

Write a Compare & Contrast Poetry ICE

Organizing a compare and contrast essay: In general you have several alternatives (w/modifications applicable to each). They move in increasing order of challenge + complexity.

1. Text-by-Text [aka chunking or blocking]

- Divide it into a discussion of the works one by one
 - o First paragraph – lit elements in one poem
 - o Second paragraph –lit elements in the other poem
 - o Third paragraph—Similarities in both poems
 - o Fourth paragraph—differences in both poems
- OR one paragraph that incorporates both similarities + differences

Note: This logical pattern MAY BE effective as long as the introduction and conclusion emphasize CLEARLY the connections between the two poems that are analyzed in the body paragraphs. However, this method IS NOT as sophisticated or mature as the #2 alternative. I do not recommend this method because the chance to focus too little on comparative analysis is rather great.

Example:

Thesis: Although both Komo and Hirsch depict basketball as a transformative experience, the rhythm and imagery in the poems show just how different those experiences are.

Topic Sentence 1: In “Slam, Dunk, & Hook” the prevalent images of struggle alongside the fragmented rhythm of the verse suggest that life is a battleground both on and off the court for the players.

Topic Sentence 2: In “Fast Break” the fluid structure and positive connotations of the words in the poem suggest that the players are achieving a singular moment of grace on the court, which is intended to be appreciated as fine art.

2. Element-by-Element

- Organize around the poetic devices you want to discuss
 - o First paragraph – Symbolism in **both** poems (be sure to highlight additional devices->diction, imagery)
 - o Second paragraph –rhythmic structure in **both** poems
...and so forth

Note: Each paragraph should refer to **BOTH** works; however, if you have a lot to say about one of the poetic devices, then break the discussion into TWO paragraphs (one on each poem).

Example:

Thesis: In these two poems, the point of view, images, and rhythmic structure reveal the relationship between the players and the sport they love, but a world of difference separates the experience of basketball for each of the speakers.

Topic Sentence 1: Though both poems are told from a first-person point of view, the speakers are connected to the game in different ways.

Topic Sentence 2: While the two poets use syntax in a different manner, in both cases it establishes a rhythm that reflects the pace of the game.

3. Movement through the poem [depending on the given prompt decide how to accomplish this—i.e. establish meaning or situation and show the message’s evolution throughout the poem]

Other Tips:

1. When gender of speaker is unknown, you may assume the gender of poet.
2. Avoid assumptions – don’t move to something that is not there!
3. When WRITING about poetry, consider that while most prose is written to express a universally relevant message (theme), the INTENT of POETRY may be to:
 - a. Explore an EMOTION
 - b. Examine a universal SITUATION
 - c. Express a THEME
4. Use qualifiers – not vivid imagery or strong diction – work on specificity
5. Focus on techniques and devices rather than paraphrasing poem
6. Always tie technique to why the poet made such a choice. Lines and techniques do not speak for themselves.
7. Go beyond obvious! – Use a variety of examples and work with the challenging lines!
8. Don’t spend too much time on broader implications before keeping focus on task at hand.