

"The messages inherent in the action adventure programs are that males and females mostly participate in and do the same things, but that males are more important than females because they vastly outnumber them," said Gerding.

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"Tween programs, which are seen worldwide, put viewers at risk of developing skewed conceptions about gender-roles that may be limiting," said Signorielli.

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"We therefore advise the use of media literacy programs to help mitigate some of these potentially deleterious effects."

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FOR WRITING OR DISCUSSION

MyWritingLab

1. What is the thesis of this selection? How does the title reflect the thesis?
2. How does tween television portray girls? Men and boys?
3. Who did the research on which Nauert bases this selection? Are the researchers reliable? How do you know?
4. What message do the researchers believe the stereotypes are sending?
5. What is your view of how men and women are portrayed on your favorite television programs?

The comparison-contrast paper is especially effective as a means of writing about literature. When you examine one literary work along with another, the comparison often provides fresh insights into both works

Youthful Imagination: Two Stories for Comparison and Contrast

SHIRLEY JACKSON

Charles

The day my son Laurie started kindergarten he renounced corduroy overalls with bibs and began wearing blue jeans with a belt; I watched him go off the first morning with the older girl next door, seeing clearly that an era of my life was ended, my sweet-voiced nursery-school tot replaced by a long-trousered, swaggering character who forgot to stop at the corner and wave good-bye to me.

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He came home the same way, the front door slamming open, his cap on the floor, and the voice suddenly become raucous shouting, "Isn't anybody here?"

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3 At lunch he spoke insolently to his father, spilled his baby sister's milk, and remarked that his teacher said we were not to take the name of the Lord in vain.

4 "How was school today?" I asked, elaborately casual.

5 "All right," he said.

6 "Did you learn anything?" his father asked.

7 Laurie regarded his father coldly. "I didn't learn nothing," he said.

8 "Anything," I said. "Didn't learn anything."

9 "The teacher spanked a boy, though," Laurie said, addressing his bread and butter. "For being fresh," he added, with his mouth full.

10 "What did he do?" I asked. "Who was it?"

11 Laurie thought. "It was Charles," he said. "He was fresh. The teacher spanked him and made him stand in a corner. He was awfully fresh."

12 "What did he do?" I asked again, but Laurie slid off his chair, took a cookie, and left, while his father was still saying, "See here, young man."

13 The next day Laurie remarked at lunch, as soon as we sat down, "Well, Charles was bad again today." He grinned enormously and said, "Today Charles hit the teacher."

14 "Good heavens," I said, mindful of the Lord's name, "I suppose he got spanked again?"

15 "He sure did," Laurie said. "Look up," he said to his father.

16 "What?" his father said, looking up.

17 "Look down," Laurie said. "Look at my thumb. Gee you're dumb." He began to laugh insanely.

18 "Why did Charles hit the teacher?" I asked quickly.

19 "Because she tried to make him color with red crayons," Laurie said. "Charles wanted to color with green crayons so he hit the teacher and she spanked him and said nobody play with Charles but everybody did."

20 The third day—it was Wednesday of the first week—Charles bounced a see-saw on to the head of a little girl and made her bleed, and the teacher made him stay inside all during recess. Thursday Charles had to stand in a corner during story-time because he kept pounding his feet on the floor. Friday Charles was deprived of blackboard privileges because he threw chalk.

21 On Saturday I remarked to my husband, "Do you think kindergarten is too unsettling for Laurie? All this toughness, and bad grammar, and this Charles boy sounds like such a bad influence."

22 "It'll be all right," my husband said reassuringly. "Bound to be people like Charles in the world. Might as well meet them now as later."

23 On Monday Laurie came home late, full of news. "Charles," he shouted as he came up the hill; I was waiting anxiously on the front steps. "Charles," Laurie yelled all the way up the hill, "Charles was bad again."

24 "Come right in," I said, as soon as he came close enough. "Lunch is waiting."

25 "You know what Charles did?" he demanded, following me through the door. "Charles yelled so in school they sent a boy in from first grade to tell the teacher she had to make Charles keep quiet, and so Charles had to stay after school. And so all the children stayed to watch him."

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"What did he do?" I asked.

"He just sat there," Laurie said, climbing into his chair at the table. "Hi, Pop, y'old dust mop."

"Charles had to stay after school today," I told my husband. "Everyone stayed with him."

"What does Charles look like?" my husband asked Laurie. "What's his other name?"

"He's bigger than me," Laurie said. "And he doesn't have any rubbers and he doesn't ever wear a jacket."

Monday night was the first Parent-Teachers meeting, and only the fact that the baby had a cold kept me from going; I wanted passionately to meet Charles's mother. On Tuesday Laurie remarked suddenly, "Our teacher had a friend come to see her in school today."

"Charles's mother?" my husband and I asked simultaneously.

"Naaah," Laurie said scornfully. "It was a man who came and made us do exercises, we had to touch our toes. Look." He climbed down from his chair and squatted down and touched his toes. "Like this," he said. He got solemnly back into his chair and said, picking up his fork, "Charles didn't even do exercises."

"That's fine," I said heartily. "Didn't Charles want to do exercises?"

"Naaah," Laurie said. "Charles was so fresh to the teacher's friend he wasn't let do exercises."

"Fresh again?" I said.

