

## Essay Assignment 2: Compare & Contrast

### Deadlines and basic submission requirements:

- **Sat, May 28th:** Rough draft deadline. Upload as a .doc/x attachment to your workshop group before 11:59 pm. Carefully read these instructions for assignment requirements and grading criteria.
- **Wed, June 1st:** Detailed peer feedback deadline. Return feedback to each of your workshop group members before 11:59 pm (carefully read my directions in the peer workshop forum).
- **Sat, June 4th:** Final deadline. Submit along with the reflection as .pdfs to Moodle before 11:59 pm. Carefully read the final pages of these instructions for grading criteria.

### **Audience & purpose:**

Your audience is an academic one that includes your peers and I: intelligent, mature, scholarly people who attend or teach college; your job is to convince your reader by presenting your own well-reasoned literary interpretation.

**Note:** The genre and purpose for this paper differ from those of the first paper, so a more formal, objective, scholarly tone is appropriate. The sole focus of this paper is the text itself, *not* your personal experiences, so please avoid the first person singular (I, me, my, etc.) and especially avoid phrases such as “in my opinion” and “I believe.”

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### **Assignment details:**

- You must do a close reading (usually this means reading once for understanding and reading a second time for analysis) of Max Porter’s novel, *Grief is the Thing with Feathers*.

This is a compare (how are they alike) and contrast (how are they different) essay. The question: How do the different sections of **BOYS, DAD, & CROW** address loss, grief, and healing? How do they achieve their sameness and differences through literary elements such as: language, symbolism, dialogue, imagery, personification of the crow, form (notice how the style of writing, sentence type, white space or lack of white space differ from section to section), etc..

For this assignment, please write a 4-5 page, [MLA formatted](#) (meaning Times New Roman, 12 pt. Font, double-spaced, include appropriate page numbered header and MLA header) literary analysis, in the style of compare and contrast, using in-text citation (quotes from the text) and including an MLA formatted Works Cited page (the works cited page does **not** count in the minimum 4 full page length requirement).

For this essay you need at least 3 outside CREDIBLE & AUTHORITATIVE sources to help you backup your arguments, and you must include at least one quote from each in your essay. For literary analysis, these can be pulled from other analysis of the book or even

from book reviews that have been published in magazines and journals (do not include random book reviews from platforms like goodreads or instagram etc..) At least ONE of these sources must be found using the Clackamas library database and the linked library guide.

Your essay MUST have a clear thesis statement in your introduction (telling us what this essay is about, aka, what the argument you are making is).

You will find a variety of resources helpful for writing this analysis on Moodle, so be sure to read and view those carefully.

Please feel free to reach out to me via email or visit an office hour to discuss this! When you do, though, please come prepared—think about what you are struggling with/ideas you already have, and come prepared with talking points.

Your paper must be more than a book report—**do not summarize the novel or sections for more than a couple of sentences**. You need to hit at **analysis**—rather than focusing on what is happening, ask yourself “why is what is happening important to what the writer wants to express to me? How does that writer accomplish expressing that?” If you tell me something that happened in the sections, your next sentence needs to show me evidence of it and explain why that event or sentence or quote is important to your argument (how does it prove the thesis?).

To prepare, start by thinking about the elements in the story that you want to analyze, and then ask yourself these sorts of questions:

- How does the crow function in the different sections of the story? Is he concrete in some sections but abstract in the other?
- How does the style of writing (written in verse sometimes and in prose others) affect our understanding of grief/ loss / healing?
- How is the narration of the BOYS different from the narration of DAD or CROW? Especially given that DAD & CROW are singular, but boys is plural, meaning more than one person is narration?
- How does the personification of CROW change or stay the same from section to section? Is CROW sometimes an actual crow, while other times a stand in or sublimation of others? As in, does the crow, at times, function as the dead mother? Does he sometimes act in place, or as the grief stricken father?
- And—to all these ends—how does Porter use literary elements to convey these things in each section?

