

Types of Comparative Essays



1) PROGRESSIVE STYLE (a.k.a. INITIAL SITUATION • DEVELOPMENT • RESULT)

This type of comparative essay requires the progression of events, usually from the beginning, middle and end of a text, to prove the theme/thesis. This is the most common type of comparative essay completed by students at this level.

For example...

Theme: One must overcome past regrets in order to be happy in the present.

Body Paragraph #1

Your first quotation from each text shows the character's **INITIAL SITUATION** in which he/she is dealing with the **problem** of being unhappy because of an inability to overcome past regrets.

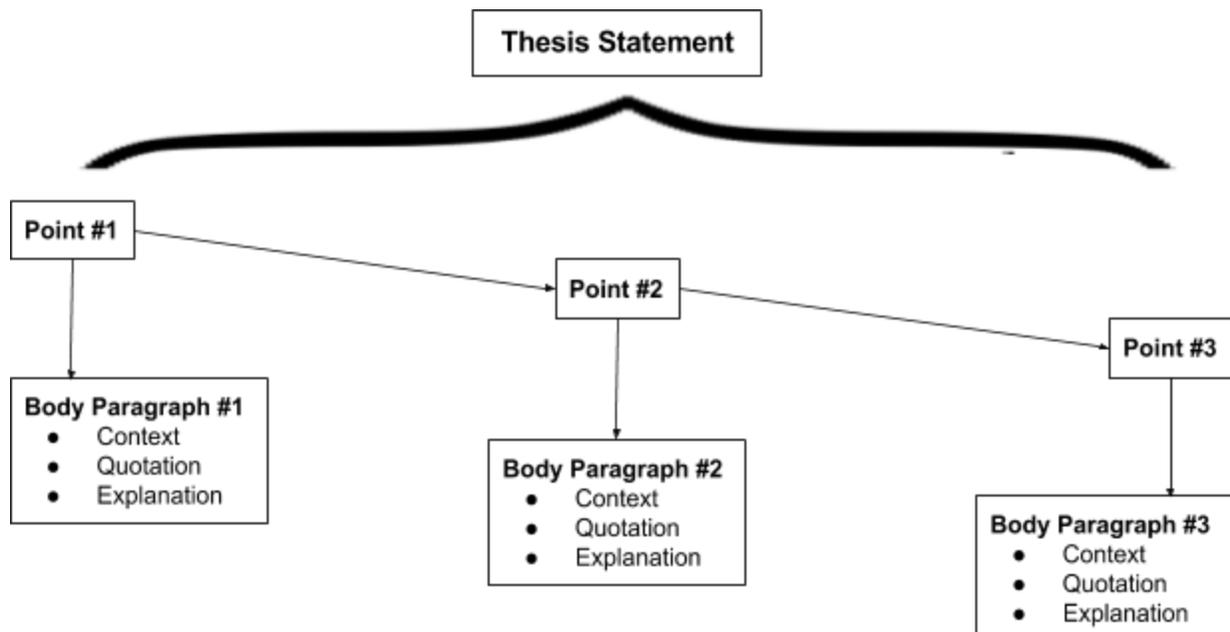
Body Paragraph #2

The second quotation from each text presents the theme's **DEVELOPMENT**, in which the character find the ability to overcome their past regrets.

Body Paragraph #3

Finally, the final quotations show the **RESULT** of the characters' ability to overcome their regrets, which, according to the stated theme, is finding happiness.

For this type of comparative essay, the progression presented through the series of three quotations from each text is required to prove the theme/thesis.



2) DIVERGENT STYLE

Some themes can be proven by highlighting differences between texts just as easily as they can through similarities. This style of essay would focus on how the texts begin with similar **INITIAL SITUATIONS**, but often diverge with their **DEVELOPMENTS** and, therefore, have different **RESULTS**.



For example...

Theme: One must overcome past regrets in order to be happy in the present.

Body Paragraph #1

Quotations from both texts would present each character's **INITIAL SITUATION**, in which he/she is dealing with the problem of being unhappy because of an inability to overcome past regrets.

Body Paragraph #2

Both quotations would represent the theme's **DEVELOPMENT**. However, this is the point at which the texts often diverge, with one character finding a solution to their problem, while the other does not. For this example, the character from "Text A" is able to find a solution to help them overcome their past regrets, while the character from "Text B" is not.

Body Paragraph #3

Because the theme's development has differed between the texts, their **RESULTS** will also be different. For example, the character from "Text A" is successful and finds themselves happy after overcoming their past regrets. However, the character from "Text B" finds that they are unable to overcome past regrets and, therefore, remains unhappy in the present.

