# What Can Compare & Contrast Do for You and Your Students?

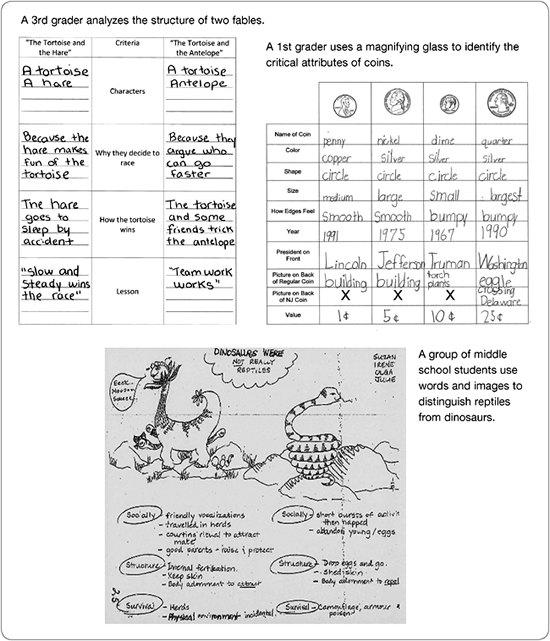
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| **GOAL #1:** | **Strengthen Students' Memories**  By focusing student thinking on analyzing pairs of ideas, the Compare & Contrast strategy strengthens students' ability to remember key content. |
| **GOAL #2:** | **Develop Higher-Order Thinking Skills**  Compare & Contrast acts as a practical and easy-to-use introduction to higher-order thinking. |
| **GOAL #3:** | **Increase Student Comprehension**  Compare & Contrast improves comprehension by highlighting important details, making abstract ideas more concrete, and reducing the confusion between related concepts (think *meiosis* versus *mitosis*). |
| **GOAL #4:** | **Enhance Students' Writing in the Content Areas**  The Compare & Contrast strategy strengthens students' writing skills by providing a simple structure that helps them organize information and develop their ideas with greater clarity and precision. |
| **GOAL #5:** | **Develop Students' Habits of Mind**  In their years of research into the defining characteristics of intelligent behavior and thought, Art Costa and Bena Kallick (2008, 2009) have identified 16 “habits of mind.” By nourishing these habits in our students, we give them the tools they need to use their minds well, thus increasing their chance for future success. Using Compare & Contrast in the classroom will help students develop these habits of mind: thinking flexibly; thinking about thinking (metacognition); striving for accuracy; applying past knowledge to new situations; and thinking and communicating with clarity and precision. |

Compare & Contrast helps teachers achieve five distinct instructional goals:

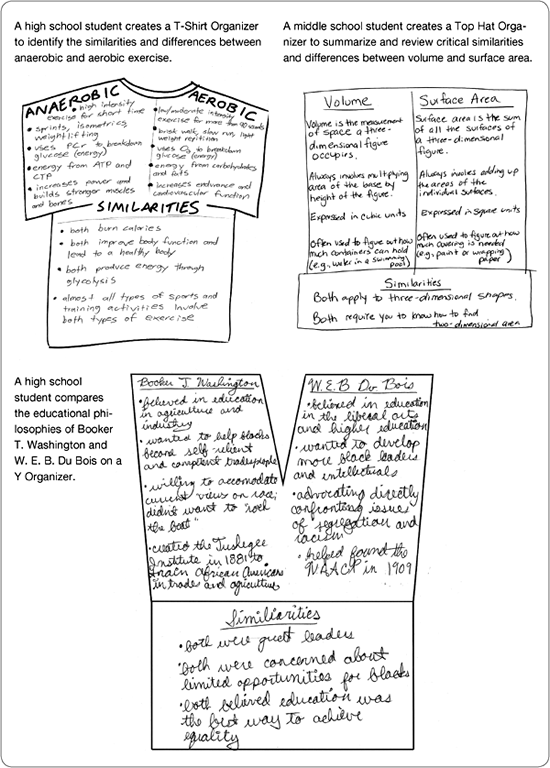
## A Potpourri of Classroom Comparisons

The next few pages show the kinds of work students create while engaged in Compare & Contrast lessons. Figure 1.1 includes a variety of student work samples that span a wide range of content areas and grade levels. As you examine this work, ask yourself, What skills are students demonstrating in this work?

