

Contrast

Essay

Teaching
tip →

The Contrast Essay is quite a challenge for most second, third, and fourth grade students. Consequently, you will likely use it only with gifted students of these ages or with gifted classes.

When you do use this essay with students, most of them will spend a great deal of time working on the level 1 contrast essay before they are ready and able to make the transition to the level 2 essay. However, students should obviously have the opportunity to make this transition as soon as their skill level shows they are ready for level 2.

Contrast Essay Defined

This type of essay contrasts three concepts that are related to two persons, two places, two things, or two ideas. At least one specific example, fact, incident, or quotation supports each concept.

Students will focus on a question, such as: "How do hot dogs and hamburgers differ as kids' favorite foods?" Then students will restate the question into a thesis statement or the essay's basic idea reduced to one statement. Next, students develop the five-paragraph essay which will include one introductory paragraph (overview of the essay, including three concepts that differ), three body paragraphs (each one elaborating on one of the three concepts), and one summary paragraph (a summary of the essay, including a review of the three concepts that differ).

The introductory paragraph is represented by the "Bunch of Bananas" which states the general topic of the essay and then lists its main ideas; in this case, the three items to be contrasted. These three main concepts will appear in the body of the essay.

The body paragraphs will elaborate on the main concepts listed in the introductory paragraph. The main concepts will be presented in three paragraphs called the Bing paragraph, the Bang paragraph, and the Bongo paragraph (as discussed in previous sections).

In a normal contrast essay the first body paragraph (Bing) discusses the first main concept in relationship to the contrast between the two subjects. The second body paragraph (Bang) discusses the second main concept in relationship to the contrast between the two subjects. Finally, the third body paragraph (Bongo) discusses the third main concept in relationship to the contrast between the two subjects.

The fifth paragraph is the summary paragraph. Here the three main concepts are restated: the first contrast, the second contrast, and the third contrast. The final sentence should contain some sort of conclusion reached by the author.

The Level 2 contrast essay differs in three ways from Level 1: The introduction is expanded to include an "Interest Catcher." Each Bing, Bang, Bongo paragraph is expanded with more specific details which often justify dividing a Bing-Bang-Bongo paragraph into two paragraphs each. The concluding paragraph is expanded to include not only a restatement of the thematic ideas but also a statement of opinion by the author as to how this theme relates to us today.

Lesson 1

Materials:

- Master 2:7, Level 2 CUTOUTS, one for each student
- Scissors
- Glue
- Crayons or colored pencils, five different colors for each student
- colored construction paper, 12"x18"

Procedure:

1. Explain that today we will learn about a different way to write an essay. Some essays are like stories, others tell information, and still others explain thoughts or opinions. In this format we will learn to explain contrasting ideas about a general topic. To help us understand the format for writing a contrast essay, we will make a cutout picture of several pieces.
2. Using the cutout/puppets, demonstrate step by step for the students the cutting and pasting of several pieces (which represent several parts) of the essay as follows:
 - Cut the bunch of bananas and glue at the top of the 12"x18" construction paper. Place the construction paper so that the greatest length runs from top to bottom. Cut and paste the word "**Introduction**" and "**Bunch of Bananas.**"
 - Next cut and paste the three monkeys, which represent Bing, Bang, and Bongo, down the left side below the introduction. Next to each monkey's face write the words that represent what that paragraph will be about; that is, next to **Bing** write the phrase, "**Contrast the first main concept**"; next to **Bang** write the phrase, "**Contrast the second main concept**"; and next to **Bongo**, write the words "**Contrast the third main concept.**" Also, you will want to write the word "**Body**" on the right side, in the middle of the construction paper.
 - Finally, cut and paste the barrel of monkeys at the bottom of the paper. Cut and paste the word phrase "**Summary**" and "**Barrel of Monkeys.**"
3. Using the five crayons or colored pencils, have the students trace around the pictures and trace over the words for each. Use a different color for each of the five paragraphs as follows:
 - Trace the *introduction* and *bunch of bananas* in yellow.
 - Trace the *Bing monkey, contrast idea 1, and specific details* in blue.

