NAME

Chapter 5 Writer's Workshop (pp. 126–132)

Compare-Contrast Essay

Below is one writer's compare-contrast model. How well did the writer discuss the similarities and differences of the topic?

Writing Model

Dickinson and Whitman: Breakthrough Poets

What does it mean to be a poet? Whether you know it or not, Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman are two poets that helped shape the way we think about poetry. While their backgrounds and writing styles were quite different, both Dickinson and Whitman challenged accepted forms of writing and are regarded today as important poets.

Opening question

Thesis statement with two clearly stated features: writers' backgrounds and writing style

Dickinson and Whitman had very different upbringings. Dickinson was raised in Amherst, Massachusetts, and had two siblings. She was always put in the best schools and even received a college education at Mount Holyoke. Her family was relatively wealthy, and she did not have to work in order to help them.

Point-by-point organization

Feature 1: Childhood

In contrast to Dickinson's privileged upbringing, Whitman came from a very poor family. He had eight siblings, which made money for his family very tight. Since he was the second oldest child, he stopped going to school when he turned eleven and began working to support his family. Whitman worked all of his life, including jobs as a journalist, teacher, government clerk, and nurse in the Civil War.

In terms of poetry, both writers had a unique style. Dickinson had a huge body of work, over 800 brief poems, but only about a dozen were published during her lifetime. Along with her intriguing content, she is widely remembered for her odd use of dashes and capital letters. For example, she would often end lines with dashes and use capital letters in the middle of sentences. Her lines were also

Feature 2: Unique writing style

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inconsistent in length. Sometimes she would follow a two-syllable line with an eight-syllable line. In addition, Dickinson also avoided traditional full rhymes, like *ball* and *tall*. She used mostly slant rhyme (words that look like they rhyme, but they do not, such as *can't* and *want*). Dickinson also believed that punctuation could completely change the meaning of a sentence. So, instead of commas, she would use a line break. Her poetry was untitled and focused heavily on nature, joy, love, and death.

Supports thesis with specific examples

Walt Whitman also had a unique writing style. However, in contrast to Dickinson's large body of work, Whitman wrote only a few long poems. "Song of Myself," one of his most famous pieces, was written in first-person narrative, meaning he wrote from his own perspective using pronouns such as *I*, *me*, and *my*. This form hadn't really been seen in poetry, and people did not like it at first. "Song of Myself" was a part of Whitman's largest and most well-known piece of work, *Leaves of Grass*. Whitman worked on and republished this collection of poetry many times in his life. The whole book was written in free verse, which means it doesn't use regular rhythms or rhymes. Whitman is often said to be the father of free verse.

Transition sentence

Even though Dickinson came from a well-to-do family, the form and content of her poetry were too cutting-edge for traditional readers. Whitman, on the other hand, struggled financially and self-published his work, but his free style was unappreciated by most critics. While neither Dickinson nor Whitman was given due credit for their work during their lifetimes, both are regarded nowadays as extremely influential writers who have greatly shaped American poetry.

Restates the thesis in conclusion

Final thought on topic

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