In this example, although the outcomes are different, both situations still prove the theme and thesis to be true. Similar to the progressive style of comparative essay, the development presented through the series of three quotations from each text is required to prove the theme/thesis.

3) “THREE REASONS” STYLE

This is the style with which many of you will be most familiar. It can be very effective as an essay, but can also be very difficult to use with comparative essays because it requires the two texts to be very similar.



In this style of comparative essay, you would simply state your thesis and determine three separate “categories” or through which to compare your texts.

For example...

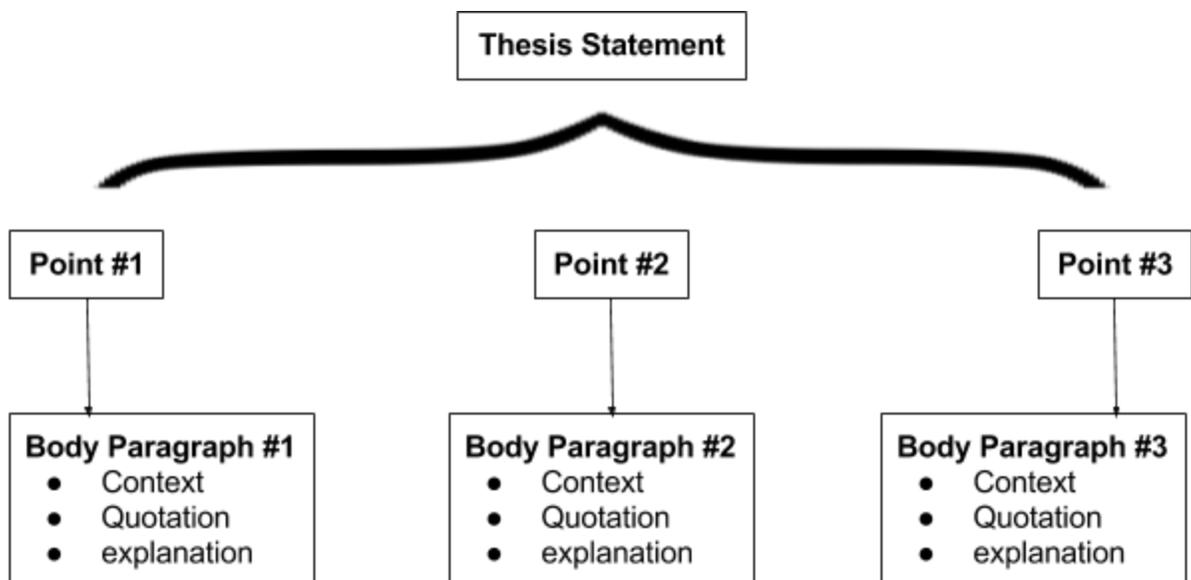
Theme: Maintaining successful relationships is essential to living a happy life.

Body Paragraph #1: Family relationships

Body Paragraph #2: Romantic relationships

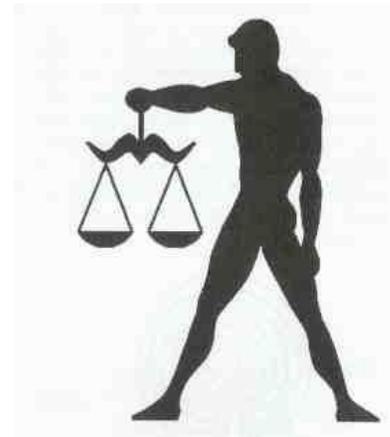
Body Paragraph #3: Professional relationships

Whereas it is essential to connect one body paragraph to the next in the “progressive style” of comparative essay, it is important that someone using this style of comparative essay connect the point in each body paragraph back to the thesis in the concluding sentence.



4) JUDGMENT STYLE

Some comparative essays will require you to make a judgment call between two novels, characters, movies, etc., then prove it. This style of comparative essay is usually only used in a predetermined context and would not be effective for an ISU essay.



For example...

Question: Which character from *The Hobbit* is more responsible for his own success: Bilbo Baggins or Thorin Oakenshield?

To respond to this type of question, include your answer in the thesis statement:

Thesis Statement: In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo Baggins is more responsible for his own success than Thorin Oakenshield.

Each body paragraph would present a “reason” why one is more responsible than the other. For example, the first body paragraph could be about “honesty.” Therefore, one would go about proving that “Bilbo Baggins is more responsible for his own success because of the honest way in which he goes about achieving it.” Your explanations would go about proving Bilbo’s honesty and Thorin’s deceptive and dishonest ways.