### WHY

**do we compare and contrast?**

We compare and contrast ideas, individuals, texts, philosophies, nations, movements, etc. in academic writing to gain a deeper understanding of the materials we are studying, their relationship to each other, and what is most important about them.

**KEEP THIS IN MIND THROUGHOUT YOUR WRITING PROCESS. YOU ARE NOT ONLY DISCOVERING SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BUT ALSO EXPLORING HOW AND WHY THESE COMPARISONS ARE IMPORTANT.**

### WHAT

**are we trying to accomplish?**

Like other academic writing, compare and contrast tasks should have an engaging, specific, and arguable thesis that explains what your comparisons are going to reveal.

**KEEP THIS IN MIND THROUGHOUT YOUR WRITING PROCESS. YOUR FINAL GOAL IS A COHESIVE SERIES OF COMPARISONS THAT SUPPORT A CENTRAL ARGUMENT.**

### HOW

**do we get started?**

Some assignments explicitly ask you to compare and contrast two or more subjects, while others might be more difficult to establish. Your first objectives are to determine your **SUBJECTS and TOPICS**: what sorts of comparisons and distinctions are going to be relevant to your assignment and which subjects you are going to compare and contrast.

**ASK YOURSELF: WHAT IS RELEVANT TO THE ASSIGNMENT? WHAT IS RELEVANT TO THE COURSE? WHAT IS INTERESTING AND INFORMATIVE? WHAT MATTERS TO THE ARGUMENT YOU HAVE BEEN ASKED TO MAKE?**

### SAMPLE PROMPTS

- Discuss the ways in which Shakespeare talks about the passing of time in three of the sonnets we read for class.
- Choose a particular idea or theme, such as romantic love, death, or nature, and consider how it is treated in two Romantic poems.
- Compare and contrast Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* with Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*.
- Trace the concept of 'power' in both Thomas Hobbs' philosophy and Friedrich Nietzsche. How are these concepts alike and how do they differ?
- Discuss the changing ideals of American womanhood between the American Revolution and the outbreak of the Civil War.
- Select two self-portraits from different historical periods and analyze how each conveys information about the artist and his or her era.
- How do the different authors we have studied so far define and describe oppression?
ESTABLISH

1. why you are comparing and contrasting these subjects/what you are looking for: your FOCUS
2. what concerns, images, questions, answers, etc. they share: your potential TOPICS
3. which topics are important (to the course, your prompt, etc.) or which might complement each other or be a part of the same argument: your TOPICS
4. HOW and WHY they each approach these topics the way they do: your CONTENT
5. thesis and presentation strategy: your ORGANIZATION

ORGANIZATION STRATEGIES:

TOPIC by

INTRODUCTION

THESIS

CONCLUSION

SUBJECT by

TOPIC

SUBJECT

A

A

B

B

C

C

D

D

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