

Composition I
Dr. Minerva
Fall 2015

Compare/Contrast Essay

Rough Draft Due: Tuesday, November 5

Final Version Due: Thursday, November 10

In this assignment you will write an essay (500-750 words) in which you develop an argument by comparing and contrasting two games or cartoon characters. The essay must be double-spaced in a 12-point font with 1-inch margins and no title page. Include a word count at the end of the paper. Staple the pages.

A game is “a form of play or sport, especially a competitive one played according to rules and decided by skill, strength, or luck.” More precisely, a game “is a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome.”¹ The most important element that distinguishes a game from other forms of play is that *games have rules* and *games have winners and losers*.

The purpose of this essay is to develop your analytic and argumentative writing skills. You will compare the two games by analyzing two or more elements, such as rules, design, participation, platform, context, content, audience, players. Each element you choose will be your *basis of comparison*. That is, you will discuss a given element for *both* games (i.e., rules or audience in both games, not the rules of one game and the audience of the other).

The thesis statement of the essay must make an argumentative claim, some proposition that it is possible to disagree with, but that you will demonstrate to be reasonable, possible, and likely. Remember, if you make a statement that no reasonable person could disagree with (such as “*Super Mario Bros.* was packaged with the Nintendo Entertainment System”), then it is not a thesis, it is just a statement of fact. You want to add something new to the knowledge of the world: what will your audience learn from your comparison of these games. For example, consider how Sam Anderson argues, among other points, that corporations exploit the addictiveness of some games for more effective advertising.

In other words: **How are the games different or similar, why does it matter, and who does it matter to?**

Clarify your purpose: will you examine overlooked similarities or examine overlooked differences? Avoid arguing about obvious similarities and differences: you will be graded on the intelligence, perceptiveness and persuasiveness of your argument. Therefore, if you choose to argue that one game is better than another, you **MUST** explicitly state and defend the criteria by which you judge the games.

Alternatively, apply these same principles to compare and contrast two cartoon characters.

¹ K. Salen and E. Zimmerman, *The Rules of Plays: Game Design Fundamentals* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 80.