## Moulay Ismail University Department of English

**Faculty of Arts & Human Sciences Semester 2: Composition 1**

**Meknes S. Kerouad**

**Chapter One: Comparison/ Contrast Essays**

Some writing topics will ask you to consider the relationship between two things, for example, your hometown (that is, the town where you were born or grew up) and your university town. Such topics may allow you to organize your essay either around the *similarities* between these two *subtopics* (for example, between your hometown and your university town) or around the *differences* between them. If you write about the similarities, the essay will be a **comparison** essay. On the other hand, if you want to write about the differences, your essay will be a **contrast** essay.

**Sample 1.**

My hometown and my college town have several things in common. First, both are small rural communities. For example, my hometown, Gridlock, has a population of only about 10,000 people. Similarly, my college town, Subnormal, consists of about 11,000 local residents. This population swells to 15,000 people when the college students are attending classes. A second way in which these two towns are similar is that they are both located in rural areas. Gridlock is surrounded by many acres of farmland which is devoted mainly to growing corn and soybeans. In the same way, Subnormal lies in the center of farmland which is used to raise hogs and cattle. Thirdly, both of these towns are similar in that both contain college campuses. Gridlock, for example, is home to Neutron College, which is famous for its Agricultural Economics program as well as for its annual Corn-Watching Festival. Likewise, the town of Subnormal boasts the beautiful campus of Quark College, which is well known for its Agricultural Engineering department and also for its yearly Hog-Calling Contest.

The passage above is from a **comparison** paragraph; that is, a paragraph which discusses the similarities between two subtopics. Notice how the ideas in this paragraph are organized. As usual, the **topic sentence** is at the beginning of the paragraph. After that, the paragraph continues by discussing one point of similarity between the towns of Gridlock and Subnormal, namely, their small population. **Specific details** are given to support the statement that "both are small rural communities." Following this, the paragraph briefly discusses a second point of similarity between the two towns, that is, their geographic surroundings. Here, the paragraph also gives supporting details to illustrate their similarity, namely, that they are "both located in rural areas." , etc. As you can see, therefore, this comparison paragraph is structured (organized) according to the **points of similarity** between the two towns.

We can place the points of similarity and their supporting details in a table in order to see more clearly how this short paragraph is organized:

**Comparison Paragraph -- Organized by Similar Points**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TOPIC SENTENCE** | My **(a)** hometown and **(b)** college town are similar. |
| **POINT #1** | *Both are small rural communities.* |
| DETAIL (a) | * Gridlock has about 10,000 people. |
| DETAIL (b) | * Subnormal has about 11,000 local residents. * It has about 4000 college students. |
| **POINT #2** | *Both are located in rural areas.* |
| DETAILS (a) | * Gridlock is surrounded by many acres of farmland. * This farmland is devoted to growing corn. * The land is also used to grow soybeans. |
| DETAILS (b) | * Subnormal is in the center of land used for raising hogs. * This land is also used to raise cattle. |
| **POINT #3** | *Both towns contain college campuses.* |
| DETAILS (a) | * Gridlock is home to Neutron College. * This college is famous for its Agricultural Economics program. * It is also famous for its annual Corn-Watching Festival. |
| DETAILS (b) | * Subnormal contains Quark College. * This campus is famous for its Agricultural Engineering department. * It is also famous for its yearly Hog-Calling Contest. |

Another way of organizing a comparison is not according to supporting details that are similar, but according to subtopic. A subtopic is a main example, or main supporting idea, that illustrates the topic sentence of a paragraph. That is, we can organize the paragraph by first discussing all the relevant points associated to one subtopic, then discussing those of the second subtopic. Look at the following example, based on the above paragraph:

**Sample 2.**

My hometown and my college town have several things in common. First, my hometown, Gridlock, is a small town. It has a population of only about 10,000 people. Located in a rural area, Gridlock is surrounded by many acres of farmland which are devoted mainly to growing corn and soybeans. Gridlock also contains a college campus, Neutron College, which is famous for its Agricultural Economics program as well as for its annual Corn-Watching Festival. As for my college town, Subnormal, it too is small, having a population of about 11,000 local residents, which swells to 15,000 people when students from the nearby college are attending classes. Like Gridlock, Subnormal lies in the center of farmland which is used to raise hogs and cattle. Finally, Subnormal is similar to Gridlock in that it also boasts a beautiful college campus, called Quark College. This college is well known for its Agricultural Engineering department and also for its yearly Hog-Calling Contest.

