

Classroom Activities

Compare and Contrast: Similar but Different

The skill of comparing and contrasting plays a very critical role in comprehension. We use this skill in our everyday lives, for instance while comparing the prices of two sweets, or knowing which shop sells goods at a cheaper price. It is often assumed that this skill develops automatically. However, it is necessary to teach children the strategies for looking at the similarities and differences in order to develop literacy skills. These strategies help students to focus on the language used to bring out the similarities or differences. Focusing on similarities and differences also draws their attention to details, helps to clarify ideas, encourages them to think critically by grouping information according to different requirements and enhances content knowledge. Targeted activities can be used to help students look for similarities between the dissimilar; and differences between the similar. Such perspectives help them to construct new insights into what they are learning. These skills may also be used in other subjects. An outcome of teaching the skills of comparison and contrast is nuanced comprehension.

There are many activities that can be used to develop compare and contrast skills. Some of these include comparing two similar stories with different endings, two different stories with similar endings, different stories written by the same author, the same incident reported by two different newspapers or relayed by two different news channels, and so on.

General Guidelines for Teachers

The guidelines for teachers to develop comparing and contrasting skills in students include:

- Use any form of input for this activity—pictures, texts, videos, photographs, and so on.
- It may be useful to use different kinds of texts—stories, descriptions, advertisements, tables, arguments, and so on.
- Be clear about the purpose—what do you want students to focus on, similarities or differences.
- Select the content carefully ensuring a match with the purpose.
- Prepare a template in accordance with the content to ensure that the purpose of the activity is met.
- In addition to the content, focus on the language used for indicating the similarities or differences, particularly as the grade increases.

The following three activities illustrate how comparing and contrasting skills can be developed in different grades.

Activity 1

Purpose: To develop the skill of comparing and contrasting using similar but different coins.

This activity is recommended for Class III students.

Duration: 40 minutes

Resources:

- 4 to 5 packets of coins of denominations of ₹ 1, 2 and 5 (the number of packets depends on the number of groups)
- Magnifying lens
- List of questions for comparison (see below)

List of questions for comparing the coins:

1. What is the denomination written on the coin? Name the Coin.
2. What is its colour?
3. What is its shape?
4. What is its size?
5. How does the edge feel?
6. What is the year of the coin?
7. What is printed on the face of the coin?
8. What is printed on the reverse of the coin?
9. What is the value of the coin?

Process:

- Divide the students into four or five groups.
- Each group gets one packet of coins, one magnifying glass and the list of questions.
- Students examine each coin, discuss the questions among themselves and then answer them.
- Each group presents a summary of the similarities and differences between the coins.
- The teacher moderates the discussion and addresses differences of opinion, if any.

Activity 2

Purpose: To develop the skill of comparing and contrasting similar but different stories.

This activity is recommended for Class IV students.

Duration: 45 minutes

Resources:

- Two similar stories with some differences
- Set of questions that focus on comparing and contrasting

Instructions to teachers:

- Choose popular stories.

- Make changes in the characters, reasons, explanations or ending of the story. In this example, we have changed the character and the reasons for the main event in the story without changing the ending.
- Carefully list the set of questions focusing on the compare and contrast skills. Take care to ensure that the questions are not mere comprehension questions (for example: what did the hare do?)

Process:

- Divide the students into four or five groups.
- Read out both stories one after the other, taking care not to participate in any discussion.
- Read out the questions and ask the students to discuss the stories in the context of the questions. Students are free to add their own questions to the list.
- Give both stories to each group. The group reads the stories again and discusses them keeping in mind the list of questions given by the teacher.
- Each group compares and contrasts the stories in front of the class.

Story 1: The Hare and the Tortoise

(The teacher may translate the following story in the language of the classroom or in any other language or languages contextually appropriate.)

One day a tortoise was resting under a tree. A hare came along and made fun of the tortoise. He said that the tortoise was slow and lazy. The tortoise challenged the hare to a race. The hare agreed. The race began. The hare ran fast. The tortoise crept slowly. The hare ran so fast that he left the tortoise far behind. So he stopped to rest under a tree. In the meanwhile, the tortoise crept along steadily. Soon, it passed the hare, who was snoring under the tree. After a long

time, the hare woke up and ran towards the finish line. He saw that the tortoise had already reached the finish line. The story shows that working steadily, even if slowly, helps to succeed.

