

How to Write a Compare Contrast Thesis

The following are some crucial points in writing a clear and analytic thesis for Compare Contrast essays.

Example Question:

For several hundred years the Mongols ruled over both Russia and China. After casting off Mongol domination, both areas began a process of political and cultural recovery. Compare and contrast these processes in Russia and China.

Things to Remember

1. Note the key words in this essay prompt: compare and contrast. This means you must write a thesis that expresses what China and Russia had in common and where they were different. In short, your thesis must address the comparison.
2. Your thesis (and essay) should stay within the parameters of the question or prompt. An essay on the Columbian exchange should not deal with the Swahili Coast of Africa .
3. Next, your thesis should state an opinion. Be bold. Do not merely restate the question or one of its assumptions. To argue a point, you must first of all have one. The following is not an acceptable thesis; it simply restates information given by the prompt:

Russia and China both gained freedom from Mongol domination.

4. Your thesis should contain the categories that you will use in the essay as evidence. Do not do this:

BAD

The recovery of Russia and China after the Mongols had many similarities and differences.

The above sentence is vague, wimpy, and is really just a restatement of an assumption in the prompt. It is a fluttering of loose ends needing to be nailed down onto concrete categories. Now look at this one.

BETTER

When Russia and China recovered from Mongol domination they had similar political goals but different cultural goals.

This thesis is getting there. It at least declares in general categories how the paths of China and Russia were different and how they were similar after the Mongols. It has broken down (analyzed) these things into categories that lend themselves to a well defined essay. But it could be better. Note the difference between the above thesis and the one below:

BEST

While both Russia and China built strong centralized governments after breaking free from the Mongols, Russia imitated the culture and technology of Europe while China became isolated and built upon its own foundations.

Think about this thesis for a moment. It directly addresses the comparison (tells what they have in common and where they were different.) It contains the categories (political and cultural) on which the writer will hang relevant historical facts, and the terms (foreign influence and isolationism) on which the comparisons will be made. These categories will form the paragraphs of the essay. This thesis is a verbal engine sufficient to drive the type of essays that could generate an 8 or a 9 on your APWH test, providing you accomplish the other thesis requirements.