As you can see, after the topic sentence, this paragraph first discusses the relevant details about Gridlock and then presents the details about Subnormal. As with the paragraph above, we can illustrate this paragraph's structure in the following way:

**Comparison Paragraph -- Organized by Subtopic**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TOPIC SENTENCE** | My hometown and college town are similar. |
| **SUBTOPIC #1:** | **GRIDLOCK** |
| **DETAILS ABOUT GRIDLOCK:** | * Gridlock is a small town.   + It has about 10,000 people. * Gridlock is in a rural area.   + It is surrounded by many acres of farmland.   + This farmland is devoted to growing corn.   + The land is also used to grow soybeans. * Gridlock is home to Neutron College.   + This college is famous for its Agricultural Economics program.   + It is also famous for its annual Corn-Watching Festival. |
| **SUBTOPIC#2:** | **SUBNORMAL** |
| **DETAILS ABOUT SUBNORMAL:** | * Subnormal is a small town.   + Subnormal has about 4000 college students.   + It has about 11,000 local residents. * Subnormal is in a rural area.   + Subnormal is in the center of land used for raising hogs.   + This land is also used to raise cattle. * Subnormal contains Quark College.   + This campus is famous for its Agricultural Engineering department.   + It is also famous for its   + Yearly Hog-Calling Contest. |

**Comparison Conjunctions**

These are not the only ways to give coherence to a comparison paragraph. There are other conjunctions, too. Here is a list of comparison conjunctions you can use:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Conjunctions |  |
| Similarly,  Likewise,  ...the same as ..  Similar to  (just) as … as  ...also...  ..., too.  both  both … and | -There are many parks to visit in that city. Similarly, there are several parks in my hometown, too.  -My parents were born in a small village. Likewise, my brothers and I grew up in a small town.  -Is the restaurant where you ate dinner the same as the place where I ate last month?  -Their new computer is similar to the one my brother bought.  -His coat is just as warm as the more expensive one.  -Both my neighbor and I are selling our cars. |

***Complete these sentences with phrases form above.***

**1.** The architecture of some modern government buildings \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the type of construction used hundreds of years ago.

**2.** In recent years, new technology such as mobile telephones has made life more convenient. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the Internet has made a wide variety of information available to everyone.

**3.** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the lakes \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the rivers are clear and beautiful.

**4.** The capital city is just \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ modern \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the cities in many other countries.

**Sample 3.**

Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana lived at different times in different countries, but their lives had some surprising similarities. First of all, both women had a difficult childhood. Monroe spent many years without parents in an orphanage, and Diana’s mother left the family when she was only six. Later in their lives, the two women married famous men. Princess Diana married Princess Charles, and Marilyn Monroe married a famous baseball player and later a famous writer. They also had difficult marriages and eventually separated from their husbands. Another similarity between Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana was that they were both very popular. Diana was called ‘The people’s princess’ because she was so friendly. Although Monroe was famously sexy, she was well-liked because she seemed very innocent. However, even though both women seemed to have very happy lives, they actually had emotional problems and often felt sad and depressed. Monroe went through serious depression and had to go to a hospital for treatment. Likewise, Diana suffered from an eating problem and was depressed during parts of her marriage. A last similarity between Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana was their deaths at an early age. In fact, they were both thirty-six years old when they died, Monroe in 1962 and Diana in 1997. Maybe their similar life circumstances and lifestyles explain why Princess Diana and Marilyn Monroe also had similar personalities.

**Sample 4.**

Studying abroad and studying in your own country both have definite benefits for a student. Living in another country can be an exciting experience because everything seems new and different. The challenge of living in a new environment can give you courage and self-confidence, too. If you want to learn another language, living abroad is a great way to do that because you can read magazines or newspapers, watch television programs, or make friends with people who are native speakers. Another good reason to live abroad is to learn more about another culture. On the other hand, there are also advantages to staying in your own country to study. It is cheaper than living abroad, so you can save more money. Also, in your home country, everything is familiar. You don’t need to worry about being taught in a foreign language, and you can understand the culture and expectations of teachers. Finally, if you stay in your own country, you can be close to your family and friends. Therefore, if you are thinking about where to study, consider all of these benefits and make a decision that is right for you.

**Contrast Paragraphs**

As mentioned above, a **contrast paragraph** discusses the differences between (at least) two things. You can organize contrast paragraphs in much the same way that you can organize comparison paragraphs. That is, you can organize them either according to points of similarity or according to subtopic. Here is an example of such a paragraph organized by subtopic. Notice the contrastive expressions in **bold** letters.

