



*"One of these things is not like the others . . . "*  
- Sesame Street

Watching toddlers learn the intricacies of language is truly an amazing experience. They begin making random sounds which are often greeted by parental smiles and encouragement. As a child's vocabulary begins to expand they find one word which represents a large category; for example, all animals become "dogs." With time and exposure to language in all its forms, toddlers begin to recognize that the term "dog" only represents a specific animal. While a dog may be brown and fluffy, a large grey animal with humongous ears is an *elephant*. A gray animal with fins and a broad tail is a *whale*. The word "Mama" represents a certain person, while *Daddy* and *Papa* are two totally different individuals. With repeated practice using pictures and oral feedback, toddlers learn to compare and contrast two objects and then associate the correct word/name to each object.

Comparing and contrasting objects is an essential skill for everyone, no matter the age. Sesame Street helped young children practice this concept with the famous song, "One of These Things." Elmo and Big Bird helped countless children look for similarities and differences between a group of objects. [youtube.com/watch?v=rsRjQDrDnY8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsRjQDrDnY8), [youtube.com/watch?v=m6keZIUBsQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m6keZIUBsQ)

Obviously, an episode of Sesame Street does not prepare our students for mastering this important concept. Comparing and contrasting objects, people, attitudes, and ideas needs to be ongoing, varied, and meshed into **daily** learning engagements while staying focused on content. Continually be on the lookout for ways to practice this essential skill in your classroom. We've included additional ideas in this newsletter!



### Websites We Like

**Readworks**—This site continually upgrades its content and access to students. If you have not recently visited the site, take a peek! Readworks has expanded with Article-a-Day sets, paired passages and Step-Reads, an easy way to differentiate a passage by reading level. Teachers may either print off passages or assign them to students electronically. Searches can be made based on topic and skill set. Best of all—the resource is free to teachers. [www.readworks.org](http://www.readworks.org)

**Read Write Think**—This site offers a wide variety of upgraded lessons / engagements for students. Offering literacy lessons, this site helps teachers easily provide differentiation for their classroom learners. [www.readwritethink.org](http://www.readwritethink.org)

## Teaching Compare and Contrast

Comparing and Contrasting is a skill required in all grade levels, requiring all students to practice with this important concept. When students compare two items, they look for similarities. When two items are contrasted, the differences between the objects are identified. In both reading and writing, students may find a prompt which asks them to compare two items. In this case, we inform our students to find both the similarities and the differences.

**Begin with pictures.** Provide primary students with 2 pictures on the same topic. As a group, look for what the pictures have in common and what is different between the pictures. Types of Homes is a good topic to use for a starting point. What do an igloo and a tent have in common? What is different between these homes? (Three pictures can be found at the end of the newsletter.) Make a chart organizing students' ideas under the titles Alike and Different.

You may also use pictures with intermediate students. Think of topics which go with your social studies or science curriculum. An example could be *Homes of Native Peoples in Different Areas*. What similarities and differences can you find?

**Comparing Items by playing "They Both"** It is easier to find differences between two unlike objects than to find ways they are alike. Present students with two unlike objects. An example is a *fork* and a *pencil*. As a class, brainstorm characteristics **they both** share. Examples could be: **They both** are tools, **they both** can be used to write, **they both** have points, **they both** are kept away from toddlers, etc. After compiling this list, students need to support their ideas with a "because." For example: *A pencil and a fork are both kept away from toddlers because a toddler might poke himself in the eye with a fork and a toddler might write on the walls with a pencil. A pencil and a fork are alike because both can be writing utensils. You write on paper with a pencil and you can write in the sand with a fork.*

**Compare and Contrast Literature Characters;** There are many versions of common fairy tales. For example, you might read students the classic Cinderella and Bubba, the Cowboy Prince by Helen Kettelman. As you read the tales, students identify similarities and differences between the versions of the stories.