"He kicked the teacher's friend," Laurie said. "The teacher's friend told Charles to touch his toes like I just did and Charles kicked him."

"What are they going to do about Charles, do you suppose?" Laurie's father asked him.

Laurie shrugged elaborately. "Throw him out of school, I guess," he said.

Wednesday and Thursday were routine; Charles yelled during story hour and hit a boy in the stomach and made him cry. On Friday Charles stayed after school again and so did all the other children.

With the third week of kindergarten Charles was an institution in our family; the baby was being a Charles when she cried all afternoon; Laurie did a Charles when he filled his wagon full of mud and pulled it through the kitchen; even my husband, when he caught his elbow in the telephone cord and pulled telephone, ashtray, and a bowl of flowers off the table, said, after the first minute, "Looks like Charles."

During the third and fourth weeks it looked like a reformation in Charles; Laurie reported grimly at lunch on Tuesday of the third week, "Charles was so good today the teacher gave him an apple."

"What?" I said, and my husband added warily, "You mean Charles?"

"Charles," Laurie said. "He gave the crayons around and he picked up the books afterward and the teacher said he was her helper."

"What happened?" I asked incredulously.

"He was her helper, that's all," Laurie said, and shrugged.

"Can this be true, about Charles?" I asked my husband that night. "Can something like this happen?"

"Wait and see," my husband said cynically. "When you've got a Charles to deal with, this may mean he's only plotting."

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49 He seemed to be wrong. For over a week Charles was the teacher's helper; each day he handed things out and he picked things up; no one had to stay after school.

50 "The P.T.A. meeting's next week again," I told my husband one evening. "I'm going to find Charles's mother there."

51 "Ask her what happened to Charles," my husband said. "I'd like to know."

52 "I'd like to know myself," I said.

53 On Friday of that week things were back to normal. "You know what Charles did today?" Laurie demanded at the lunch table, in a voice slightly awed. "He told a little girl to say a word and she said it and the teacher washed her mouth out with soap and Charles laughed."

54 "What word?" his father asked unwisely, and Laurie said, "I'll have to whisper it to you, it's so bad." He got down off his chair and went around to his father. His father bent his head down and Laurie whispered joyfully. His father's eyes widened.

55 "Did Charles tell the little girl to say *that*?" he asked respectfully.

56 "She said it *twice*," Laurie said. "Charles told her to say it *twice*."

57 "What happened to Charles?" my husband asked.

58 "Nothing," Laurie said. "He was passing out the crayons."

59 Monday morning Charles abandoned the little girl and said the evil word himself three or four times, getting his mouth washed out with soap each time. He also threw chalk.

60 My husband came to the door with me that evening as I set out for the P.T.A. meeting. "Invite her over for a cup of tea after the meeting," he said. "I want to get a look at her."

61 "If only she's there," I said prayerfully.

62 "She'll be there," my husband said. "I don't see how they could hold a P.T.A. meeting without Charles's mother."

63 At the meeting I sat restlessly, scanning each comfortable matronly face, trying to determine which one hid the secret of Charles. None of them looked to me haggard enough. No one stood up in the meeting and apologized for the way her son had been acting. No one mentioned Charles.

64 After the meeting I identified and sought out Laurie's kindergarten teacher. She had a plate with a cup of tea and a piece of chocolate cake; I had a plate with a cup of tea and a piece of marshmallow cake. We maneuvered up to one another cautiously, and smiled.

65 "I've been so anxious to meet you," I said. "I'm Laurie's mother."

66 "We're all so interested in Laurie," she said.

67 "Well, he certainly likes kindergarten," I said. "He talks about it all the time."

68 "We had a little trouble adjusting, the first week or so," she said primly, "but now he's a fine little helper. With occasional lapses, of course."

69 "Laurie adjusts very quickly," I said. "I suppose this time it's Charles's influence."

70 "Charles?"

71 "Yes," I said laughing, "you must have your hands full in that kindergarten, with Charles."

72 "Charles?" she said. "We don't have any Charles in the kindergarten."

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"A most extraordinary man, a Mr. Nuttel," said Mrs. Sappleton; "could only talk about his illnesses, and dashed off without a word of goodbye or apology when you arrived. One would think he had seen a ghost."

"I expect it was the spaniel," said the niece calmly; "he told me he had a horror of dogs. He was once hunted into a cemetery somewhere on the banks of the Ganges by a pack of pariah dogs, and had to spend the night in a newly dug grave with the creatures snarling and grinning and foaming just above him. Enough to make anyone lose their nerve."

Romance at short notice was her speciality.

FOR WRITING OR DISCUSSION

MyWritingLab

1. In what ways could you classify these pieces as "surprise ending" stories? How does each writer achieve the surprise? What clues to the outcome do you notice in each case before you reach the ending?
2. In what ways are the children in the stories similar? Different? How do the adults affect the outcome—the parents in Laurie's case, the aunt and Mr. Nuttel (note the man's name!) in the niece's case?
3. The last line of each story is well known. How do the last lines capture the heart of the stories?
4. Write a paper comparing and/or contrasting Jackson's short story with Saki's. You may use one or more of the preceding questions to guide you in limiting your subject.

Love, Sweet Love: Two Poems for Comparison and Contrast

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Sonnet 29

When, in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless¹ cries,
And look upon myself and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,

¹Futile.