

Developing Skills for Comparing Points of View

Cluster 3 page 81

How can you develop a strong comparison of points of view?

To strengthen your skill at comparing points of view, use the following three steps. You will see them in action one by one on the following screens.

Step 1: Compare how authors treat the same or similar topics.

Step 2: Identify the details each author includes and emphasizes.

Step 3: Compare the points of view of the authors.

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Step 1: Compare how authors treat the same or similar topics.

Compare only items with broad similarities.

- Comparing short stories about justice, with one set in the United States and one set in China, might be useful because you can highlight the differences in similar items.
- Comparing a poem about justice in ancient Greece with a magazine article about a musical group named Justice may not be useful because the topics are so different.

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Directions: Which of the two could be compared most usefully?

- an article by a historian describing how the Puritans in Massachusetts Bay Colony decided to punish or release criminals
- a novel about what happens when a judge in Arizona in 1888 frees a man convicted of robbery
- a magazine article for parents about how to respond to a disobedient child

The views of the historian and the novelist are both about justice as it applies to people convicted of crimes.

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Step 2: Identify the details each author includes and emphasizes.

Writers select details about their topic to highlight particular points. Compare these two descriptions of the same event.

- The woman knew she could receive a harsh punishment, but she was willing to risk it to feed her starving child. She felt fortunate when she heard that she would not.
- The king was angry enough to punish the woman harshly because he felt embarrassed by what she had done while his cousin was visiting. However, he was also merciful enough to order a light punishment.

Both descriptions are accurate. However, the first one focuses on the woman and explains why she broke the law. The second one focuses on the king and explains why he was angry but merciful.

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Directions: In 1974, President Richard Nixon was accused of various types of corruption in what became known as the Watergate Scandal. Faced with mounting evidence of wrong-doing, Nixon resigned, the only president ever to do so. The new president, Gerald Ford, soon pardoned Nixon. The pardon was very controversial at the time and remains so today.

Use a chart similar to the one on the next screen to compare the two selections that follow it.

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Detail	Kennedy	Noah
View of the pardon		
View of Nixon's actions		
Dangers facing country		
Opinion of Ford		

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Senator Edward Kennedy

At a time of national turmoil, America was fortunate that it was Gerald Ford who took the helm of the storm-tossed ship of state. Unlike many of us at the time, President Ford recognized that the nation had to move forward, and could not do so if there was a continuing effort to prosecute former President Nixon. So President Ford made a courageous decision, one that historians

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now say cost him his office [Ford lost in the 1976 election], and he pardoned Richard Nixon. I was one of those who spoke out against his action then. But time has a way of clarifying past events, and now we see that President Ford was right. His courage and dedication to our country made it possible for us to begin the process of healing and put the tragedy of Watergate behind us.'

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Journalist Timothy Noah

Why was Ford wrong to pardon Nixon? Mainly because it set a bad precedent. Nixon had not yet been indicted, let alone convicted, of any crime. It's never a good idea to pardon somebody without at least finding out first what you're pardoning him for. How can you possibly weigh the quality of mercy against

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considerations of justice? . . . If Ford hadn't issued the pardon, would Nixon have stood trial, or perhaps even been sent to jail? If so, his successors might have learned the valuable lesson that presidents are not above the law.

Timothy Noah, "Why Pardoning Nixon Was Wrong," Slate.com

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Detail	Kennedy	Noah
View of the pardon	“right”	“wrong”
View of Nixon’s actions	“tragedy”	maybe a “crime;” deserved a “trial”
Dangers facing country	resignation caused “turmoil;” country needed immediate “healing”	pardon set “bad precedent;” country needed “justice” for future
Opinion of Ford	was “courageous” because pardon cost him reelection	missed a chance to teach a “valuable lesson”

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Step 3: Compare the points of view of the authors.

Based on the details that the writers include, summarize how they differ on Ford's pardon of Nixon.

Kennedy believes that Ford was correct to pardon Nixon because the country was in turmoil and Ford needed to act for the immediate good of the country. Noah thinks Ford was wrong because Nixon may have committed crimes and Ford missed an opportunity to provide a valuable lesson for future presidents.