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Students will recall this cutout procedure from earlier essay lessons. The difference they will notice is that small cutout monkeys have been added to represent specific details.

On the right side of page 2:9, see the diagram of how to place the 11 parts of Master 2:7, Level 2 CUTOUTS.

4. Tell the students to look at the model they made yesterday. Check for understanding by asking students questions such as these:

“What do we call the first part of the essay?” and
“What picture represents this part of the essay?”

Teaching Tip

#5: Always have students copy the missing parts of the essay onto their paper as you go through it, paragraph by paragraph. Do not read and work on the entire essay at the same time.

5. Call students attention to the **Bing** paragraph. Ask them to supply details to complete it and to copy these on their paper. Here are some possibilities if they need help:

- II. Bing: shape
- A. hot dog
 - 1. long, tube shape
 - B. hamburger
 - 1. thick, circle shape

6. Have students continue with **Bang** and **Bongo** filling out the blanks as they go. Some suggested details are as follows:

- III. Bang: how to make them
- A. hot dog
 - 1. boil in a pan
 - B. hamburger
 - 1. fry in a pan
- IV. Bongo: easy or hard to eat
- A. hot dog
 - 1. easy to eat—you can hold with one hand
 - B. hamburger
 - 1. hard to eat—need two hands

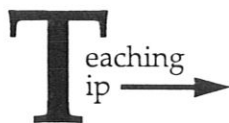
#7: Be sure to stress that all paragraphs have their own topic or concept that they do not share with the other paragraphs.

7. Call students attention to the summary and show how the Bing-Bang-Bongo ideas are repeated as follows:

“In summary I have contrasted hot dogs and hamburgers. I have shown the differences between their shapes, the ways you cook and make them, and the ease with which people can eat them when they are in a hurry.”

8. After students have copied the responses from the overlay, they should take out the five colored pencils and draw a different colored circle around each of the five parts of the essay. This will help them to see that each part is separate in meaning from the others even though each part is in the same essay.

5. Tell them to keep this frame plus their outlines in their notebooks to use as references for the next task which will be to practice developing a contrast essay on a new topic. (See Lesson 5.)



Explain that Level 2 contrast essays are challenging, but they have more power than Level 1 contrast essays.

Lesson 3—optional for Level 2

Materials:

- Master 6:3, Level 2 WRITING FRAME 2, one per student plus overlay
- Pencils
- Five colors of crayons or colored pencils per student pair
- Five matching colors of overhead pens

Procedure:

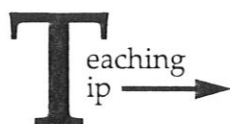
1. Pass out copies of Level 2 WRITING FRAME 2. Display the overlay of the frame; then, have the students fill in the blanks on their copies as you strip tease the parts.
2. Begin by reading the first sentence of the **introduction**. Indicate this sentence is designed to capture the reader's attention; hence, it is called an "**interest catcher**."

"Across America children ask for two favorite foods every day—hot dogs and hamburgers."

3. Note the next sentence states the **topic** plus **lists the main ideas** to come in the essay.

"They love to eat these tasty foods which contrast in their shape, in how they are cooked and prepared, and how children eat them while they are 'on the run.'"

4. Explain how each part of the body outline is expanded to include more details in the Bing-Bang-Bongo paragraphs as seen in the outline on page 6:8:



On your overlay master be sure to use the colored overhead pens to emphasize the essay's Bing, Bang, and Bongo ideas.



Research shows students' attention and retention are both enhanced through use of color.

Procedure:

1. Pass out copies of Level 1 WRITING FRAME 3. Displaying the overlay, tell the students to look at the outline they made in the previous lesson. Tell them to use this outline as a guide for determining parts of a new topic. Have them suggest words to use in filling out the blanks on the overlay.
2. Have the students complete their copy of the frame as you go down, part by part, of the essay on the overhead.
3. When they have completed the frame, have them color each part, using the appropriate color.
4. When the students are finished, go over this summary with them:
 - Introductory paragraph or bunch of bananas tells the main idea and lists the three main concepts which will be contrasted in the paper.
 - Bing paragraph supports the first contrast idea.
 - Bang paragraph supports the second contrast idea.
 - Bongo paragraph supports the third contrast idea.
 - Summary paragraph or barrel of monkeys restates the three contrasting ideas used to inform the reader.
5. Tell them to keep this frame plus their outlines in their notebooks to use as references for the next task which will be to construct a contrast essay on their own.

