

Comparison-Contrast Essay

Attention getter

Background information

Thesis statement
(focus on differences)

Relevant feature 1:
Appearance

Parsons

Markwardt

Relevant feature 2:
Speech

Parsons

Markwardt

Relevant feature 3:
Attitudes

Parsons

Different Visions

How many different ways are there to see? In MacKinlay Kantor's "A Man Who Had No Eyes" two blind men—Parsons and Markwardt—meet in front of a hotel. At the beginning of the story, the reader does not know that Parsons is blind. That lack of knowledge makes the differences between the two men seem even more distinct. By the end of the story the reader has learned that even though both men are blind, one has lost another important kind of vision as well.

The two men are obviously different in appearance. Parsons carries a jaunty malacca walking stick and is a "handsome figure with his immaculate gray suit." Markwardt, on the other hand, looks "shaggy" and is dressed in a "greasy" coat.

The speech of the two men also points up their differences. Parsons speaks briskly, with businesslike dignity: "It's late. I have an appointment. Do you want me to give you some money?" Markwardt, however, speaks in a wheedling tone, using slang and a self-pitying manner: "And, mister, you wouldn't mind helping a poor guy out?" His self-pity is carried to an extreme when he speaks about the explosion when he was "just a workman, working for what was in it."

Parsons and Markwardt each have different attitudes toward life. Parsons, though blind, has made a success of his life by selling insurance. "A few years ago," the narrator says, "he had been little more than a skilled laborer; now he was successful, respected, admired. . . ." But

Comparison-Contrast Essay *continued*

Markwardt

Connection of support
to thesis

Markwardt is little more than a beggar who wants others to feel sorry for him. It's almost as though he believes the story that he tells Parsons about the man who, during the explosion, "hauls me back and climbs right over me!"

At the beginning of the story, when the two men first meet, the air is "rich with spring." Later, when Markwardt is telling his lie, the wind becomes "damp and quivering." It's obvious that the memory of the explosion and Markwardt's role in it are painful for Parsons to remember. In spite of that, however, Parsons has gone on to make a success of his life. In contrast, Markwardt—as his appearance, speech, and attitude show—has allowed his self-pity to dominate him. In this story, both men are sightless. But, because he cannot see a better way to live his life, Markwardt is "A Man Who Had No Eyes."

Comparison-Contrast Essay

Definition

A **comparison-contrast essay** points out the similarities and differences between two subjects. You might write a comparison-contrast essay to explain something to other people or to help you make an informed decision between two possible plans or activities.

Many comparison-contrast essays use the structure illustrated in the framework below. Print this framework and use it as a guide when you write your own comparison-contrast essay.

Framework

Directions and Explanations

Introduction

- Open with an attention getter.
- Give background information.
- Include a thesis statement.

Get their attention Grab your readers' attention quickly with an interesting introduction. Begin with a mysterious statement, a funny story, or a question.

Give some background Include background information that your readers will need to understand your subjects.

Declare your thesis Provide a clear thesis statement that states exactly what the subjects of your essay are. Be sure to indicate whether you will compare the two subjects, contrast them, or both.



Body

- Organize your information into multiple paragraphs using either the block method or the point-by-point method.

Inform your readers Supply information that supports your main idea. Use either the block method or the point-by-point method to organize the information.



Conclusion

- Connect your points back to your thesis.
- Leave your readers with something to remember.

Stress the point Sum up the results of your analysis. Restate the main idea from the introduction and make it clear how the evidence you have provided supports your thesis.

Wrap it up Try to finish up with a statement that leaves your readers with something to ponder.