



Are you ready to write Touchstone 2.1?

The sample below provides an example of an essay in the proficient to advanced range. As you read through the essay, notice how the writer employs techniques characteristic of comparison/contrast writing in the informative mode.

Angel Martinez

English Composition I

January 15, 2018

The Tale of Two Cities

Many cities around the world have been built along a river. Some “twin” cities have developed along both banks of a single river. The cities of Buda and Pest, divided by the Danube River in Hungary, became the city of Budapest in 1873. Other twin cities, such as Minneapolis and St. Paul in Minnesota, have retained a river, in this case, the Mississippi, as a boundary between two separate cities. While the locations of Budapest and Minneapolis are relatively even on a world latitude scale (Budapest is somewhat north and east of Minneapolis, more closely aligned with Seattle), the cities have distinct differences in weather, cost of living, and population demographics.

Comment [SL1]: Good choice of topic. It isn't too big or too small of a topic, and there are enough similarities or differences between the two to explore within an essay.

Comment [SL2]: Nice job connecting the subjects in a meaningful way. Though the details you've provided, we can see the connection between the subjects and why they work well for this type of essay.

Comment [SL3]: This is a detailed thesis statement clearly showing that the two subjects will be contrasted as opposed to compared. The thesis tells us what the two subjects being contrasted are (the cities of Budapest and Minneapolis), as well as the points of contrast that will be explored in the essay (weather, cost of living, and population demographics).

Spring begins in April in Budapest when sunshine is abundant and temperatures rise quickly. Summers are long and warm, with an average temperature of 77 degrees Fahrenheit. Humidity is low for the most part. Temperatures remain in the high 60s through mid-November, but rain becomes more frequent in the fall. Finally, the winter season in Budapest brings temperatures that, on average, remain in the 30-40 degree Fahrenheit range. Snow falls, but in small amounts. The coldest month is January with an average temperature of 30 degrees Fahrenheit. There is also frequent fog in the winter months.

Minneapolis, **on the other hand**, is less temperate than Budapest. Spring in Minneapolis arrives later on average and is shortened. It isn't unusual to have snow in April, nor is it unusual to have snow in October in Minneapolis. The three summer months of June, July, and August are humid and see almost half of the year's precipitation in the form of sometimes violent thunderstorms. Tornadoes can also occur in the spring and summer months in Minneapolis. Autumn is often brief and characterized by blue skies and cooling temperatures. Winters can be brutal with snow, sleet, freezing rain, ice, and blizzard conditions. The average temperature for the month of January in Minneapolis is 4 degrees Fahrenheit.

The cost of living in Budapest is much lower than the cost of living in Minneapolis. Of course, wages are lower too – the major industries are manufacturing and tourism - but it is quite easy to live well on an average salary in the city. For example, rent for a one-bedroom apartment near the City Center costs an average of 138,000 forints, or around \$532 in U.S. dollars. Monthly access to the internet costs

Comment [SL4]: Good use of a contrast transitional phrase here.

about \$18, and a bottle of mid-range domestic wine costs only \$5. Gasoline costs more in Budapest, as do monthly utilities such as heat and water.

Comment [SL5]: Add a transitional word or phrase here, such as "However," to more clearly indicate that this line is a contrast between the cost of gasoline/utilities in Budapest and the cost of gasoline/utilities in Minneapolis.

The cost of living in Minneapolis is about 5% higher than the U.S. national average, but still much lower than in other U.S. major cities like Chicago or Los Angeles. Unemployment is low and the economy is diverse, with no single industry dominating the market. Monthly rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Minneapolis is between \$1400 and \$1700, with utilities an average of an additional \$150 a month. The cost for access to the Internet varies by speed, but rounds out to about \$45 per month. A bottle of good domestic wine will cost you around \$15 in Minneapolis. Gas prices change almost daily but average around \$2.50 per gallon. Drivers in Budapest pay almost \$5 per gallon.

Comment [SL6]: I would recommend using a transitional word or phrase, such as "In contrast," here to more clearly indicate that you're contrasting the prices between the two cities.

The population of Budapest is approximately 1.74 million people. When taking into account the entire metropolitan and commuter area, this number climbs to 3.3 million. The city itself has experienced negative growth over the past 30 years, falling from a population of 2.2 million in 1989. The vast majority of residents in Budapest are Hungarian by nationality: 84%. Other nationalities include Romans, which make up about 3% of the population, Germans who account for 1%, and Slovaks, Romanians, and Croats, who make up the remainder.