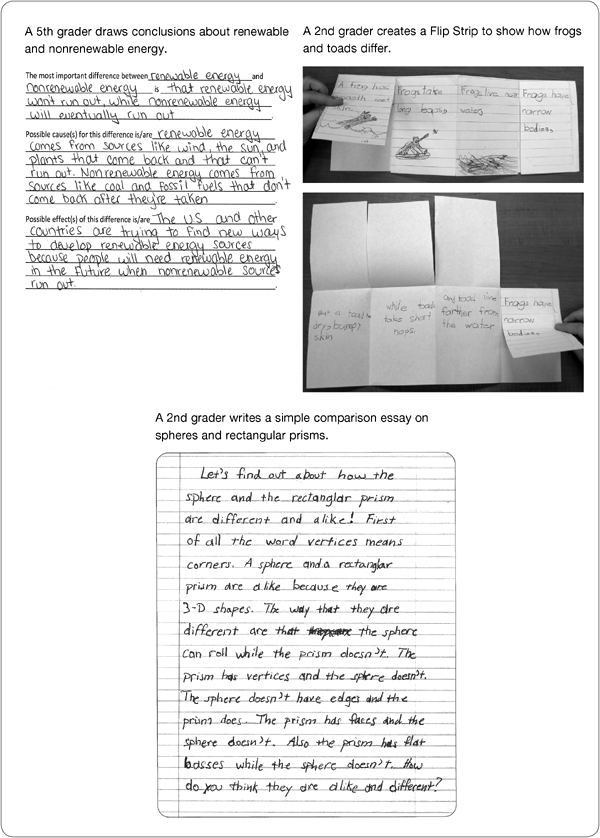
#### Figure 1.1. Compare & Contrast Potpourri



#### Figure 1.1. (continued)



#### Figure 1.1. (continued)



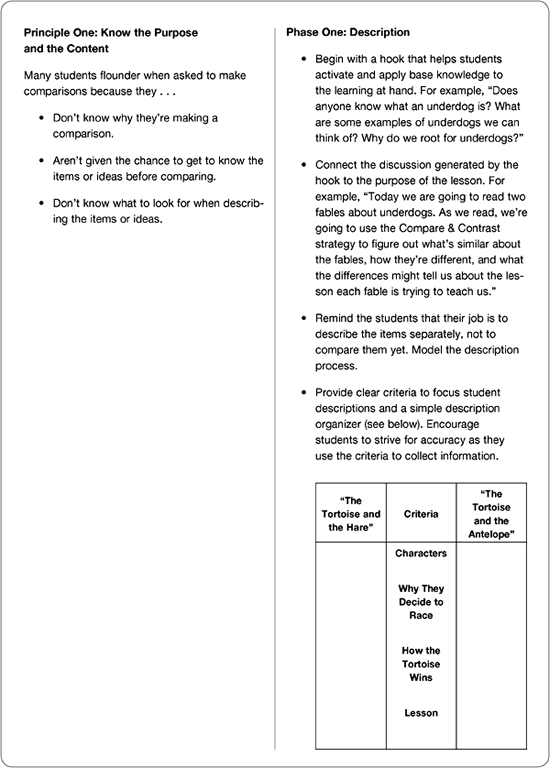
What skills were evident in these student work samples? Use the space below to record your thoughts, then discuss your response with a partner.

