



## 1 Learn the Skill

Authors use **comparisons** and **contrasts** to describe the people, places, or conflicts in their stories. When authors make comparisons, they show the similarities between two or more elements. When they show contrast, they emphasize the differences. Comparing and contrasting can help you sort out and analyze information. You can group details, events, or people by their similarities and differences.

As you learned in Lesson 6, signal words such as *likewise*, *in the same way*, *similarly*, *like*, and *in like manner* indicate similarities. Signal words such as *on the other hand*, *however*, *whereas*, *unlike*, and *but* indicate differences.

## 2 Practice the Skill

By practicing the skill of comparing and contrasting in fiction, you will improve your study and test-taking abilities, especially as they relate to the GED® Reasoning Through Language Arts Test. Read the passage below. Then answer the question that follows.

### EMILY AND SUSAN

Oh there are conflicts between the others too, each one human, needing, demanding, hurting, taking—but only between Emily and Susan, no, Emily toward Susan that corroding resentment. It seems so obvious on the surface, yet it is not obvious. Susan, the second child, Susan, golden- and curly-haired and chubby, quick and articulate and assured, everything in appearance and manner Emily was not; Susan, not able to resist Emily's precious things, losing or sometimes clumsily breaking them; Susan telling jokes and riddles to company for applause while Emily sat silent (to say to me later: that was my riddle, Mother, I told it to Susan); Susan, who for all the five years' difference in age was just a year behind Emily in developing physically).

I am glad for that slow physical development that widened the difference between her and her contemporaries, though she suffered over it. She was too vulnerable for that terrible world of youthful competition, of preening and parading, of constant measuring of yourself against every other, of envy. ...

From I STAND HERE IRONING by Tillie Olsen, © 1961

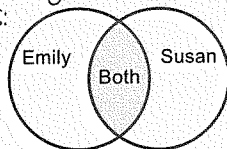
**a** The narrator contrasts two sisters, Susan and Emily. The narrator first describes Susan and then says that Emily is not the same at all.

**b** The narrator continues to emphasize the differences between Susan and Emily, explaining that Susan is outgoing and amuses her audiences whereas Emily is quiet.

- Which statement describes one way in which Emily and Susan are different?
  - Susan is clumsy and ill at ease in company, but Emily is not.
  - Susan finds more riddles than Emily does.
  - Emily enjoys sharing her possessions, but Susan does not.
  - Emily is slower to develop physically than Susan is.

### TEST-TAKING TIPS

A Venn diagram is a useful tool for organizing comparison and contrast. A comparison of Emily and Susan might look like this:



★ Spotlighted Item: **FILL-IN-THE-BLANK**

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the passage. Then fill in your answers in the boxes below.

**A DIFFERENCE IN MUSICAL TASTES**

1 No one will believe that I like country music. Even my wife scoffs when told such a possibility exists. "Go on!" Gloria tells me. "I can see blues, bebop, maybe even a little buckdancing. But not bluegrass." Gloria says, "Hillbilly stuff is not just music. It's like the New York Stock Exchange. The minute you see a sharp rise in it, you better watch out."

From WHY I LIKE COUNTRY MUSIC by James Alan McPherson, © 1972

2. How do the musical tastes of Gloria and her husband contrast? Only her husband likes

3. Gloria compares "hillbilly" music with the New York Stock Exchange. She implies that after a sharp rise in the stock market, what comes next is a

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the passage, read each question, and choose the **best** answer.

**SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN PERSPECTIVES**

1 I tend to argue the point, but quietly, and mostly to myself. Gloria was born and raised in New York; she has come to believe in the stock exchange as the only index of economic health. My perceptions were shaped in South Carolina; and long ago I learned there, as a waiter in private clubs, to gauge economic flux by the tips people gave. We tend to agree on other matters too, but the thing that gives me most frustration is trying to make her understand why I like country music. Perhaps it is because she hates the South and has capitulated emotionally to the horror stories told by refugees from down home. Perhaps it is because Gloria is third generation Northern-born. I do not know. What I do know is that, while the two of us are black, the distance between us is sometimes as great as that between Ibo and Yoruba.