### Teaching Compare and Contrast—continued

**Organize ideas on compare and contrast on a plan prior to writing.** At Write Now—Right Now, students organize their thoughts prior to writing and use evidence from text to support their response. As students either read texts or look at pictures they are asked to compare, their thoughts and ideas can go directly onto a plan. In this way, students' thoughts are organized and written responses are planned. The following are grade level prompt suggestions.

**Kindergarten:** Look at the pictures of children playing games. One picture shows children who lived 100 years ago and one picture shows children playing today. How are the games children played long ago and the games children play now alike? How are they different?



**First Grade:** Family traditions change over time. Compare the pictures of the First Thanksgiving to pictures of families celebrating Thanksgiving today. How are the celebrations similar? What differences do you see?



**Second Grade:** People live in different types of communities. Read the two texts about city communities and farming communities. As you read, look for ways the communities are the same. Identify ways the communities are different from each other. Write an essay explaining two ways these communities are alike and two ways these communities are different.

### Teaching Compare and Contrast—continued

**Third Grade:** A geographic region is an area that has specific characteristics and is different from another region. Study the geographic regions in Colorado and choose two regions. Write an essay comparing and contrasting these two regions. Include information from the text.

**Fourth Grade:** We have been studying the ancient Puebloan people who lived in Colorado. Think about the daily life of a Puebloan child. Although these people lived long ago, their lives had some similarities with ours. Write an informative paragraph explaining three ways that a Puebloan child's life was similar to yours and three ways it was different than yours.

**Fifth Grade:** We have been learning about different forms of governments found around the world. Choose two varying forms of government. Write an essay comparing and contrasting these two types of government. Include details on how leaders come to power, how laws/decisions are enacted, and ways the government cares for its people. Include information from the texts.

**Sixth Grade:** Feeding the world's population is an increasing problem. Scientists are searching for ways to improve farming techniques. Read the articles on farming in the past and farming in the future. Compare and contrast new farming techniques with those practiced by farmers in the 1950's and 1960's. Include two ways farming today is similar to farming in the past and two ways farming today is different from farming in the past.

## Poetry Corner

Poetry can be an excellent tool for enforcing compare and contrast.

"Rice Pudding" by Alan Alexander Milne

<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/rice-pudding/>

"The Story of Augustus Who Would Not have Any Soup" by Heinrich Hoffman (Note: This poem should be used with older students, as the main character suffers grave consequences from not eating his soup.)

[https://germanstories.vcu.edu/struwwel/kaspar\\_e.html](https://germanstories.vcu.edu/struwwel/kaspar_e.html)

"Melinda Mae" by Shel Silverstein

<http://shelsilverstein.yolasite.com/melinda-mae.php>

The first two poems focus on characters who do not want to eat the food that is provided for dinner. Students can compare the characters' attitude towards food and how they choose to react to the situation. Older students will be able to note the irony in the two characters. You may also want to compare the main characters of these poems to the main character in the poem "Melinda Mae" by Shel Silverstein. She also has a strong reaction to food, but focuses on the problem in a completely different way.



The following two poems can be used with any age. The poems' narrators have very different methods for asking someone to be their Valentine!

"An Angry Valentine" by Myra Cohn Livingston

[thekittycats.wordpress.com/2013/02/12/an-angry-valentine/#more-6689](http://thekittycats.wordpress.com/2013/02/12/an-angry-valentine/#more-6689)

"A Lament" by Marie Irish

[www.woojr.com/valentines-day-kids-poems/funny-valentine-poem-kids/](http://www.woojr.com/valentines-day-kids-poems/funny-valentine-poem-kids/)

The characters both desire for someone to be their Valentine, but ask the question in very different ways. Students can compare how the characters ask someone to be their Valentine, discuss why each method may prove to be ineffective, and predict what may happen next.