#### Activity: Looking at the Skills

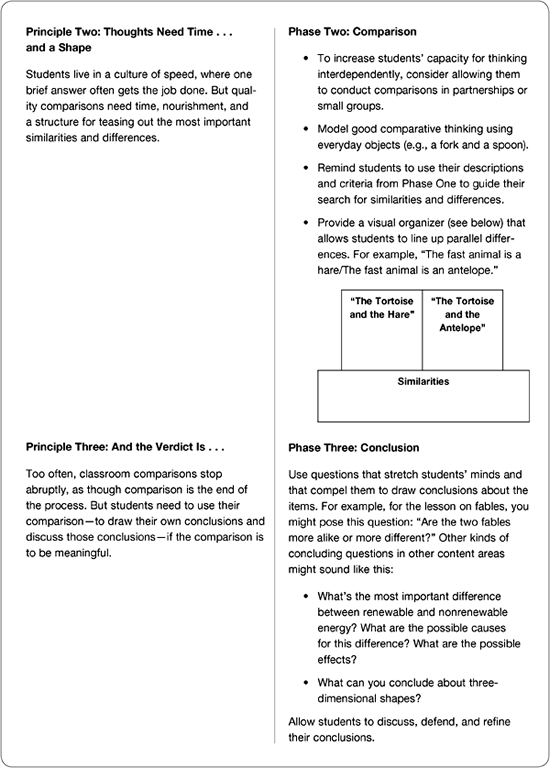
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| **Skills:** |

We all want our students to produce this kind of work—to be able to use comparative thinking independently to advance their own learning. To help us achieve this goal, let's turn our attention to the four principles and the four phases of Compare & Contrast. Each principle is tied closely to the difficulties students commonly encounter when they engage in comparative thinking. You'll notice that the four *principles* of Compare & Contrast are closely aligned with the four classroom *phases* of Compare & Contrast. Leading your students through these four phases is essential for ensuring your students' effective use of the Compare & Contrast strategy in the classroom. A classroom poster highlighting these four phases for students is included in this guide. Figure 1.2 shows the four principles and corresponding four phases of Compare & Contrast.

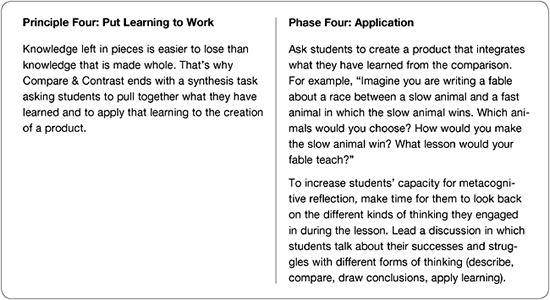
#### Figure 1.2. The Four Principles and Phases of Compare & Contrast



#### Figure 1.2. (continued)



#### Figure 1.2. (continued)



Now that you have a better understanding of the four phases of the Compare & Contrast strategy, take a second look at the student work samples in Figure 1.1. Each of the four phases is represented by at least one piece of student work. Can you determine which work samples were developed during which classroom phase?

## The Strategy in Action

Now let's experience a lesson using the Compare & Contrast strategy. Joanne Glass, a high school history teacher, wants her students to understand how circumstances of time and place influence perspective. With this lesson, Joanne is looking to shift her students' attention from *macrohistory* to *microhistory*. Most students are familiar with the major events, dates, and people that make up macrohistory, but students are often not aware of the knowledge that can be gained from studying the microhistory of social customs, personal writings, and everyday lives of common people. To this end, Joanne has designed a lesson using Compare & Contrast based on two primary documents, one from a 17th century Puritan family and one about a 19th century industrial family. Joanne has made sure that the activities and assessments in the lesson require students to practice the skills assessed by her state's standardized tests, including

* The ability to present clear analyses of issues, ideas, texts, and experiences;
* The ability to support positions with well-developed arguments;
* The ability to develop arguments with effective use of details and evidence; and
* The ability to explain the importance of analyzing narratives and documents from different times and places to understand historical events.

## The Model Lesson: Different Times, Different Households

As you review this lesson, keep in mind the principles of Compare & Contrast, the role of the student, the role of the teacher, and the goals of the strategy. We also encourage you to *be* the student by completing the student activities throughout the lesson.

### The Hook and Bridge of the Lesson

The “hook and bridge” is meant to hook students into the lesson by creating bridges between students' prior knowledge or personal experiences and the content of the lesson. It also focuses students' attention in preparation for the lesson ahead.

Joanne begins her lesson by saying, “Stop and think about some families that you know. Have you ever noticed how some households are different from your own? Take a moment and jot down some ways in which households are similar and different from one another.”

