn * adequate close readings * some interpretation given | * limited insight * weak analysis * few inferences drawn * weak close readings * limited interpretation given |
|  | **(8-10)** | **(7-7.9)** | **(6-6.9)** | **(5-5.9)** |
| **Communication**  - structure and organization  - stylistic skill  - paragraphing  - coherence  - use of supporting quotations  **/20** | * very structured; effective organization * strong and sustained controlling idea * excellent paragraphing * clear and coherent throughout * -a number of supporting quotations used, and used well; very good formatting of quotations | * good structure; clear organization * clear controlling idea * clear paragraphing * good coherence; clear * a reasonable number of supporting quotations used; minor issues with formatting of quotations | * some structure; some organization * some sense of paragraphing * some coherence; intermittent clarity * some supporting quotations used, but not enough | * limited structure; weak organization * weak controlling idea * limited sense of paragraphing * poor coherence; often unclear * very few supporting quotations used |
|  | **(16-20)** | **(14-15)** | **(12-13)** | **(10-11)** |
| **Application**  - mechanics, language conventions, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure  - formal qualities  **/10** | * almost no errors in mechanics, language conventions, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure * strong formal qualities | * very few errors in mechanics, language conventions, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure * acceptable formal qualities | * some errors in mechanics, language conventions, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure * some formal qualities | * several errors in mechanics, language conventions, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure * few formal qualities |
|  | **(8-10)** | **(7-7.9)** | **(6-6.9)** | **(5-5.9)** |

**What you did well:**

**Next steps:**