Getting the Idea

When you compare and contrast across texts, you look at the similarities and differences in the texts. Comparisons focus on the things that the texts share. Contrasts focus on differences. Comparing and contrasting across texts will help you better understand each text. You can think about the information in the texts in different ways. Read these examples.

**Andrew Jackson**

Andrew Jackson was the seventh president of the United States. Unlike the presidents who came before him, Jackson was not born into a rich home. He was born in a log cabin in South Carolina and grew up on the frontier. He did not have much education. Later he taught himself law and became a judge. He was also known for his success on the battlefield. A soldier nicknamed him “Old Hickory,” after the hickory tree known for its hard, tough wood.

**Jimmy Carter**

James “Jimmy” Carter was the thirty-ninth president of the United States. He was born and raised in southwest Georgia. Carter was the first president born in a hospital. He was a very gifted student who loved to read. After high school, Carter attended college. He joined the navy and served for several years. After the navy, Carter became a peanut farmer, a state senator, and a governor.
Both of the passages are about presidents of the United States. How are Andrew Jackson and Jimmy Carter alike? How are they different? Jackson did not have much of an education, while Carter attended college. They both served in the military, but Carter never went to battle. How else are they alike? How else are they different?

You can also compare and contrast the main ideas in different texts. Look at the examples below.

There are many different types of beverages that people drink, including juice, soda, and milk shakes. However, the best type of drink for you is water. Drinks such as juice, soda, and milk shakes contain a lot of sugar, which has been shown to promote tooth decay. Water contains no sugar and no calories. Water also promotes healthy growth and helps your body function. So the next time you are thirsty, try a nice big glass of water!

Health experts believe that people are eating too much junk food today. They also think that it is important for people to develop healthy eating habits at a young age. What foods should we include in our diet? We should eat fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, such as whole-wheat bread and brown rice. We should also eat foods with calcium, such as milk, yogurt, and cheese. What foods should we avoid? We should not eat junk food, such as potato chips and candy bars. Junk food contains too much fat and sugar.

How are the passages alike? How are they different? Eating and drinking in a healthy way are the topics of both passages. Both passages are trying to persuade readers to eat and drink healthier. How else are they similar? How else are they different? You can look for clue words such as both, neither, like, unlike, and however.
Read the following paragraphs, and then answer the questions that follow.

Some animals live with people. These are called *domestic* animals. Dogs and cats are domestic animals. They eat meat. Animals that eat meat are called *carnivores*.

Horses and cows are domestic animals. They do not have sharp teeth. They do not eat meat. Animals that do not eat meat are called *herbivores*.

How are the two paragraphs alike? How are they different?

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HINT Look for clue words in each paragraph.

DISCUSS The word *herbivore* means “plant-eater.” What are some plant foods that horses and cows eat? Share your ideas with a partner.
The Ostrich

The ostrich is the world’s largest land bird. In fact, it is the world’s largest bird. It is found only on the hot continent of Africa. An ostrich eats mainly vegetation and insects. An adult male ostrich can grow to be nine feet tall! That’s three feet taller than an average adult male human. An ostrich can weigh more than 300 pounds. Of course, since this kind of bird is so large, it is unable to fly. However, an ostrich can run as fast as forty-five miles per hour. Its legs are so strong that it can deliver a powerful and even deadly kick when it feels it is in danger.

The Emperor Penguin

The emperor penguin is the largest kind of penguin. This seabird cannot fly, but it is an excellent swimmer. Most emperor penguins live in Antarctica where the weather is very cold. However, a thick layer of fat and feathers keeps them warm. Another way these birds stay warm is by huddling in groups. These smart penguins take turns moving to the center of the group where it is warmest. Emperor penguins can also be very playful. They enjoy running, hopping, jumping, and sliding down hills on their bellies.
1. How are the ostrich and the emperor penguin alike?
   A. They both like cold weather.
   B. They are both fast swimmers.
   C. They both like hot weather.
   D. They are both unable to fly.

**Hint** Compare the ostrich and the emperor penguin to see how they are the same.

2. Which of the following is one way these two passages are different?
   A. Only the first passage uses numbers as supporting details.
   B. Only the second passage talks about what the animals eat.
   C. Only the second passage uses numbers as supporting details.
   D. Only the second passage talks about where the animals live.

**Hint** Reread the passages. Think about the details in the passages.

3. How are the ostrich and the emperor penguin different?

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**Hint** Reread the passages. Think about how the two animals are different.
Clues to the Past

No one has ever seen a living dinosaur. So how do scientists learn about them? Paleontologists research the things that dinosaurs left behind. They look for fossils, the hardened remains or traces of animals and plants that lived a long time ago. They study fossils for clues about how dinosaurs lived.

For many years, scientists thought that dinosaurs hatched from eggs. But no one knew for sure until 1869. In that year, some fossil dinosaur eggs were found in France. Since then, many more fossil dinosaur eggs have been discovered elsewhere, including in the United States and China. These fossils show us that some dinosaurs built nests, and they give us clues about how those dinosaurs lived.

Millions of years ago, dinosaurs left droppings on the ground. Over time, the droppings turned into fossils. Today, by studying these fossil droppings, we can tell whether a dinosaur ate grass, fish, or meat.

