

# SMART™ Lesson

## Comparing and Contrasting Different Works

### Introduction

When analyzing literature, one of the tools at your disposal is the skill of comparing and contrasting different works. This technique helps you to better understand the themes, motifs, and symbols present in each piece, as well as the stylistic devices used by the authors.

### Comparing Literature

When comparing literature, you are looking at the similarities between two or more works. This can include:

- Themes – What messages or ideas do the works share?
- Motifs – What recurring elements can be found in each work?
- Symbols – What objects or images represent similar things in both works?
- Style – How do the authors use language, dialogue, and narration in similar ways?

When comparing literature, it is important to look for both similarities and differences. Identifying differences can help to highlight the unique aspects of each work, and to better understand the specific messages and techniques used by each author.

### Practice

Read the following two passages and answer the questions below:

#### **Passage 1:**

"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts, his acts being seven ages."

– William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*

#### **Passage 2:**

"Life is a game, boy. Life is a game that one plays according to the rules."

– J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*

1. What is one similarity between these two passages?
2. What is one difference between these two passages?
3. What theme do these two passages share?

## Contrasting Literature

When contrasting literature, you are looking at the differences between two or more works. This can include:

- Themes – What messages or ideas do the works differ in?
- Motifs – What recurring elements can be found in one work but not the other?
- Symbols – What objects or images represent different things in each work?
- Style – How do the authors use language, dialogue, and narration in different ways?

When contrasting literature, it is important to consider why the authors made different choices, and to think about the effect those choices have on the overall meaning of the works.

## Practice

Read the following two passages and answer the questions below:

### Passage 1:

"This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle, / This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars, / This other Eden, demi-paradise, / This fortress built by Nature for herself / Against infection and the hand of war, / This happy breed of men, this little world, / This precious stone set in the silver sea, / Which serves it in the office of a wall, / Or as a moat defensive to a house, / Against the envy of less happier lands, / This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England."

– William Shakespeare, Richard II

### Passage 2:

"There was no hope for him this time: it was the third stroke. Night after night I had passed the house (it was vacation time) and studied the lighted square of window: and night after night I had found it lighted in the same way, faintly and evenly. If he was dead, I thought, I would see the reflection of candles on the darkened blind for I knew that two candles must be set at the head of a corpse. He had often said to me: 'I am not long for this world,' and I had thought his words idle. Now I knew they were true."

– James Joyce, Dubliners

1. What is one similarity between these two passages?

2. What is one difference between these two passages?
3. What themes do these two passages differ in?

## Conclusion

Comparing and contrasting literature is a powerful tool for analyzing and understanding different works. By identifying similarities and differences in themes, motifs, symbols, and style, you can gain a deeper appreciation for the techniques used by authors, and for the messages they are trying to convey.

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Works