Story 2: The Tortoise and the Stag

One day a tortoise was resting under a tree. He was feeling happy that he had won the race against the hare. A stag passed by. The tortoise began to think that no one could win a race against him. So he challenged the stag to a race. The stag agreed, and the time was set for the race. They also agreed that the bushes that stretched along the race track would mark the distance run by each of them. The stag then sprinted off. The tortoise, seeing the stag run, got scared and began to wonder whether he could win the race. He immediately thought of a plan. He called his cousins and told them to hide themselves under the bushes that stretched along the track. The race commenced. The Stag began to run. The tortoise crept forward slowly. Each time the Stag reached a bush, it called out, “are you there?” The tortoise’s cousin hiding behind the bush shouted “yes”. The stag ran faster. It reached the last bush. The tortoise’s cousin was already there. Mistaking the cousin for the tortoise who had challenged him, the stag declared that he had lost the race. The story shows that working together as a team helps to succeed.

Compare the stories for the following:

1. Characters in the story
2. Reasons for the race
3. How does the tortoise win?
4. What is the lesson?
5. Any other question that you would like to add.

Activity 3

Purpose: To compare and contrast two advertisements selling the same product.

This activity is recommended for Classes VII - VIII students.

Resources:

- Two advertisements with similar purposes (see below)
- A template to draw the students’ attention to the specifics of what to compare and differentiate (see example)

Time: Roughly 1 hour

Process:

- Give each student two texts and ask them to go through both and familiarize themselves (this can perhaps be given the previous day as homework).
- Divide the students into four or five groups. Ask the groups to discuss the questions among themselves. Some of the questions could be as follows:

What is the name of the product?
What is the profession of the speaker/ writer? How do you know this?
Whose experience is the speaker/ writer talking about? How do you know this?
How is the action of the tooth paste explained? Underline the key words.
What are the key phrases?
What is the impact of using the product as explained in the advertisement?

After the discussion, the students focus on the similarities and differences either in the form of a table or a venn diagram (as shown in figure 1).

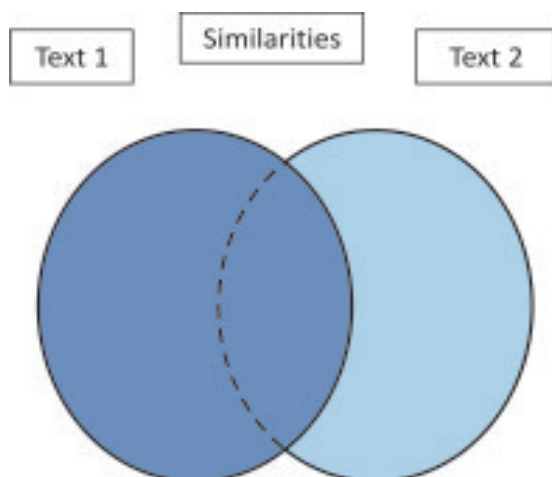


Figure 1. Similarities and differences between the two texts

The groups present to the whole class the similarities and differences between the two advertisements. The teacher consolidates the discussion by highlighting the similarity in purpose of the two advertisements and the differences used to meet the purpose. He/she also touches upon the differences in the presentation of how the tooth pastes protect sensitive. The focus of the discussion is on the content as well as the language. The teacher may briefly touch upon the reasons for using a dentist as a character in both the advertisements, the impact of using first person and third person narrative for communicating the message, the role of key phrases in reinforcing the message and other such issues.

(The teacher may translate the following texts from the advertisements in the language or languages of the classroom or in any other language or languages that may be contextually appropriate).

Text 1

*kyaa aap aaraam se ice cream khaa sakte hain. cold drink pii sakte hain. nahii na. yeh sensitivity ke kaaran ho saktaa hai. aap apnaa toothpaste badal ke dekhiye. hum aapke liye **NUMBER ONE** toothpaste le kar aaye hain. ye aapke daanton ke andar tak jaayegi aur unhen strong banaayegii. **NUMBER ONE** istemaal karne ke kuch din baad hii aap kuch bhii khaa sakte hain. log kehate hain ki, “ab ham apnii manpasand chiiiz khaa paa rahe hain” aur yeh **NUMBER ONE** ke vajaha se hua hai.*

Text 2

*mai ek doctor hoon. par mujhe bhii hot aur cold khaane se dar lagtaa hai. mere dost ne kahaa **NUMBER TEN** istemaal karke dekho jab gums loose ho jaate hain to daant sensitive ho jaate hain **NUMBER TEN** daanton par ek saftey belt kaa kaam kartaa hai. merii pasand **NUMBER TEN** aap bhii istemaal karen **NUMBER TEN***

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