

Writing a

Comparative Essay



Comparative Essays

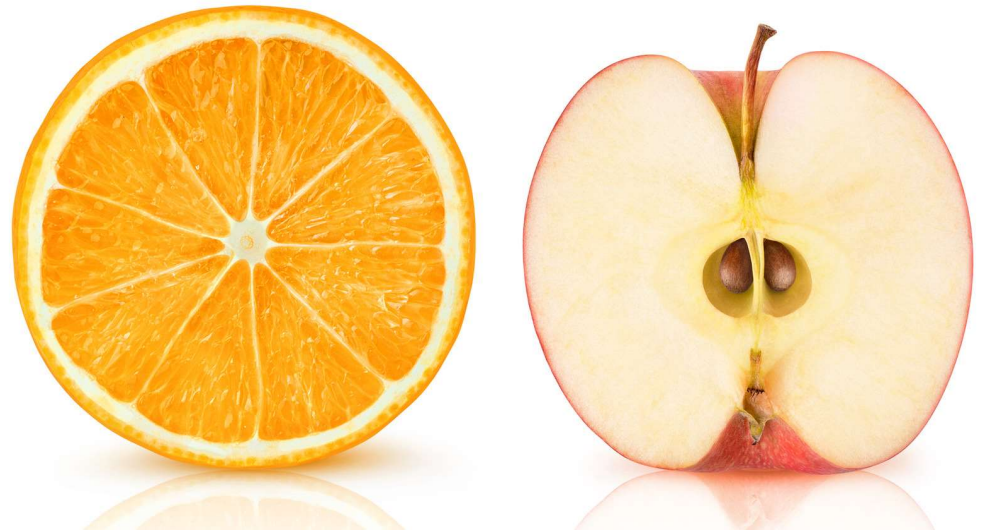
In a comparative essay you are usually asked to compare and contrast two things.

- Compare = find the **similarities** (things that are the same)
- Contrast = find the **differences** (things that are different)



Developing a Thesis

- The first step in writing a comparative essay is to develop a **thesis**.
- This is your overall point, which you will keep linking back to throughout the essay (LINK step in Peel).
- All of the information in your essay should ultimately be evidence that supports your thesis.





Developing a Thesis

In a comparative essay, your thesis can be:

1. SIMILAR

The two things are basically the same. Similarities outweigh any differences

2. DIFFERENT

The two things are basically different. Differences outweigh any similarities.

3. BOTH

There are both similarities and differences – neither outweighs the other.



Developing a Thesis

Compare and contrast how the film techniques in Disney's *Mulan* (1998) and *Mulan* (2020) have been used to portray Chinese culture.

Your thesis could be...

- The films use **similar** techniques to portray Chinese culture.
- The films use **different** techniques to portray Chinese culture.
- The films use **both similar and different** techniques to portray Chinese culture.



Thesis Statement



- Your thesis statement should briefly list the three main points of comparison that you intend to focus on.

Example:

- *Mulan* (2020) uses **similar** techniques to *Mulan* (1998) to portray Chinese culture, such as **similarity 1**, **similarity 2**, and **similarity 3**.
- Disney's two film adaptations of the legend of Mulan use **different** film techniques to portray Chinese culture, for example **difference 1**, **difference 2** and **difference 3**.



Do this now:

1. Look through your notes about the two versions of Mulan
 - Examples table
 - Group Venn diagram
2. Identify three main similarities or differences that you would like to focus on in your essay.
 - Remember, these must be differences in FILM TECHNIQUES, not plot points or characters
3. Based on the above, decide what your thesis will be
 - Mainly similarities
 - Mainly differences
 - Similarities AND differences
4. Use the Thesis Template to draft your thesis statement

A digital kitchen scale with a silver base and a white weighing pan. Inside the pan, a red apple and an orange are placed side-by-side. The scale's LCD screen shows the number '357'. To the left of the screen is a blue button labeled 'UNIT', and to the right is a blue button labeled 'TARE ON'. The entire scene is set against a background of light brown diagonal stripes.

Structure of a Comparative Essay

Basic Structure – same as any essay

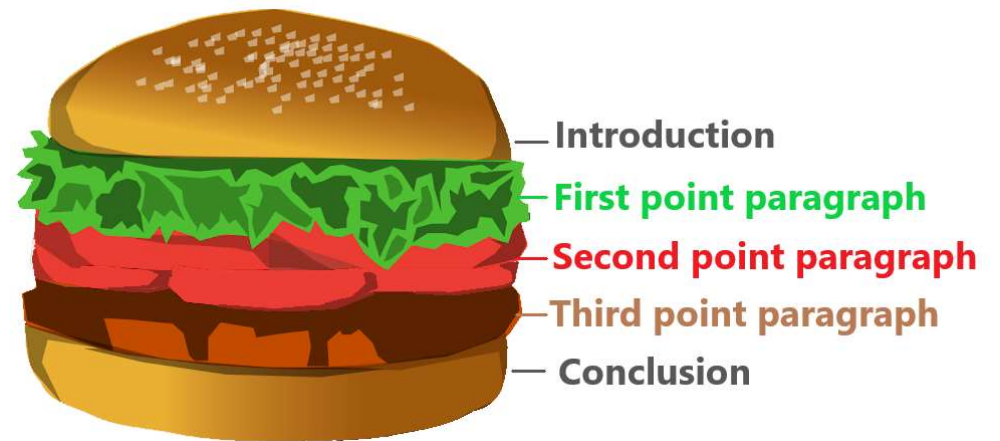
Introduction

Body paragraph 1

Body paragraph 2

Body paragraph 3

Conclusion



- In a comparative essay, the body paragraphs will be a little longer. Each should contain TWO examples, one from **each** of the films you are comparing. (Paragraph structure will be PEEEEEL)