**Sample 1.**

Even though Arizona and Rhode Island are both states of the U.S., they are strikingly **different in many ways.** For example, the physical size of each state **is different**. Arizona is large, having an area of 114,000 square miles, **whereas** Rhode Island is only about a tenth the size, having an area of only 1,214 square miles. **Another difference** is in the size of the population of each state. Arizona has about four million people living in it, **but** Rhode Island has less than one million. The two states **also differ in** the kinds of natural environments that each has. For example, Arizona is a very dry state, consisting of large desert areas that do not receive much rainfall every year. **However,** Rhode Island is located in a temperate zone and receives an average of 44 inches of rain per year. In addition, **while** Arizona is a landlocked state and thus has no seashore, Rhode Island lies on the Atlantic Ocean and does have a significant coastline. Although the two states are different in many aspects, each has its own charm and beauty that attract many tourists.

**Contrast Paragraph -- Organized by Different Points**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TOPIC SENTENCE** | **(a)** Arizona **(b)** Rhode Island are different in many ways |
| **POINT #1** | *Physical size.* |
| DETAIL (a) | * Arizona has about 114,000 square mile. |
| DETAIL (b) | * Rhode Island has about 1,214 square miles |
| **POINT #2** | *Population .* |
| DETAILS (a) | * Arizona has about 4 million people |
| DETAILS (b) | * Rhode Island has less than one million people |
| **POINT #3** | *Natural environments* |
| DETAILS (a) | * Arizona is a very dry state. * It consists of large desert areas * It does not receive much rainfall. * It is a landlocked state and has no seashore |
| DETAILS (b) | * Rhode Island is located in a temperate zone * It receives an average of 44 inches of rain per year * It lies on the Atlantic Ocean and have a significant coastline |

**Contrast Conjunctions**

Here are some contrast conjunctions that you can use:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Short Conjunctions | Subordinating Conjunctions |
| However,  In contrast,  By contrast,  Different from  ..., but  ..., yet | On the other hand,  even though + [sentence]  although + [sentence]  whereas + [sentence]  unlike + [sentence]  while + [sentence]  nevertheless, |

***Complete these sentences with phrases from above***

**1.** Some tourists enjoy going on organized tours. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ many other tourists prefer travelling on their own.

2. The two books are very \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ each other.

3. The cost of studying in a college or university in Britain is very high. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in many countries, the cost is much lower.

4. Changes in technology are occurring \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ quickly \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the past.

**Sample 2.**

Reading a story in a book is often different from seeing it as a film. When you read a story, you need to use your imagination. A book usually gives a lot of description about the people, places, and things in the story, so you can create pictures in your mind. In addition, the conversations between people are always written with details that describe how the people look or feel while they are talking. When you read, you use a lot of imagination to help ‘see’ the characters in the story. However, when you see a film, it is a different experience. When you watch a film, you do not need to use your imagination. The pictures on the screen give all the details about the people, places, and things in the story. The conversations are spoken out loud, so you just listen and watch. The feelings of the people come through their faces, body movements, and voices. Although a book and a film might tell the same story, reading a book and watching a film are very different experiences.

**Sample 3.**

There are three main differences between eating fresh food and canned food. The most notable difference between these two kinds of foods is their flavor. Fresh food has great flavor and taste because it keeps all their natural conditions. Canned food, however, lacks a lot of its flavor characteristics because there are some other chemical products added to the natural foods. Secondly, there is a health factor that affects both of them. Canned food is unhealthy since in order to keep the shelf life for longer times, it is tinned with many conservatives and chemical factors. On the other hand, fresh food does not include any chemicals, so it is healthier. Another difference between these two kinds of foods is the cost. Canned food is much more expensive than fresh food. For example, a small can of peas might cost as much as one kilo of fresh ones. In conclusion, before eating, choose the best type of food for your convenience and lifestyle.

**Sample 4.**

Students who have Mr. Jones and Mr. Smith are immediately aware of the difference in the lecturing manner of each teacher. Mr. Jones has a pleasant voice, which helps hold the interest of the students. He pronounces clearly in a rhythmic pattern emphasizing key words. His moderate tone and inflected words make his lectures interesting. Mr. Jones also adds humor to his subject, and he welcomes questions from students who do not understand the material. He takes his time and explains slowly. He tries to make sure that his students understand  
a concept before he moves on to something new, and he is very enthusiastic about his subject. Mr. Smith, on the other hand, has a different tone, pronunciation, expression and attitude from Mr. Jones. He has a booming voice, which commands rather than teaches, and sometimes it is hard to understand because he runs his words together. His lectures are not as interesting as those of Mr. Jones, either, because Mr. Smith speaks in a boring monotone. He also hates to be interrupted, feeling that he must cover everything. Mr. Smith teaches every class in a serious, determined mood. Each teacher has a different voice, tone, pronunciation, expression, and attitude; as a result, their lectures are very different.