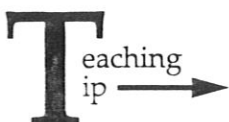
Lesson 4—optional for Level 2

Materials:

- Master 6:5, Level 2 WRITING FRAME 4, one copy per student plus overlay

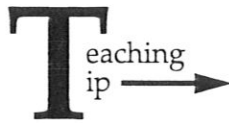
Procedure:

1. Pass out copies of Level 2 WRITING FRAME 4. Display the overlay of the frame; then, have the students fill in the blanks on their copies as you strip tease the parts.
2. Begin by reading the first sentence of the **introduction**. Indicate this sentence is designed to capture the reader's attention; hence, it is called an "**interest catcher**."



Stress the power of the interest catcher used in Level 2.

5. Have the students complete the summary, noting how it has been expanded to include a **challenge** to the reader as well as a **restatement** of the contrast ideas:



Ending a contrast essay with a strong conclusion, including a challenge, entices the reader to think.

“Thus, the games of dodge ball and four square contrast in the number of people who can play, the rules players must follow, and the courts where they are played. I like both games, but four square is more fun for me because of its many challenges. Which do you like better?”

Lesson 5—Level 1 or 2

Materials:

Less experienced students may benefit from using Master 4:9 in place of Master 6:1.

- Master 6:1, CONTRAST OUTLINE, one per student
- Master 6:6, CONTRAST COMMENT, one per student
- Writing frames and outline from previous lessons
- Pencils
- Lined paper

Procedure:

1. Have the students get out their materials.
2. Pair the students. Have them brainstorm possible topics for a contrast essay. Try to get them to use topics that they have strong feelings about.
3. Pass out a new CONTRAST OUTLINE. Have each pair help one another fill it out on a topic of their choice.
4. Allow sufficient class time for the writing of a rough draft, using the writing frames as models.
5. Once the rough drafts are done, tell the pairs to read their rough drafts to each other. Hand out the comment sheets. Have the students complete the CONTRAST COMMENT sheet together for each rough draft.
6. After 15 minutes ask the pairs to return each person’s comment sheet and rough draft to the author. Each student should have the comment sheet and the rough draft in front of him/her as the final draft is begun, normally during the next lesson.

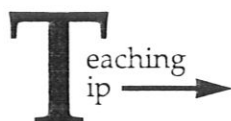


Occasionally we use reward incentives for each error found. The result: more attentive editing.

Introduction After telling students to look at the WRITING RUBRIC CHART on page 4 in their Student Guides, we briefly go over the major points on it. We discuss the RUBRIC POINTERS on page 5 for the literal, thoughtful and discerning writers. Then, we have students look at the Anchor 3, Anchor 4, and Anchor 5 Contrast Essays. We explain that we are going to use these essays and rubric pointers as models for evaluating our own work. We hasten to tell our students that all of us can work and train to be better swimmers, but not many of us will compete in the Olympics and that students need not be discouraged because few will ever reach the 6 on the rubric, and that even reaching a 5 is quite good. By always trying to be better each time we write, however, we can aspire to a “5” with the goal being that all of us will write at least at the “4” level by the year’s end.

Directions

1. Form your class into Quads. Taking the essays turned into you, pass them out at random to each group.
2. Have the Quads open their Student Guides to the Anchor Essays for the type they are evaluating.
3. Call students attention to the WRITING RUBRIC in their Student Guides. Place an overhead transparency of this chart (Master 2:11) on the overhead and go over with the students. Discuss how each score is determined. Tell the students to read carefully the 3, 4 and 5 rubric score descriptions. Tell the class they will learn to use these rubrics to score their papers. Remind them that the rubric is not only a standard that a paper is judged against, but also acts as an instructional aid in helping each person advance his/her skills in writing.
4. Next have them pass their essays around their Quads so everyone has someone else’s paper. Ask the students to each read the paper and refer to the rubric as they score. The first student to score the paper places a small number 1-6 on the lower right-hand corner and folds the corner over.
5. Then have the students pass the papers to another reader who reads the paper and scores it using the rubric chart. The second scorer writes his/her score on the bottom left-hand corner and folds over the corner.