Remember, you are explaining and arguing to your reader how the author constructs this story— you are not telling them what happens in the story necessarily. You are telling them

why what happens is important to how the writer conveys grief, loss, and healing throughout the various sections.

Don't just jump through hoops on this one. In wrestling with these topics you are generating your critical thinking skills—your ability to evaluate evidence, judge it, present it, and synergize it into a unified, clear idea that you express to your reader clearly.

Remember—getting your ideas on paper is only half of the point. You are developing your ability to get your ideas out so that others understand clearly what you have to say and can understand your point. That is more challenging than how you may think of “writing a paper.” It requires contemplation, planning, evidence, organization, and attention to format, style, and grammar. You are showing me that you are developing these skills with this paper.

To that point, please **DO NOT go to any websites in order to “just get an idea of that the story is about.”** You and you alone must wrestle with trying to figure out how to explain the ways Porter constructs the story to grapple with these abstract concepts of grief, healing, and loss. Only after you have grappled with the story on your own should you look for outside sources to help back up your own thoughts on the story. I can help you via email and office hours, but I cannot help you if you plagiarize, accidentally or not. As much as lifting one idea or one line without proper citation and context is plagiarism. Luckily, you cannot steal if you do not go looking for it. Avoid the internet as a source of inspiration for this assignment—you do not need it for this paper.

**Important:** for further important information about literary analysis, refer to the handouts and video posted on Moodle.

**Documentation (see plagiarism note at the bottom of the page):**

- Place titles of books, plays, journals, newspapers, films, epic poems, etc. in italics (e.g. *Trifles*, *The Grapes of Wrath*; *The New England Journal of Medicine*);
  - Enclose titles of short stories, essays, articles, most poems, etc. in quotation marks (e.g. “The Yellow Wall-paper,” “I Stand Here Ironing.”).
  - Punctuate quotations carefully.
  - Use MLA parenthetical references for citations within the text. Be sure to cite the sources for all of your references, not just your direct quotations. Remember to cite page numbers wherever available.
  - Include a carefully formatted Works Cited page. Use MLA Style for all documentation.
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**Things to think about before submitting the final draft and reflection (these are the sorts of things I'll consider when I score the final draft):**



**Overall quality & critical thought:** Demonstrate careful reading, critical thinking, and an understanding of theme and other literary elements in the text(s) you reference. Avoid too much summary.



**Focus:** Focus the paper around a strong thesis (specific, debatable, clear, interesting, etc.).  
Underline the thesis statement.



**Presentation of ideas & support of thesis:** Ensure paragraphs are reasonably-sized, logically organized, and support the thesis in some way. Paragraphs should be focused and contain the elements discussed in lecture notes as P.I.E. (Evidence *must* include brief, relevant quotations from the text.)



**Revision:** Revise the final draft to meet the demands of audience, purpose, and genre. Think about big picture elements including support & idea development, etc.). **Avoid first person singular** (*I, me, in my opinion, I think, When I read the essay . . .* etc.) **and avoid announcing what you plan to do or say** (*In this paper I will discuss . . ., In conclusion . . ., etc.*). Give the paper a specific, relevant title. The paper must be no shorter than 3 full pages, not counting the works cited page.



**Polish:** Carefully proofread and edit the paper to eliminate errors/problems with wording, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Be clear and concise.



**Formatting and Citation:** Follow 9th edition MLA guidelines including quotation, parenthetical citation, signal phrases to introduce quotations, and the Works Cited page.

Here are the learning outcomes for the course that this assignment is addressing:

- Accurately read and respond, in discussion & in writing, to college level texts, and analyze them in detail, for both content and form.
- Independently create clearly written, thesis driven academic essays using a process that includes generating ideas, drafting, critiquing, revising, and polishing.
- Participate constructively and respectfully in discussions & writing groups; independently analyze and improve their own and others' writing.
- Using MLA formatting and a properly made works cited page.