From WHY I LIKE COUNTRY MUSIC by James Alan McPherson, © 1972

4. The narrator says that "Gloria is third generation Northern-born." This information is important because it
- A. contrasts her background with her husband's.
  - B. implies that her husband is also from the North.
  - C. emphasizes her indifference toward the North.
  - D. shows that she and her husband have similar beliefs.
5. The narrator says that his wife hates the South. Her dislike for the South **most** likely indicates that
- A. he too dislikes the South.
  - B. they live elsewhere.
  - C. they do not always agree.
  - D. she has never been there.

**1 Review the Skill**

**Comparing** is showing how two or more elements are similar. **Contrasting** is showing how these elements are different. In stories, authors may compare and contrast characters, settings, or points of view. The author compares or contrasts to help readers understand more about a particular part of the story.

**2 Refine the Skill**

By refining the skill of comparing and contrasting in fiction, you will improve your study and test-taking abilities, especially as they relate to the GED® Reasoning Through Language Arts Test. Read the passage below. Then answer the questions that follow.

**THE NARRATOR DESCRIBES HER DAUGHTER**

She fretted about her appearance, thin and dark and foreign-looking at a time when every little girl was supposed to look or thought she should look like a chubby blond replica of Shirley Temple. The doorbell sometimes rang for her, but no one seemed to come and play in the house or be a best friend. Maybe because we moved so much.

There was a boy she loved painfully through two school semesters. Months later she told me how she had taken pennies from my purse to buy him candy. "Licorice was his favorite and I brought him some every day, but he still liked Jennifer better'n me. Why Mommy why?" A question I could never answer.

School was a worry to her. She was not glib or quick in a world where glibness and quickness were easily confused with ability to learn. To her overworked and exasperated teachers she was an over-conscientious "slow learner" who kept trying to catch up and was absent entirely too often.

From I STAND HERE IRONING by Tillie Olsen, © 1961

**a** The narrator makes an implied comparison between other girls and her daughter, suggesting that she had fewer friends and was less popular.

**b** The story about loving the boy creates a comparison between the daughter and another girl, Jennifer, whom the boy prefers.

**MAKING ASSUMPTIONS**

Authors compare and contrast to make a point. Assume that the differences emphasized are significant. This passage points out the reasons the daughter does not fit in.

- How does the narrator contrast her daughter with images of beauty at the time? Her daughter is different because she
  - looks like Shirley Temple.
  - does not understand what beauty is.
  - is blond and chubby.
  - is thin and dark.
- How does the daughter compare with other students at school?
  - She is not as well behaved as other students.
  - She is not as quick and is viewed as a slow learner.
  - She is more adaptable and pleasant than other students.
  - She is more easily confused at school than other students.

### 3 Master the Skill

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the passage, read each question, and choose the **best** answer.

#### THE KELVEY GIRLS ARE SHUNNED

- 1 Playtime came and Isabel was surrounded. The girls of her class nearly fought to put their arms round her, to walk away with her, to beam flatteringly, to be her special friend. She held quite a court under the huge pine trees at the side of the playground. Nudging, giggling together, the little girls pressed up close. And the only two who stayed outside the ring were the two who were always outside, the little Kelveys. They knew better than to come anywhere near the Burnells.
- 2 For the fact was, the school the Burnell children went to was not at all the kind of place their parents would have chosen if there had been any choice. But there was none. It was the only school for miles. And the consequence was all the children in the neighborhood, the judge's little girls, the doctor's daughters, the store-keeper's children, the milkman's, were forced to mix together. ... But the line had to be drawn somewhere. It was drawn at the Kelveys. Many of the children, including the Burnells, were not allowed even to speak to them. They walked past the Kelveys with their heads in the air, and as they set the fashion in all matters of behaviour, the Kelveys were shunned by everybody. Even the teacher had a special voice for them, and a special smile for the other children when Lil Kelvey came up to her desk with a bunch of dreadfully common-looking flowers.
- 3 They were the daughters of a spry, hardworking little washerwoman, who went about from house to house by the day. This was awful enough. But where was Mr. Kelvey? Nobody knew for certain. But everybody said he was in prison. So they were the daughters of a washerwoman and a jailbird. Very nice company for other people's children! And they looked it. Why Mrs. Kelvey made them so conspicuous was hard to understand. The truth was they were dressed in "bits" given to her by the people for whom she worked.