Remind the students never to write in the Student Guides because next year’s students will also use them.

Masters

Ch. 6

I. Introduction:

A. Interest catcher (if using level 2):

B. List the main topic of the contrast and the two parties to be contrasted:

C. List the three items to be contrasted:

II. Bing (list item one): _____

A. Party 1's point of view about Bing: _____

1. specific detail: _____

2. specific detail: _____

B. Party 2's point of view about Bing: _____

1. specific detail: _____

2. specific detail: _____

II. Bang (list item two): _____

A. Party 1's position: _____

1. specific detail: _____

2. specific detail: _____

B. Party 2's position: _____

1. specific detail: _____

2. specific detail: _____

III. Bongo: (list item three): _____

A. Party 1's position: _____

1. specific detail: _____

2. specific detail: _____

B. Party 2's position: _____

1. specific detail: _____

2. specific detail: _____

V. Summary

A. Restate B-B-B: _____

B. Challenge (if level 2): _____

Master 6:1

Title: Hot Dogs and Hamburgers



“What are the three parts of the Bunch of Bananas in the first paragraph?”

Across America children ask for two favorite foods every day—hot dogs and hamburgers. They love to eat these tasty foods which contrast in their shape, in how they are cooked and prepared, and how children eat them while they are “on the run.”



BING

“Do your details clearly contrast the two?”

To begin with, a hot dog and a hamburger do not have the same shape. The hot dog is _____. It can also be _____. On the other hand, a hamburger is _____. It, too, can be _____.



BANG

“Be sure your specific details show clear differences between the two.”

Hot dogs and hamburgers are also not cooked and prepared in the same manner. Usually the hot dog is _____, but it can be _____. While the hamburger is most often _____, it can be _____.

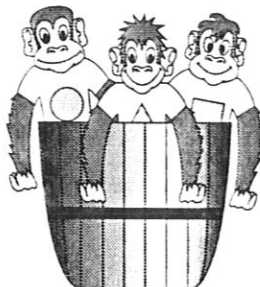


BONGO

“Did you use dramatic details that make pictures in your readers’ minds?”

Finally, hot dogs and hamburgers differ in how easy it is to eat them. The hot dog can be eaten _____ or without _____. In contrast, the hamburger can be eaten _____ or _____.

“Why are the three of us in this barrel?”



In conclusion, I have contrasted a hot dog’s and a hamburger’s shape, their cooking and preparation, and the ease with which people can eat them when they are in a hurry. Even though I like both, I think hot dogs are better. Do you agree with me?

Master 6:3

Title: Dodge Ball and Four Square



"What are the three parts of the Bunch of Bananas in the first paragraph?"

Children scream as a ball almost hits them or bounces from one square to another. Two school yard games which cause this happy yelling are dodge ball and four square. They differ in the number of people who play the games, the games' rules, and the playing courts.



"Do your details clearly contrast the two?"



BING

Dodge ball is a game that can be played by _____ and _____. Four square is a game that can be only _____ and _____.



"Be sure your specific details show clear differences between the two."



BANG

The rules of the games differ, too. Dodge ball rules require _____ and _____. In contrast, the rules for four square can be _____.



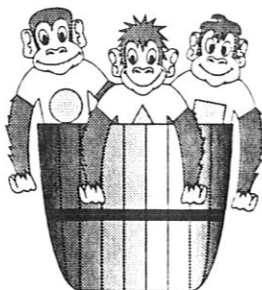
"Did you use dramatic details that make pictures in your readers' minds?"



BONGO

Finally, dodge ball and four square differ in their playing courts. In dodge ball _____ . Players must _____. They may not _____. In four square _____. Players must _____, and they may not _____.

"Why is this barrel here?"



Thus, the games of dodge ball and four square contrast in the number of people who can play, the rules players must follow, and the courts where they are played. I like both games, but four square is more fun for me because of its many challenges. Which do you like better?

Master 6:5