## **Book Nook**

### **A Night Divided by Jennifer A. Nielsen**

This book for intermediate students addresses an often overlooked time in history—the building of the Berlin Wall. Gerta and her brother Fritz wake up one morning to find their family divided by this huge wall. Not only are they separated from their family and brother, but their friendships in the East are also challenged. The novel tells of the children's cunning and bravery as they struggle to reunite with their family and find freedom again.

[amazon.com/Night-Divided-Scholastic-Gold-ebook/dp/B00SZIBP6C/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1546641127&sr=8-1&keywords=a+night+divided+by+jennifer+nielsen+paperback](https://www.amazon.com/Night-Divided-Scholastic-Gold-ebook/dp/B00SZIBP6C/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1546641127&sr=8-1&keywords=a+night+divided+by+jennifer+nielsen+paperback)

### **Words and Your Heart by Kate Jane Neal**

This simple picture book expresses the power that our words have to both help and hurt others. Told through the eyes of a child and a cat, the book illustrates the importance of thinking about your words, whether they be encouraging or not. This is a perfect book to remind us about verbal bullying, no matter the age.

[amazon.com/Words-Your-Heart-Kate-Jane-ebook/dp/B077XMSKS3/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1546640789&sr=8-1&keywords=words+and+your+heart](https://www.amazon.com/Words-Your-Heart-Kate-Jane-ebook/dp/B077XMSKS3/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1546640789&sr=8-1&keywords=words+and+your+heart)

### **Ellie by Mike Wu**

When the zookeeper announces that the zoo is closing, Ellie and her animal friends look for ways to spruce up their surroundings and save the zoo! While all the animals seem to have a talent they can use to improve the zoo, Ellie feels insignificant. How can she help? At this moment she picks up a paintbrush and discovers her artistic talents. This delightful book reminds us that we all have talents to share!

[amazon.com/Ellie-Hyperion-Picture-Book-eBook-ebook/dp/B00X0GQHU8/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1546641200&sr=8-1&keywords=ellie](https://www.amazon.com/Ellie-Hyperion-Picture-Book-eBook-ebook/dp/B00X0GQHU8/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1546641200&sr=8-1&keywords=ellie)

### **In My Heart—A Book of Feelings by Jo Witek**

This book, with a cutout heart on the front, describes emotions in both lyrical and easy to understand language. Teachers will find this book a delightful resource as they work with students to develop emotional balance. The colorful graphics add to the meaning of the emotion found on each page.

[amazon.com/My-Heart-Feelings-Growing-Hearts/dp/1419713108/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1546641632&sr=8-1&keywords=in+my+heart+a+book+of+feelings](https://www.amazon.com/My-Heart-Feelings-Growing-Hearts/dp/1419713108/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1546641632&sr=8-1&keywords=in+my+heart+a+book+of+feelings)

## Writing in Response to Math

Today's students are not asked to simply solve math equations correctly. Rather, a good math student must correctly solve a math problem and then present their thinking and solution using good writing techniques. This genre of writing requires a specific skill set. *Write Now—Right Now* is excited to announce a new program—*Writing in Response to Math*. This easy to follow program provides the teacher with step-by-step lesson plans to use with their students as they teach children how to sequentially explain their math thinking. Each program includes samples of math problems addressing the different strands. By following these simple steps, students are able to clearly explain each step they took while solving a math word problem. The new program, *Writing in Response to Math*, is now available for Grades 3, 4, and 5 and look for 6th grade later this summer.

We love to talk writing! If we can ever be of service or you'd like to chat, please email us at [darlene-and-terry@writenow-rightnow.com](mailto:darlene-and-terry@writenow-rightnow.com)

Additional ideas and activities can be found in the *Write Now - Right Now Writing Program*.

To view grade level samples, locate additional newsletters and read blog posts, visit:

[writenow-rightnow.com](http://writenow-rightnow.com)

*The Write Now—Right Now Writing Program is now being used in 48 states and four Canadian provinces. How can we be of help to you in your classroom?*