From *THE DOLL'S HOUSE* by Katherine Mansfield, © 1922

3. What do the Kelveys and the Burnells have in common?
- A. They attend the same school.
  - B. They play with the same girls.
  - C. They both like wildflowers.
  - D. They are both shunned by others.
4. In paragraph 1, the narrator contrasts the children who are inside Isabel's ring with those who are outside it in order to
- A. show the difference in status.
  - B. indicate a difference in ages.
  - C. emphasize a difference in size.
  - D. reveal that not all children like Isabel.
5. The narrator says that the school is not at all the kind of place that the Burnell parents "would have chosen." How would a school of their choosing differ from the school in the passage?
- A. It would provide a better education.
  - B. It would be closer to their home.
  - C. It would not accept poor children.
  - D. It would abolish social class distinction.
6. What does the narrator imply about the children who do not speak to the Kelveys?
- A. Their families are more concerned with fashion than the Kelveys are.
  - B. Their families are better off than the Kelveys are.
  - C. The Kelveys have more social status than those families do.
  - D. The Kelveys are more educated than those families are.
7. In paragraph 2, the narrator states "Even the teacher had a special voice" for the Kelvey children. What does the signal word **even** reveal about the teacher's attitude toward the children?
- A. She is always equally fair to all children.
  - B. She feels sorry for the Kelvey girls.
  - C. She, unlike others, is kind to the Kelvey children.
  - D. She, like others, would shun the Kelvey girls.

### 3 Master the Skill

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the passage, read each question, and choose the **best** answer.

#### THE NARRATOR EXAMINES HIS HERITAGE

- 1 You would not know or remember, as I do, that in those days, in our area of the country, we enjoyed a pleasingly ironic mixture of Yankee and Confederate folkways. Our meals and manners, our speech, our attitudes towards certain ambiguous areas of history, even our acceptance of tragedy as a normal course of life—these things and more defined us as Southern. Yet the stern morality of our parents, their toughness and penny-pinching and attitudes toward work, their covert allegiance toward certain ideals, even the directions toward which they turned our faces, made us more Yankee than Cavalier. Moreover, some of our schools were named for Confederate men of distinction, but others were named for the stern-faced believers who had swept down from the North to save a people back, back long ago, in those long forgotten days of once upon a time. Still, our schoolbooks, our required classroom songs, our flags, our very relation to the statues and monuments in public parks, negated the story that these dreamers from the North had ever come.

From WHY I LIKE COUNTRY MUSIC by James Alan McPherson,  
© 1972

8. The narrator describes his upbringing as an "ironic mixture of Yankee and Confederate folkways." This description reveals that he
- A. agrees with neither Yankee nor Confederate ideals.
  - B. identifies with Confederates more than Yankees.
  - C. holds to both Yankee and Confederate beliefs.
  - D. identifies with ideals other than Yankee and Confederate beliefs.
9. Which detail does the narrator mention as a contrast between Northern and Southern ways?
- A. Yankees accept tragedy quickly.
  - B. Yankees' morality is not very stern.
  - C. Confederates understand history well.
  - D. Yankees are careful with their money.
10. The **most** likely reason the narrator describes Northern and Southern attitudes is to
- A. prove the superiority of Northern ways.
  - B. complain that schools are named for Northern men.
  - C. confirm that Northern and Southern practices are basically the same.
  - D. show that he is the product of two different cultures.
11. What comparison does the narrator suggest about the schoolbooks, songs, and flags of his area of the country?
- A. They agree more with the North than the South.
  - B. They favor the South over the North.
  - C. They treat the North and South equally.
  - D. They show only the best qualities of the North.
12. The author refers to the past as "back long ago" and "those long forgotten days of once upon a time." What is implied by the comparison between the past and the present?
- A. People often think that the past is better than the present.
  - B. Some people's ideas about the past are unrealistic and similar to fairy tales.
  - C. The past was a long time ago and should not influence the present.
  - D. The past should never be forgotten, or it could be repeated.

