

**COMPARATIVE  
ANALYSIS  
OF POETRY**



# INTRODUCTION



# COMPARISONS IN LITERATURE

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**Comparisons in literature may be based on CONTENT and FORM.**

**A comparative study focuses on similarities and differences**

**Compare - similarities**

**Contrast - differences**

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**Avoid comparisons based on the poet's biography / career / time period. These may inform our readings but are not a basis for comparison.**

# BASIS FOR COMPARISON (1)

## CONTENT

### Theme of the poem

What is the broad subject of the poem (death, time, nature, love)

### Persona

Who is speaking in the poem? (Is there a character or a general point of view? )

**Unlike prose, poetry has more elements for comparison in form than content.**

## **Poetic type**

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- **sonnet, ballad,  
ode, lyric**
- **blank/ free verse**

## **Word choice / rhyme scheme**

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- **modern/ancient  
terms**
- **regular / irregular  
rhyme**
- **repetition**

## **Literary devices**

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- **simile/ metaphor**
- **personification**
- **allusion/ symbols**

# LITERARY DEVICES:



**THESE ARE WHAT (MAINLY) DISTINGUISH ONE POEM FROM ANOTHER**

Simile : a comparison using like or as

Metaphor: a comparison NOT using like or as

Personification: comparing inanimate object/emotion/ animal to a person

# ALLUSION AND SYMBOLS



**ALLUSIONS ARE REFERENCES TO SOMETHING ELSE:  
THIS CAN BE CULTURAL OR HISTORICAL.**

**SYMBOLS ARE THINGS WHICH STAND FOR SOMETHING  
ELSE.**

## **Two poems for comparison**

**Both of these are poems by Emily Dickinson so that the comparison can focus on the text.**

**'There came a Wind like a Bugle' (1891)**

**'There's a Certain Slant of Light' (1890)**



**Study the poem**  
**“There came a Wind like a Bugle”**  
**and identify the type of poem**  
**and the rhyme scheme**

**Study the poem**  
**“There’s a Certain Slant of Light”**  
**and identify the type of poem**  
**and the rhyme scheme**

What in general is being described here?

Poem A describes a wind

Poem B describes the light

**Both are therefore concerned with some element of nature and its effect.**

# Which adjectives are used?

A: strange, ominous, wild

B: internal, imperial (more nouns)

**What are the effects of having more /less adjectives?**

**How would that compare to nouns/verbs?**

# Identify similes / metaphors:

A: "a wind like a bugle"

B: "like the heft of Cathedral Tunes"

**What are the effects of using a simile rather than a metaphor?**

# Are there other literary devices in the poem?

"A strange mob of panting trees"

"the look of Death"

(personification)

# **WHICH BASIS WOULD WE CHOOSE?**

Develop an argument based on the similarities:

description of nature as a dangerous / powerful force.

# **DEVICES CAN BE MENTIONED AS POINTS OF COMPARISON.**

***simile/ metaphor /allusion/  
adjectives/ length of line all  
contribute to the overall TONE.***

***Tone can be hard to define but it  
helps to read the poem aloud***

***another concern is with 'mood' -  
what effect do the poems have on  
the reader?***

***Again reading aloud can help.***



# Steps to plan a comparative analysis

Poem A:  
'The Tyger'

Poems are given to the students in the exam.

An element of comparison is identified.  
In this example: the presentation of animals

Poem B:  
'Earthy Anecdote'

# Brainstorm the ideas around that concept of animals:

## **Feline**

'tyger'

'fire-cat'

Blake's spelling is a normal variant and there were no tigers in England at this time.

A 'fire-cat' is probably a cougar or mountain lion.

## **Beauty**

"burning  
bright"

"bright eyes"

the adjectives are meant to describe the animals as beautiful and awe-inspiring.

## **Strength/ power**

Poem A - lines 10-11

Poem B - Line 3 and line 15

## **Mystery**

Poem A - series of questions but no answer

Poem B: identity is unclear - doesn't exist.

Now we have the content level comparison, we can move on to the formal level.

### **Symbol**

Tiger can be a symbol of creativity  
Firecat as a symbol of wildfire

### **Metaphor**

poetry - the 'feet' of the tiger  
predator - wild fire

### **Allusion**

A: God (Creator)  
Icarus / Prometheus  
  
B: Native American legend

### **Imagery**

fire - both creative (blacksmith / forged) and destructive (bristled)

these two overlap

## **An introductory paragraph:**

The tiger in Poem A and the firecat in poem B are both presented as powerful and threatening. Both are feline and both are described using fire imagery, "burning bright" and "bright eyes" for example. However the tiger is presented as more of a creative achievement whereas the firecat is seen as destructive.