

## Compare and Contrast

**Overview:** Students will discover differences and similarities in order to compare examples in Art, ELA, and Science.

**Goals:** This lesson will

Support concepts & skills: asking and pursuing questions, observing, making predictions, designing experiments

Fulfill Learning Standards: Science Strand 1 (for gr. 5) 2, 3; (for gr. 6-8) 1; Strand 2 (for gr. 5) 1; (for gr. 6-8) 1, 3; Strand 3 (gr. 5) 1, 2, 7, 10; ELA 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10; Visual Arts 2, 3, 5, 8.

Practice: careful observation, compare and contrast, problem solving.

Familiarize students with: ways to investigate works of art, literature, and topics in science.



*Silver Coffee Pot*  
William Cox

**Objectives for Students:** Students will

Be able to: identify ways that items are similar and different, and classify them according to the categories discovered.

Understand: that we can get a great deal of information about something by comparing it to other similar things.

**Key Questions** (to be answered by students):

1. How are these things alike and how are they different?
2. In what ways that I can't immediately perceive might these things be different?
3. What can I do that would give me the information I need to classify these?

**Materials Needed:** Set of blocks (or other objects) that are similar but not identical, Inquiry Worksheet, Classification chart.

**Museum Objects:** You may create your own sets of artworks to use, or the following are recommended:

- Set #1: *Watermark* by Robert Rauschenberg, *Mrs. Sarah Clayton* by Joseph Wright, *Cactus* by E. Ambrose Webster, *Full Moon, Barbados* by Joseph Stella, *White Writing* by Mark Tobey.
- Set #2: Object shown is *Silver Coffee Pot* by William Cox, silver, 1776, Purchased in memory of Mary Lewin Dejonge (Mrs. Max Emil Dejonge) (1962.2), *Tureen* (French), *Colts in a Storm* by Anna Hyatt Huntington, a ceramic pot by Harvey Sadow.
- Set #3: *Fragmentary jar Herakles slaying the Hydra* (Greek), an African object, Pre-Columbian stirrup vessel, *Portrait of a Young Woman* (Roman), *Buddha Head* (Thai).
- Set #4: A Chinese scroll (TVIIF4 or other), *Lever Building* and *Chartres Cathedral* by Charles Sheeler, *Under the Horse-Chestnut Tree* by Mary Cassatt, *Ploughman and Wife* by Kathe Kollwitz.

**Pre-Museum Visit** – Lay out at the front of the room a row of blocks (or marbles, or coins) that are similar but not identical. Ask students to compare and contrast these objects. “How are these the same? How are they different?” Write their answers on chart paper. Answers might be size,

color, shape, texture, etc. “Could there be ways that they are different or the same that we can’t tell by looking at them here? What might those ways be?” Answers might be kind of wood they are made out of, or their weight or density. “How could we explore this? What would we have to do?” (test the hardness of the wood, weigh them, measure the density)

The ways the objects are different can be called *categories of difference*. Ask students to list on their own paper all the categories of difference they have identified. Give each object a number, and ask students to carefully examine the objects and classify them.

Reflection: “What did we do to discover how these objects are different?” (looked at color and shape, measured size and weight, felt texture, etc.) “What are some other things that we have studied that we could do this with?” (history, science, math or ELA examples)

**At the Museum** – Work in small groups. Assign each group a set of works of art to focus on (numbered). Ask them to repeat the process you did in the class with the blocks: They will look carefully, and list all the ways these works are the same or different from each other. On their charts they will list all the categories of difference, and then classify the works of art according to these categories. “How many ways can you find that these are different from each other?” “What are the categories of difference?” “Fill in the chart. Include ways these objects might be different, but you can’t tell with the information you have.” “These are areas for exploration. How might you explore each?” (Use Inquiry Worksheet.)

**Post-Museum Visit** – Reflection: “Were the works of art more difficult to classify than the objects in the first activity? Why?” Share the categories of difference that each group came up with. Other groups might want to add some of these that they hadn’t thought of. There are some differences between the sets of objects that would point to other categories of difference. Ask the students to describe to each other the objects they were focused on, and see if they can identify any further categories (such as 2-D and 3-D).

You may want to return to the Museum another day, and hand each group’s chart to another group, asking them to see if they can identify any other categories.

Review the categories that students could not classify by looking. “How could you go about getting this information?” Make a list of questions that you would like to ask about getting this information. Ask a Museum staff person to meet with your class back in the Museum to discuss the questions, and to add any categories of difference that the students may not have thought of (such as genre, style, media, specific techniques).

Repeat this activity with curriculum content that you are currently working on, in order to sharpen students’ skills in observation, analysis, and comparison, and to teach the information about the topic. Examples below.

**Supportive Material:** Inquiry Worksheet, Classification Chart.

**Documentation and Assessment Options:** Keep copies of student worksheets over the three times they complete the compare/ contrast activity (blocks, works of art, curriculum topic), and analyze the number and sophistication of the categories of difference they were able to identify.

**Links to Other Curriculum:**

Science: Classification; Periodic table; Taxonomy: Kingdom, Phyla, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species; kinds of rock, or minerals; Keying out trees and other plants; Physical properties of substances (density, conductivity, viscosity, flammability, reflection and refraction, etc.).

ELA: Comparing poems, stories or myths;

History and Social Sciences: Compare cultures, world religions, continents, social or economic systems.

Art: Genres, styles, comparing artists within one media or era or style.

Author of the lesson: Anne Rhodes

## Inquiry Worksheet

How many ways can you find that these works of art are different from each other? List all the ways they are different.

Think of some ways they might be different, but you can't tell with the information you have, and add these to the list.

Fill in the chart with the categories of difference. Classify each of the samples as best as you can.

You may not be able to fill in some categories. These are areas for exploration. How might you explore each?