Introduction:

- Hook – get the reader's attention with a quote, statistic, rhetorical question etc
- Background information – introduce the two things you are comparing
- Thesis statement – whether your essay will focus on similarities or differences, briefly list your 3 main points

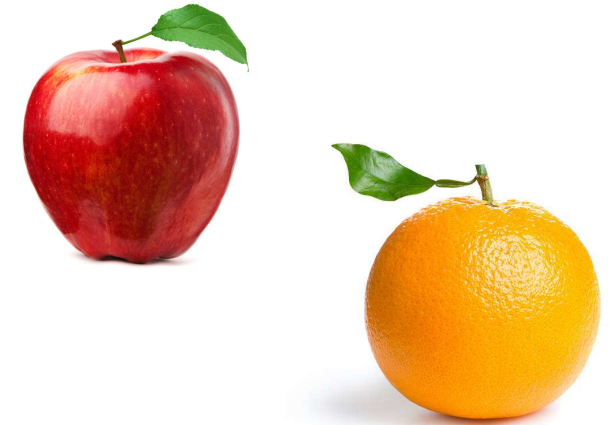
Body paragraphs (3):

- P – POINT: A key similarity or difference in the film techniques used
- E – EXAMPLE: a technique (e.g. costume, shot, sound/music) used in FILM 1
- E – EXPLANATION: how this technique portrays Chinese culture in FILM 1
- E – EXAMPLE: how the same technique is used in FILM 2
- E – EXPLANATION: how this technique portrays Chinese culture in FILM 2 and how this compares to FILM 1
- L – LINK: relate this back to your thesis (main idea – basically similar or different?) or link to your next point

Conclusion:

- Re-state your thesis – mostly similarities, mostly differences, or a mix of both?
- Restate your 3 main points of comparison
- Finish with a takeaway message or opinion about the topic as a whole.

Introduction Paragraph



1. Hook (get the reader's attention)
2. Background information about the two subjects
3. Thesis statement
 - Lets the reader know whether you will focus on **similarities**, **differences**, or **both**
 - Lists your three main points of comparison

Example:

An apple a day keeps the doctor away, but does an orange a day have the same effect? Both fruits are popular choices and well known for their health benefits. Compared to oranges, apples originated in a **different** part of the world, grow in cooler climates, and **differ** greatly in appearance.

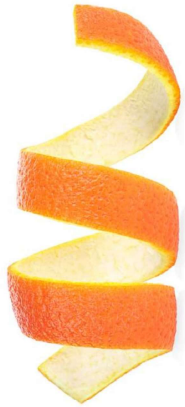
Introduction Paragraph

- Hook (get the reader's attention)
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- Thesis statement
 - Lets the reader know whether you will focus on similarities, differences, or both
 - Lists your **three** main points of comparison

Example:

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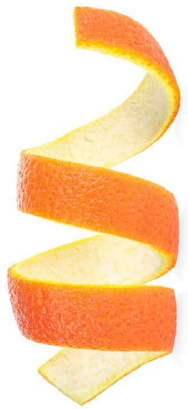
Body Paragraph



- **P**POINT – one similarity or difference
- **E**EVIDENCE – an example from **film 1**, with quote or description of scene
- **E**EXPLAIN – how this technique affects the audience, compared to the other
- **E**EVIDENCE – an example from **film 2**, with quote or description of scene
- **E**EXPLAIN – how this technique affects the audience, compared to the other
- **L**INK – to the next point or back to your thesis

Example: Place of origin is one difference between oranges and apples. The orange is believed to have come from Southern China. This shows it is a fruit suited to a warmer and milder climate than apples. In contrast, the apple comes from Central Asia, near Mongolia. This region has a cooler climate with frequent snow, which suits the apple. These two fruits had very distinct beginnings and again this shows they are quite different foods.

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Conclusion Paragraph

- Re-state your thesis
 - Mostly similarities, mostly differences, or both
- Restate your 3 main points of comparison
- Finish with a takeaway message or opinion about the topic as a whole.



Example:

In conclusion, it can be seen that apples and oranges have many differing qualities. This is clearly evident when place of origin, growing climate, and appearance are taken into consideration. While they are often classed together as fruit, it is important to realise that their significant differences make them truly unique.

Conclusion Paragraph

- Re-state your thesis
 - I.e. mostly similarities, mostly differences, or both
- Restate your 3 main points of comparison
- Finish with a takeaway message or opinion about the topic as a whole.

Example:

In conclusion, it can be seen that apples and oranges have many differing qualities. This is clearly evident when place of origin, growing climate, and appearance are taken into consideration. While they are often classed together as fruit, it is important to realise that their significant differences make them truly unique.