#### Activity: Comparing Households

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| **How are households similar and different?** |

### The Content: Two Readings, Two Households

Joanne continues, “In this lesson, we are going to go back into the 17th and 19th centuries, where you will have the opportunity to visit two homes. The first passage you will read is taken from a 17th century father's diary, and the second passage comes from a 19th century song. As you visit these homes, pay close attention to the following criteria: the father's role, the daughter's role, the nature of the world, and the nature of the home.”

#### Two Images of Fatherhood

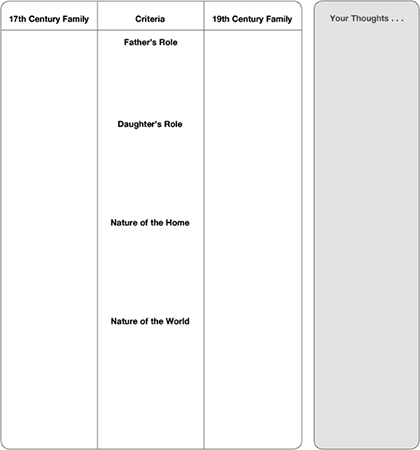
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| **A 17th Century Father Talks to His Daughter**  Recognizing that I, like all men, will one day perish, I invited my daughter, little Katy, into my study. I told my child that I am to die shortly, and she must, when I am dead, remember everything I said unto her. I set before her the sinful and woeful condition of her nature, and I charged her to pray in secret places every day without ceasing that God for the sake of Jesus Christ would give her a new heart. I wished her to live happily under God and abide by the laws governing her existence here. I gave her to understand that when I am taken from her she must look to meet with more humbling afflictions than she does now [when] she has a careful and tender father to provide for her. | ***“Father Is Coming” (19th Century Song)*** *The clock is on the stroke of six; The father's work is done; Sweep up the hearth and mend the fire, And put the kettle on. The wild night wind is blowing cold, 'Tis dreary crossing o'er the wold.He is crossing o'er the wold apace, He is stronger than the storm; He does not feel the cold, not he, His heart it is so warm; For father's heart is stout and true As ever human bosom knew. . . .Nay, do not close the shutters, child; For along the lane The little window looks, and he Can see it shining plain; I've heard him say he loves to mark The cheerful firelight through the dark. . . .Hark! hark! I hear his footsteps now, He's through the garden gate; Run, little Bess, and open the door, And do not let him wait; Shout, baby, shout! and clap thy hands, For father on the threshold stands.* |

You'll notice that even at this early stage of the lesson, students are engaged in addressing state standards by analyzing primary documents from different time periods.

### Phase One: Description

Now Joanne asks students to use the criteria provided in the description organizer (see Figure 1.3) to describe each household.

#### Figure 1.3. Activity: Description Organizer



*You'll notice that we have added a section to the right for you to record your own thoughts on the lesson. This is part of a process we call “Do, Look, Learn.” Too often, we go through the motions of learning a new process or idea without reflecting on our own thinking. As you “do” the lesson, “look” in on your own thought process to see what you can “learn” from your own experiences.*

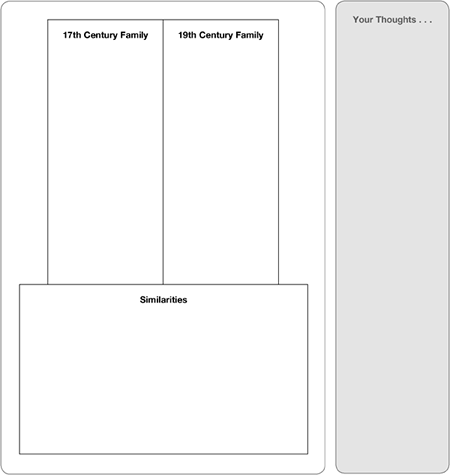
***Thinking About Phase One:*** Thorough descriptions framed by clear criteria lead to deeper and richer comparisons. The more students are encouraged to think about details and specifics in their description, the easier and more sophisticated their comparisons will be. Take a moment to look back at the readings with the criteria from Figure 1.3 in mind. How do the criteria affect your thinking?

