

Developing Skills for Comparing Points of View

Cluster 2 page 61

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

To strengthen your skill at comparing points of view, use three strategies. You will see them in action here, one by one.

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

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

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

Developing Skills for Comparing Points of View

Cluster 2 page 61

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

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

Compare only items with broad similarities.

- Comparing the hamburgers at two restaurants will highlight the differences in similar items.
- Comparing the hamburgers at one restaurant with the lasagna at another may not be very useful because the items are so different.

Developing Skills for Comparing Points of View

Cluster 2 page 61

Directions: In this group of three points of view, which two could be compared most usefully?

Group A

- a soldier’s account of the Battle of Gettysburg
- Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address” given on the occasion of dedicating a cemetery to fallen soldiers
- Gary Paulsen’s historical fiction story “Gettysburg”

Response for Group A

It would be most useful to compare a soldier’s account of the battle (a primary source) with Paulsen’s work of historical fiction.

Developing Skills for Comparing Points of View

Cluster 2 page 61

Directions: In this group of three points of view, which two could be compared most usefully?

Group B

- Robert E. Lee's personal journals of the Civil War
- Frederick Douglass's view of slavery
- Horace Porter's eyewitness account of Lee surrendering to General Grant

Response for Group B

It would be most useful to compare Lee's view of the surrender with that of Porter, an outside observer.

Developing Skills for Comparing Points of View

Cluster 2 page 61

Directions: In this group of three viewpoints, which two could be compared most usefully?

Group C

- a letter to the editor from a draft rioter
- correspondence about the draft from Lincoln to the governor of New York
- an entry from Wikipedia about the draft riots

Response for Group C

The letter from the draft rioter and the correspondence from President Lincoln can be compared and contrasted more effectively than a Wikipedia article, which will have a more objective point of view.

Developing Skills for Comparing Points of View

Cluster 2 page 61

Directions: Compare the topics in the three passages on this slide and the following one. Which two do you think share enough broad similarities to be useful in comparing?

Group D

James McPherson from *What They Fought For 1861–1865*

... why did the Yankees keep fighting? ... Confederates who said that they fought for the same goals as their forebears of 1776 would have been surprised by the intense conviction of the Northern soldiers that they were upholding the legacy of the American Revolution.

Developing Skills for Comparing Points of View

Cluster 2 page 61

Abraham Lincoln from “The Gettysburg Address” (page 77)

... we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Bruce Catton, “Reflections on the Civil War” (pages 29–36)

Both armies contained a number of very ardent teenagers who had lied about their age in order to get into the army in the first place.

Developing Skills for Comparing Points of View

Cluster 2 page 61

Group D Response

The excerpts from McPherson and Lincoln are about the ideals that motivated the Union army to keep fighting the war. The excerpt from Catton is about a different issue: how teenagers lied about their age in order to become soldiers. So, it makes the most sense to compare the excerpts from McPherson and Lincoln.

Developing Skills for Comparing Points of View

Cluster 2 page 61

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

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

Read the passages by McPherson and Lincoln again on the next screen. This time, note the details that each author includes and emphasizes.

Developing Skills for Comparing Points of View

Cluster 2 page 61

Abraham Lincoln from “The Gettysburg Address” (page 77)

... we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

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Developing Skills for Comparing Points of View

Cluster 2 page 61

Strategy 2 Response

Both excerpts address the North's motivation for fighting the Civil War. Lincoln's description of government "of the people, by the people, for the people" is a reference to the democracy that was born in 1776. McPherson notes that the soldiers fighting in the fields envisioned themselves as protectors of the freedoms fought for during the American Revolution.

Developing Skills for Comparing Points of View

Cluster 2 page 61

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

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

Read the passages by Lincoln and McPherson again. This time, note how the details selected by the author indicate the author's viewpoint about motivations for fighting the Civil War.

Developing Skills for Comparing Points of View

Cluster 2 page 61

Abraham Lincoln from “The Gettysburg Address” (page 77)

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Developing Skills for Comparing Points of View

Cluster 2 page 61

Strategy 3 Response

Lincoln's point of view is that the North is fighting to preserve democracy in the United States of America.

McPherson's point of view is that both Northern and Southern soldiers believed they were fighting to uphold freedom and human rights, just like the soldiers in the American Revolution.

Developing Skills for Comparing Points of View

A chart can help organize information comparing two authors. Create a chart using three steps.

1. Assign a column to each author. In this case, the authors are

Lincoln

McPherson

Developing Skills for Comparing Points of View

Cluster 2 page 61

	Lincoln	McPherson

Developing Skills for Comparing Points of View

2. Assign a row to each element you want to compare:

General Issue

Precise Topic

Details

Point of View

Developing Skills for Comparing Points of View

Cluster 2 page 61

	Lincoln	McPherson
General Issue		
Precise Topic		
Details		
Point of View		

Developing Skills for Comparing Points of View

Cluster 2 page 61

	Lincoln	McPherson
General Issue	Motivations for the North to fight the war	Motivations for both sides to fight the war
Precise Topic	Why the Union government was motivated to fight	Why the soldiers in the field fought

Developing Skills for Comparing Points of View

Cluster 2 page 61

	Lincoln	McPherson
Details	Democracy is at stake.	Soldiers from both sides saw themselves as upholding the legacy of the American Revolution.
Point of View	True democracy gives rights to people of all races and colors.	Both sides believed their version of democracy was the right one.