Dinosaurs no longer exist, but they never really disappeared. We can learn plenty of things about them by studying the clues they left behind!
Scientists Who Study the Past

Have you ever read about people of long ago? Books tell you how they lived. You can also learn what the people were like. Archaeologists are scientists who study past human life and culture.

Howard Carter, an English archaeologist, made a great find in 1922. He studied ancient Egypt. After years of work, he found King Tut’s tomb. King Tut was a king in ancient Egypt. The king died at eighteen. His body went through a special process. It was wrapped in cloth. King Tut’s body became a mummy. This mummy was in the tomb. There was also treasure in the tomb, such as golden chairs and the king’s jewelry stored in magnificent boxes. A bed, a temple, and food were left inside the tomb. People are still amazed to see these things today.

Howard Carter and other archaeologists showed that the past has much to teach us. However, our interest should not let us forget that it is very important to respect the past. Luckily for us, archaeologists today do care. They help us understand what the world was like long ago.
Lesson 18: Compare and Contrast Informational Texts

Answer the following questions.

1. What do the two passages have in common?
   A. Both passages give a name of a specific scientist.
   B. Both passages tell about the work of the scientists.
   C. Both passages tell about King Tut.
   D. Both passages tell about Howard Carter.

2. Which of the following is one way the two passages are different?
   A. Only the first passage tells about what scientists do.
   B. Only the first passage gives the name of a specific scientist.
   C. Only the second passage gives the name of a specific scientist.
   D. Only the second passage talks about the past.

3. According to the passages, how are paleontologists and archaeologists alike?
   A. They both study people.
   B. They both study tombs.
   C. They both study dinosaurs.
   D. They both study the past.

4. Which one of these would BEST compare with the second passage?
   A. a detective who solves an important case
   B. a basketball player who wins a big game
   C. a poet who writes a beautiful poem
   D. a fireman who puts out a fire

5. How are paleontologists different from archaeologists?
The Cherokee Nation

The Cherokee nation is a Native American tribe whose territory used to consist of an area in the southeastern part of the United States. At one time, before explorers and colonists from Europe began to take over their land, the Cherokee nation had more than twenty-two thousand members and controlled about forty thousand square miles of parts of Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and South Carolina. They were a powerful people.

Life in the Cherokee nation took place in communities called towns. Towns were divided into two main groups: white and red. White towns were peace towns, while red towns were war towns. Each town had a chief in charge of day-to-day life; however, two supreme chiefs, one for white and one for red, had power over all of the towns’ chiefs.

A typical Cherokee town had a council house. Families lived in smaller dwellings, or houses. These homes were like log cabins, but they had no windows and only a single door. There was a hole in the roof for smoke to escape, since they used fire inside. The council house also had a fire burning, known as a sacred fire. In this house, all men and women of the town would meet to discuss issues facing the town.

The Cherokee nation had a system that worked well for them. Despite having some powerful members, everyone had a chance to speak his or her mind. This helped make life in the Cherokee towns harmonious.
Sequoyah

The Cherokee was a large and powerful Native American nation that lived in the southeast long ago. One of the most important members of that tribe was a man named Sequoyah. Sequoyah was born around 1775 and was a Cherokee during the time when settlers from Europe had begun to move into Cherokee territory.

Sequoyah was a talented man. He worked as a silversmith and a painter, and he was also a fierce warrior. However, Sequoyah’s greatest accomplishment was creating a system of writing for the Cherokee. He realized that the European settlers had an advantage over the Cherokee because they could write on paper. The settlers used this to write treaties to convince the Cherokee to give up their land. He wanted to find a way for the Cherokee to communicate with each other through writing.

Sequoyah experimented with different styles of writing. At first, he used pictographs to represent the Cherokee language. Then he began to include letters from other languages including English and ancient Greek. Eventually, he made eighty-six separate symbols that represented all of the syllables of the Cherokee language.

At first, Sequoyah was not sure that the Cherokee nation would want to use his writing system. Eventually, though, he convinced his people that this system would be simple enough to learn and use. When the Cherokee began teaching his writing in schools, Sequoyah knew it was a success. He had invented a brand new way for the Cherokee to communicate!
Answer the following questions.

6. What information is in the first paragraph of the first passage but NOT the second passage?
   A. The Cherokee were powerful.
   B. The tribe was located in the southeast.
   C. The Cherokee are a Native American nation.
   D. The Cherokee controlled a large area of land.

7. According to both passages, what caused the Cherokee to lose their land?
   A. not having a written language
   B. European settlers moving in
   C. the Cherokee fighting with each other
   D. the council voting to move

8. What new information would BEST fit in BOTH passages?
   A. The Cherokee used the writing system to communicate between towns.
   B. Sequoyah’s daughter helped him create his writing system.
   C. Outacite was the name of one of the white chiefs.
   D. Sequoyah’s name was given to giant redwood trees.

9. What is one detail that is in the last paragraph of BOTH passages?
   A. The Cherokee were good communicators.
   B. The Cherokee writing system spread throughout the tribe.
   C. The Cherokee nation had powerful members.
   D. The Cherokee had schools.
10. How are the two passages different from each other? Use text evidence to support your answer.