Minneapolis and its surrounding communities have a similar population to metropolitan Budapest – approximately 3.3 million inhabitants. However, population continues to grow in Minneapolis and has increased every year since 1990. Minneapolis is also much more diverse than Budapest. Whites (mainly of Scandinavian and German descent) make up 64% of the population, African Americans are nearly 20%, Hispanics

Comment [SL7]: Good use of a contrast word here to indicate that Minneapolis' population is growing, which contrasts with the population decline in Budapest.

stand at 10%, and Asians around 6%. Minneapolis is also known as a gay-friendly community, while homosexuality is quite hidden in Budapest.

Both Minneapolis and Budapest are cities built along the banks of a major river. Although Buda and Pest joined to form one city along the Danube, the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis have maintained separate governments and identities on either side of the Mississippi. Budapest and Minneapolis are comparable in size, but differ in climate, cost of living, and demographic makeup. Both cities offer much for the traveler, whether it's historical castles and ruin pubs in Budapest or peaceful lakes and greenery in Minneapolis. Combined visits for both cities reached a high of 34 million last year, and 34 million people can't be wrong!

(812 words)

Comment [SL8]: Nice job on the conclusion here. You recap the essay's thesis and main points, and expand on the topic slightly by discussing tourism. This creates a sense of circular motion and gives a satisfying end to this essay.

Think About Your Writing

1. Did you use the point-by-point or block method to organize your body paragraphs? What made you decide to organize your essay in this way? (3-4 sentences) *Sophia says: Consider the ways a comparison/contrast essay can be organized. Which organization did you choose and why?*

For my essay, I choose the point-by-point method of organization. I felt that either method of organization would have worked well. However, the contrasts between the two cities in regards to weather, cost of living, and population demographics seemed like they were a little more obvious and easier to point out to the reader when I used the point-by-point method. It helped me to emphasize the contrasts between the two cities, one point at a time.

2. In what ways did writing a comparison/contrast essay differ from the narrative essay you wrote in Touchstone 1? Give specific examples. (3-4 sentences) *Sophia says: Consider how the structure, point of view, and purpose of the two essays differ.*

Writing a comparison/contrast essay felt very different from writing a narrative essay. First of all, when writing a narrative, there was no real formalized structure to follow and I didn't have to create a thesis statement. The comparison/contrast essay has a much more defined structure and does require a thesis statement. It follows a more academic approach to writing as well, and maintains an objective tone with the purpose of informing the audience of the differences between the two subjects. In my narrative essay, it was just the opposite. I incorporated dialogue, first person language, and my own ideas since my purpose was to tell a story.

3. Remember that the writing process is a recursive process, and your first draft of an essay is rarely your last. What part of the draft did you struggle with? (3-4 sentences) *Sophia says: Think about how you could improve the draft if you continued the writing process with revision and editing.*

Overall I really enjoyed writing a comparison/contrast essay. However, there were a few elements that I struggled with a little bit. It was sometimes difficult to maintain an objective tone in the essay. Since I have lived in both cities, I have a strong connection to them, and refraining from injecting my own opinions was difficult. It was also difficult to determine which specific points of contrast I wanted to focus on since there are so many similarities and differences between the two cities that are very interesting.

SCORING APPEARS ON THE NEXT PAGE

SCORING for Sample Touchstone 2.1

The sample essay was evaluated according to the Touchstone 2.1 Rubric, which considers elements of a comparison/contrast essay, the thesis statement, organization, style and tone, conventions, and responses to the "Think About Your Writing" questions. Each rubric area is evaluated according to the performance level.

Elements of a Comparison/Contrast Essay

Overall the author does a nice job making the connection between subjects very clear, and the organization used is appropriate for a comparison/contrast essay. There are a few opportunities; however, in which transitional words or phrases can be used to more effectively convey contrasts between the two cities.

Area Score: Proficient 13/15

Thesis Statement

The thesis statement, "While the locations of Budapest and Minneapolis are relatively even on a world latitude scale (Budapest is somewhat north and east of Minneapolis, more closely aligned with Seattle), the cities have distinct differences in weather, cost of living, and population demographics," is clear and effectively communicates the two subjects being contrasted (Minneapolis and Budapest) as well as the three points of contrast that will be explored in the essay (weather, cost of living, and population demographics).

Area Score: Advanced 10 /10

Organization

The essay is well organized, and contains all of the required elements of a comparison/contrast essay: an introductory paragraph, a thesis statement, adequate body paragraphs organized in the point-by-point method, and an effective concluding paragraph.

Area Score: Advanced 10 /10

Style and Tone

The writing maintains an objective tone throughout, appropriate for informative writing. A wide variety of sentence structures and thoughtful word choices contribute to the overall style and tone of the essay.

Area Score: Advanced 5/5

Conventions

There are few/no errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, formatting, or usage.

Area Score: Advanced 5/5

Think About Your Writing

It is clear that the writer thoroughly and thoughtfully answered the questions. All questions meet or exceed response length guidelines.

Area Score: Advanced 5/5

TOTAL SCORE: ADVANCED 48/50