Note that *criteria* are not perfectly synonymous with *critical attributes*. Most comparison strategies ask students to focus their attention on critical attributes, which are the defining characteristics of the items under investigation. Critical attributes are always a good starting point for helping students to focus their attention on the essential information, but sometimes we want students to go beyond simply describing the items by these attributes. For example, if students are describing *renewable energy* and *nonrenewable energy*, we may want students to consider not only the critical attributes (e.g., the sources of the types of energy, how each type is used) but also the factors that put renewable and nonrenewable energy into a larger context (e.g., arguments for and against each type of energy).

### Phase Two: Comparison

Joanne now moves her students into the comparison phase by having them work with partners to identify similarities and differences between the two households and then to record those similarities and differences using the Top Hat Organizer (see Figure 1.4).

#### Figure 1.4. Activity: Top Hat Organizer

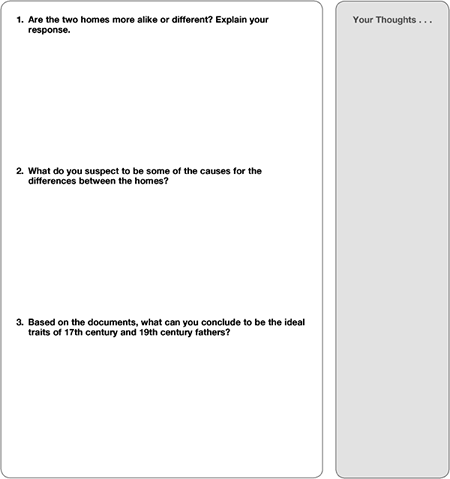


***Thinking About Phase Two:*** Notice how much easier it was to conduct a comparison having already completed detailed descriptions of the readings. These first two phases encourage students to use details and evidence from the readings to support their comparisons, and the Top Hat Organizer helps students give their thoughts a shape.

### Phase Three: Conclusion

For this phase, Joanne asks her students to discuss what they have learned as a result of their comparison and to form some conclusions. She uses the questions in Figure 1.5 to guide the discussion.

#### Figure 1.5. Activity: Drawing Conclusions



***Thinking About Phase Three:*** Guided by questions, students are forced to distill the evidence they have gathered from the passages and analyze the two readings in greater depth. By asking students to take a position and draw conclusions about the content, we enhance their retention and understanding.

### Phase Four: Application

Joanne introduces her application activity by saying, “You have seen how specific time periods affect the notion of family and the roles of fathers and daughters. Now you will be asked to synthesize what you have learned in this lesson in a creative task. Think about today's society. How do our time period and culture affect the role that fathers play in our families?” Joanne then introduces and explains the following synthesis task.

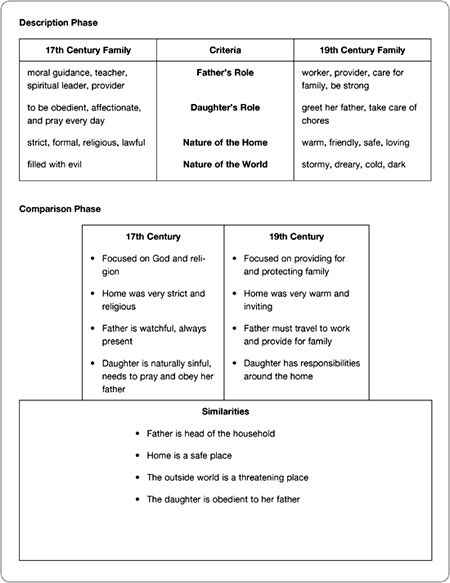
#### Activity: Want Ad

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| **Pick two universal traits for ideal fathers, whether they come from the 17th, the 19th, or the 21st century. Then pick two more traits that you believe are unique to modern fathers. Use the four traits you select to develop a want ad for an ideal 21st century father.** |

***Thinking About Phase Four:*** Remember the principle of “putting learning to work”? Creating a real-world task and asking students to stretch their thinking beyond the original context increases transfer and helps students find deeper meaning in the content.

Figure 1.6 depicts how one student group completed the four phases of the lesson. How does their work compare with yours?

#### Figure 1.6. Student Work from the Lesson



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