

# MPC English & Study Skills Center

## Comparison: Sample Point by Point Essay

<p>Introduce both items of comparison and state a thesis at the end that makes a point about the two.</p>	<p>All people experience changes in their lives as they grow older. Some people are afraid of those changes and try to keep their lives the same. They live in the same place with the same people and do the same things. I was never one for sameness. I always wanted to see the world. I grew up on a farm in northern Idaho, near a small town. I lived like a free little native, running barefoot in the fields and trees, surrounded by mountains. California was another world. At 18, I moved to San Francisco to go to school. The woods and mountains were replaced with trees and buildings. I put on shoes and set out to learn about the new world I'd moved into. I got some surprises. My old life was much less complicated than my new life.</p>
<p>Make a point of comparison for each topic and then write about first one item of the comparison and then the other. In longer essays, each half of the comparison is a separate paragraph (as in this essay). In a short essay, they may be combined in one paragraph. A transition separates the two halves of the comparison (different from, in contrast, on the other hand, etc.)</p>	<p>First, the rules of life were different in Idaho from those in California. In Idaho, I trusted everyone. There were no locks on our doors. Strangers were welcomed without questions or fears. Because the winters were harsh in Idaho and the roads were often closed, my parents used to rent a small apartment in town for us. Whoever needed or wanted to stay in town just stayed there. I didn't like to miss school, so I often stayed there when the roads were closed. Sometimes, when I was eight or nine years old, I would stay in town for a week or more at a time by myself. Mom always left money in the cupboard, so I just climbed up and got some money and went to Safeway or the Pastime Cafe. No one seemed surprised to see a little girl by herself. The people at the store helped me find what I wanted. The waitresses at the Pastime always gave me a big dessert, and the little old woman down the hall used to tap on my door to invite me over for cookies and TV. My parents never worried about me, and I never even thought about being afraid. The world I knew was safe, and the people in it were kind. If I needed help, I could ask almost anyone. There were a few town drunks, but almost no crime and no drugs.</p> <p>In San Francisco, in contrast to Idaho, I soon learned that I was not to trust anyone. Every door was locked. Nobody trusted strangers. When I first went downtown in San Francisco, I smiled and said "hello" to everyone. People often answered me, but they did it with very strange looks on their faces. Some of the other students decided I needed protection because I didn't have enough brains to survive on my own in the city. They told me not to look at people and not to talk to strangers. They showed me how to hold my purse so that it would be hard to steal. After awhile, I noticed that people really weren't the same. They didn't look at me when they walked down the street; they looked through me. When I tried to tell a young woman on the bus how beautiful her baby was, she glared at me, tightened her arms around her baby, and turned away. She was afraid of me. Her baby was growing up in a world</p>

## MPC English & Study Skills Center

	<p>of locks and strangers whom she needed to fear. The streets seemed full of drunks, addicts, and thieves. I realized I needed to be afraid of strangers, too, to protect myself.</p>
<p>Continue with points of comparison—usually at least three points for an essay.</p>	<p>Next, the sounds were different in Idaho from those in San Francisco. In Idaho, the sounds were those typical of a farm: the barking of dogs, the mooing of the cows, the whistling of wind in the trees. The sounds of the night were always my favorite. At sundown, the coyotes started to howl, and the sound echoed eerily from the surrounding forests and hills. The frogs answered with a cacophony of croaks from the creek at the bottom of the hill, and the crickets added to the noise. The cattle and the dog joined in, too. If I listened quietly, I could hear the wind whistle around the corner of the house. Sometimes, the annoying buzz of a mosquito would add to the sound mix. The air was alive with sound, but the sounds were those of nature. I could listen or not listen because the sounds weren't intrusive. Even in town, the rare sound of a siren only meant that the deputy was on his way home to dinner and was signaling his wife to set the table.</p> <p>In San Francisco, my ears were assaulted by the sounds of the city: the honking of cars, yelling of people, and wailing of sirens. My first night in the city was a horror! I couldn't sleep all night. My dorm room was across the street from St. Francis Memorial Hospital, right in the middle of the city. The emergency room faced the dorm. All night long, I could hear the ambulances and the sirens as they raced to the emergency entrance. I could hear the ambulance attendants talking to the nurses. I could hear the cars going by incessantly, braking and accelerating with the change of the traffic light on the corner. I couldn't hear myself think! This was not pleasant background sounds of nature; it was intrusive, loud, human-made noise that was inescapable. I learned to fight noise with noise: my stereo against the outside world.</p> <p>Last, the people seemed totally different in Idaho from those in San Francisco. (This is not an exaggeration. They were a different species altogether.) In Idaho, people were pretty much the same—color-wise and everything-else-wise. My father was a typical "blue collar" person (except his collar was usually green). He was a farmer and drove a school bus to make ends meet. He wore blue overalls over black work pants and a dark green shirt—everyday. He had one suit in his entire life. He wore it to weddings and funerals. He also had one tie and one white shirt. My mother made her own clothes and mine, too, until I got old enough to make my own, so everything had a homemade, flowered-print sort of look. People worked, went to church, cooked, ate, and lived very similar lives. They didn't beg on the streets, and they didn't appear to be confused about their genders, at least not in public.</p> <p>In San Francisco, on the other hand, the people were a</p>

## MPC English & Study Skills Center

	<p>revelation! There were people in uniforms, in suits, in rags—all kinds of people. On my first walk down Market street, I saw beggars in filthy clothes sitting on the sidewalks with signs, “Help me, I’m hungry.” There was also a blind man playing an accordion, with a can for donations in front of him. Then, there were the men with makeup . . . <u>not that there’s anything wrong with that!</u>. However, I’d never seen a man wear makeup; I didn’t even know there were men who might <u>want</u> to wear makeup. I was completely confused as to why both men and women, wearing hot pants, would be standing around on street corners in the cold San Francisco weather. It seemed like a strange fashion statement to make. Added to that, there were Asians, and African Americans, and East Indians, and Greeks, and Russians, and Mexicans, and everything else. The people were confusing, fascinating, amazing, and truly wonderful!</p>
In the conclusion, review the main points and reiterate the thesis, but in different words	<p>I’ve been off of the farm for a long time now, and I can appreciate and value the differences between Idaho and San Francisco. Idaho was a terrific place to grow up. I could run the hills feeling safe and in tune with nature. It was, in many ways, an idyllic life. However, it was a sheltered life. There is much to be gained from diversity. San Francisco opened my eyes and my mind to so many possibilities. I certainly became more flexible and more accepting of difference. Over time, I learned to feel as much at home in the chaos of the city as I did in the peace of the country.</p>