Comparative Essay Workshop: Two texts, one argument

NBE3U, Unit 7: Independent Study and Final, Lesson 3. 75 minutes. Teacher lesson plan.

Lesson at a glance

A strong comparative essay doesn't describe two texts side by side. It uses each text to light up the other and makes an argument neither could make alone, while treating the authors and the communities they write from with care.

What students do: Students turn their Check-in 3 question into a comparative thesis, choose an integrated structure, study a model paragraph that weaves Johnson and Zitkála-Šá, practise comparative transitions, learn to cite Indigenous authors and Knowledge Keepers respectfully, and begin drafting their 1,200 to 1,500 word essay.

Curriculum expectations

Code	Students will…
D1.4	identify, sort, and order main ideas and supporting details for writing tasks, using a variety of strategies and selecting the organizational pattern best suited to the content and the purpose for writing
D2.7	produce revised drafts of a variety of texts, including increasingly complex texts, written to meet criteria identified by the teacher, based on the curriculum expectations and respecting First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communication styles
C1.5	extend their understanding of texts from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and, as appropriate, relevant texts from non-Indigenous sources, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, by making rich connections between the ideas in them and in other texts and to their own knowledge, experience, and insights

From The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies (2019), English: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices, Grade 11, University Preparation (NBE3U). A = First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Perspectives and Text Forms in Canada, B = Oral Communication, C = Reading and Literature Studies, D = Writing, E = Media Studies.

Learning goals and success criteria

Learning goals	Success criteria
• We are learning to plan and draft a comparative literary essay. • We are learning to write and cite with respect for First Nations, Métis and Inuit authors and communication styles.	• I can write a comparative thesis. • I can plan integrated paragraphs with evidence from both texts. • I can use comparative transitions. • I can name authors and Nations accurately and cite sources respectfully.

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Materials and preparation

- **Slides:** Comparative Essay Workshop deck.
- **Handouts:** Comparative Planner (page 1), Paragraph Weave (page 2).
- **Students bring:** Their book, journal, check-in pages and course text.

Lesson sequence

Time (min)	Part	Teacher	Students	Look for
0–10	**Thesis**	From question to thesis.	Write.	
10–25	**Structure**	Integrated vs block; plan.	Plan.	
25–45	**Paragraph weave**	Model and practise.	Practise.	Evidence from both.
45–55	**Writing with respect**	Names, Nations, citation.	Note.	
55–75	**Draft**	Begin drafting.	Write.	

Differentiation

- **Support:** Comparative paragraph frame.
- **ELL:** Transition word bank.
- **Challenge:** Address a counter-reading in one paragraph.

Assessment

Type	Tool	Purpose
Assessment for learning	Comparative Planner and draft	Organizing ideas (D1.4), revised drafts respecting communication styles (D2.7) and connections between texts (C1.5)

Comparative transitions and respect

- **Similarity:** Similarly, Likewise, Both… and…, In the same way
- **Difference:** Whereas, By contrast, Unlike…, However
- **Deepening:** Read alongside…, This sheds light on…, Together, the texts suggest…
- **Names:** The author's full name and Nation or community as they give it, then the surname.
- **Generalizing:** Write about this author and this book, not about “Indigenous people” as one group.

Teacher notes

- This course discusses colonization, residential schools and their effects. Some students and families carry this history personally. Support: Hope for Wellness Help Line (for Indigenous people across

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Canada, 24/7, by phone or online chat at hopeforwellness.ca; English and French, with Cree, Ojibway and Inuktut on request at certain times), 1-855-242-3310; Kids Help Phone, 1-800-668-6868 or text 686868; 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline (call or text 988); National Indian Residential School Crisis Line, 1-866-925-4419.

- Set the essay due date (usually one week later). Students cite their book's edition in MLA format.
- Citing Elders and Knowledge Keepers: if a student learned from an Elder, Knowledge Keeper or guest in Unit 4, they cite that teaching as more than “personal communication.” Lorisia MacLeod's templates (with NorQuest College's Indigenous Student Centre), published in KULA in 2021, include the person's Nation or community, treaty territory where applicable, where they live, the topic and the date. Always ask the person's permission before citing what they shared.
- Johnson, Zitkála-Šá and Eastman are historical writers (they died in 1913, 1938 and 1939). We read them as historical context: Indigenous writers who answered settler audiences a century ago. The course's contemporary voices are First Nations, Métis and Inuit creators chosen by the teacher.
- We strongly recommend reviewing this unit with your board's Indigenous education lead and, where possible, inviting a First Nations, Métis or Inuit Elder, Knowledge Keeper or guest speaker following your board's protocols (including offerings and honoraria). Local Nations' own sources come first.

Coming up

Lesson 4, ISU Seminar.

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