

**sample assignment: essay
comparing two reading sources**

Writing Assignment
CPN 100, section 074

Drawing Comparisons
Between Two Reading Sources

Compare and contrast two essays among the four written by these writers in your textbook: Wetzsteon, Martin, Nelson, and Duke. Use only two sources.

Your essay is to be written in a formal, academic style for a general, college-educated reader. Consider the portfolio reviewers.

To document your source, include MLA-style parenthetical citations and a "Works Cited" page.

sample essay: drawing comparisons between two reading sources

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CPN 100, section 074
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The Battle of the Sexes: An Essay in Comparison and Contrast

Why are newborn boys likely to be lavished with footballs and baseball gloves, whereas little girls are bestowed with dolls and frilly dresses? Do females lack a competitive gene that their male counterparts possess, or does society invest them with presumptions that women cannot fully understand competition? Questions such as these prompted the writing of the essays: "The Winner Instinct," by Ross Wetzsteon, and Mariah Nelson's "Who Wins, Who Cares?" At first, it may appear that the only way these two writers might meet on common ground would be in a head-on collision. Nevertheless, after reading their essays more carefully, one can realize that Wetzsteon and Nelson are actually saying the same thing.

Initially, these essays seem to have very little in common. Their titles, for example, convey two different images: Wetzsteon's aggressive "The Winner Instinct" versus Nelson's passive "Who Wins, Who Cares?" Their subject matters and these authors' reasons for writing likewise make them appear very dissimilar. Wetzsteon maintains that women cannot understand the reality of competition as well as men can; by contrast, Nelson argues that most men get too caught up in winning to enjoy the sport of competition. Between Wetzsteon's use of his competition-shy wife to symbolize women in general and Nelson's subliminal "we/women versus them/men" message,

essay heading: does not include instructor's name (according to portfolio guidelines)

essay title: uses key terms to clarify the focus of essay (see Troyka 53-54)

opening strategy: writer engages readers by asking questions and identifying a situation (see Troyka 104-106)

writer introduces sources: stating authors' full names, titles of essays

thesis statement: writer formulates main point about the relationship between two reading sources

writer focuses on specifics while contrasting two sources

writer summarizes viewpoints in sources, emphasizing differences

sample essay: drawing comparisons between two reading sources

*transition: writer starts paragraph
with link to preceding paragraph
(see Troyka 82-84)*

*writer uses alternating method
within paragraph to compare
sources*

*writer paraphrases and quotes
relevant points in reading
sources—with MLA-style
parenthetical citation
(see Troyka 522-32, 580-87)*

*writer continues to develop
comparison between sources, using
alternating method within
paragraph*

*writer paraphrases relevant points
in reading sources—with MLA-
style parenthetical citations
(see Troyka 528-32, 580-87)*

Sarfus 2

readers at first have difficulty recognizing a neutral meeting ground between these two persistent writers.

This strong insistence by each writer that solely one sex can appreciate competition, however, helps readers eventually see how similar Wetzsteon's and Nelson's arguments really are. For both authors, the proposition that "winning is everything" is just a myth.

¶13 For instance, Nelson contends that she and women in general take competition more seriously than its ultimate outcome; for this reason, losing does not simplistically mean failure. Wetzsteon, in dealing with male competition, reiterates what Nelson says in her article about the challenge involved in competition: "It's not winning or losing that matters--it's the competition itself!" (370).

¶14 Regarding the challenge of competition, we likewise find Nelson and Wetzsteon expressing similar views. According to Nelson, winning is not wonderful if the playing is not challenging or fun; moreover, when a competitor challenges you to play harder and think faster, the game attains a special thrill (378). Wetzsteon cites two experiences to support this viewpoint; for him as well as for Nelson, the final score becomes secondary to the more important presence of challenge. Wetzsteon's first example deals with a friend who finally wins a tennis match against a longtime rival; instead of reveling in his accomplishment, he feels a letdown because the game lacked the element of challenge (372). In his second example, Wetzsteon himself was defeated; because the competition was so challenging, however, Wetzsteon felt a sense of accomplishment after playing one of the best games ever (372).

sample essay: drawing comparisons between two reading sources

Sarfas 3

Nelson and Wetzsteon agree on a third point: competition is not divisive but unifying. By definition, competition sets people or teams of people against each other; some feel that strong competition may create animosity or hard feelings between competitors. According to Wetzsteon, however, most men enjoy competition

¶15 because the playing field is one of the few places where challenge and companionship can come together (372). Women also experience this, according to Nelson. In fact she goes further to contend that women play with each other, not against each other--thus promoting each other to do better (379).

Although Wetzsteon and Nelson write about differences in the competitive styles of men and women, readers can perceive a common ground. Upon close analysis, their essays reveal several important points of agreement.

¶16 Insofar as both writers agree on the spirit of competition, the necessity of challenge in a game, and the unity competition brings about, readers can recognize that Wetzsteon's and Nelson's arguments prove to be not as different as they at first seem.

writer continues to develop comparison between sources, using alternating method within paragraph

writer paraphrases relevant points in reading sources—with MLA-style parenthetical citations (see Troyka 528-32, 580-87)

conclusion: writer fully develops thesis about relationship between two sources

sample essay: drawing comparisons between two reading sources

Sarfus 4

MLA-style "Works Cited"
(see Troyka 588-607)

*writer follows procedure for citing
multiple selections from anthology*
(see Troyka 595-96)

Works Cited

- Miller, Robert K. *The Informed Argument*. 2nd ed.
New York: Harcourt, 1992.
- Nelson, Mariah B. "Who Wins? Who Cares?" Miller
377-79.
- Wetzsteon, Ross. "The Winner Instinct." Miller
370-72.