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the passage, read each question, and choose the **best** answer.

### A SOLDIER'S QUEST

- 1 Sometimes they of the infantry looked down at a fair little meadow which spread at their feet. Its long, green grass was rippling gently in a breeze. Beyond it was the grey form of a house half torn to pieces by shells and by the busy axes of soldiers who had pursued firewood. The line of an old fence was now dimly marked by long weeds and by an occasional post. A shell had blown the well-house to fragments. ...
- 2 Collins, of A Company, said: "I wisht I had a drink. I bet there's water in that there ol' well yonder!"
- 3 "Yes; but how you goin' to git it?"
- 4 For the little meadow which intervined was now suffering a terrible onslaught of shells. Its green and beautiful calm had vanished utterly. Brown earth was being flung in monstrous handfuls. And there was a massacre of the young blades of grass. They were being torn, burned, obliterated. ...
- 5 There was a quarrel in A Company. Collins was shaking his fist in the faces of some laughing comrades. "Dern yeh! I ain't afraid t' go. If yeh say much, I will go!"
- 6 "Of course, yeh will! You'll run through that there medder, won't yeh?"
- 7 Collins said, in a terrible voice: "You see now!" At this ominous threat his comrades broke into renewed jeers.
- 8 Collins gave them a dark scowl, and went to find his captain. The latter was conversing with the colonel of the regiment.
- 9 "Captain," said Collins, saluting and standing at attention—in those days all trousers bagged at the knees—"Captain, I want t' get permission to go git some water from that there well over yonder!"
- 10 The colonel and the captain swung about simultaneously and stared across the meadow. The captain laughed. "You must be pretty thirsty, Collins?"
- 11 "Yes, sir, I am."
- 12 "Well—ah," said the captain. After a moment, he asked, "Can't you wait?"
- 13 "No, sir."
- 14 The colonel was watching Collins's face. "Look here, my lad," he said, in a pious sort of a voice—"Look here, my lad"—Collins was not a lad—"don't you think that's taking pretty big risks for a little drink of water."
- 15 "I dunno," said Collins uncomfortably.

From A MYSTERY OF HEROISM by Stephen Crane, © 1895

13. Which detail **best** emphasizes the implicit contrast between pre-war and post-war conditions?
- Someone's home is torn apart from the wartime fighting.
  - The well might contain water for the soldiers to drink.
  - The soldiers bicker as if they have known one another a long time.
  - The captain and the colonel consult each other rather than consult the soldiers.
14. How are Collins and the soldiers with whom he is bickering similar?
- Every soldier is concerned with the welfare of the other soldiers.
  - Collins and the other soldiers resent the captain and the colonel.
  - Collins's and the other soldiers' manner of speaking makes them seem uneducated.
  - All the soldiers are willing to take big risks during the war.
15. How is Collins different from the captain and the colonel?
- Collins is hopeful; the captain and the colonel are without hope.
  - Collins is naïve and impulsive; the captain and the colonel are experienced and cautious.
  - Collins is brave and fearless; the captain and the colonel are anxious and self-doubting.
  - Collins is cunning; the captain and the colonel are straightforward.
16. How does the contrast between the natural landscape and the wartime activity enhance the story?
- The contrast between the natural landscape setting and devastating wartime activity emphasizes the beauty and power of nature.
  - The peaceful natural setting emphasizes that the wartime activity will end soon.
  - The simple natural setting contrasts with and emphasizes the complex tactics required during wartime.
  - The contrast between the tranquil natural setting and the violent wartime activity emphasizes the destructive nature of war.