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Comparing and Contrasting Stories



Introduction

THEME: >>> Wondrous Creatures

Genre refers to the type of literature. Literature can be categorized into different genres based on the subject matter. For example, mysteries have certain characteristics that distinguish them from other genres. A mystery typically involves a crime or a puzzle that must be solved. Stories in a particular genre may have similar themes and topics.

Look at the chart below and pay attention to the characteristics of the different genres that are described.

Realistic Fiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has characters who could be real • has settings and problems that could happen in real life
Historical Fiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • features realistic characters and problems but the setting is an earlier time period.
Science Fiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has settings and problems that probably could not happen in real life, but usually involve a real life science concept or problem • characters may be nonhuman or people living in the future
Fantasy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • features imaginary settings • characters with extraordinary powers • fantastic creatures like unicorns
Traditional Literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • includes stories that have been passed down orally from generation to generation • fables are short folktales but have talking animals that teach a lesson or moral • folktales are stories of ordinary people that contain a lesson about human behavior • myths explain something about nature or a people's beliefs or customs, characters are often heroes or gods • fairy tales involved magical creatures and places

Sometimes, comparing and contrasting texts in the same genre can help readers understand important features of each text. For example, authors might develop similar themes, tones, settings, and even types of characters.

Look at the two illustrations from two stories. Then answer the questions.



What genre are the two stories? _____

How are the settings different? _____

What is similar about the characters in the two stories? _____

How are the problems in each story similar or different? _____

Read the first part of the story.

How the Monkey Became a Trickster

by Elsie Spicer Eells

1 Once upon a time there was a beautiful garden in which grew all sorts of fruits. Many beasts lived in the garden, and they were permitted to eat of the fruits whenever they wished. But they were asked to observe one rule. They must make a low, polite bow to the fruit tree, call it by its name, and say, "Please give me a taste of your fruit." They had to be very careful to remember the tree's correct name and not to forget to say "please." It was also very important that they should remember not to be greedy. They must always leave plenty of fruit for the other beasts who might pass that way, and plenty to adorn the tree itself and to furnish seed so that other trees might grow. If they wished to eat figs, they had to say, "O, fig tree, O, fig tree, please give me a taste of your fruit;" or, if they wished to eat oranges, they had to say, "O, orange tree, O, orange tree, please give me a taste of your fruit."

2 In one corner of the garden grew the most splendid tree of all. It was tall and beautiful and the rosy-cheeked fruit upon its wide spreading branches looked wonderfully tempting. No beast had ever tasted of that fruit, for no beast could ever remember its name.

3 In a tiny house near the edge of the garden dwelt a little old woman who knew the names of all the fruit trees which grew in the garden. The beasts often went to her and asked the name of the wonderful fruit tree, but the tree was so far distant from the tiny house of the little old woman that no beast could ever remember the long, hard name by the time he reached the fruit tree.

4 At last, the monkey thought of a trick. Perhaps you do not know it, but the monkey can play the guitar. He always played when the beasts gathered together in the garden to dance. The monkey went to the tiny house of the little old woman, carrying his guitar under his arm. When she told him the long, hard name of the wonderful fruit tree he made up a little tune to it, all his own, and sang it over and over again all the way from the tiny house of the little old woman to the corner of the garden where the wonderful fruit tree grew. When any of the other beasts met him and asked him what new song he was singing to his guitar, he said never a word. He marched straight on, playing his little tune over and over again on his guitar and singing softly the long, hard name.

Now read the first part of the poem. Then answer the questions.

The Monkey

by Marmaduke Park

The animals, on the death of the lion,
 During his life, prince of the country,
 Resolved to elect a king to try on
 The regal crown, and chose a monkey.

- 5 Because after the animals had all
 Tried on the regal crown, or let it fall,
 Because their heads were all too big,
 Or too small, too horned, or too thick,
 The monkey slipped through it;
- 10 And with it cut up many a trick,
 Which they all thought refined¹,
 And chose him with one mind.
 Only the fox regretted the election,
 And swore to reign in his defection.

¹refined: fine

Think About It



How is the character of the monkey similar and different in the poem and the story? To answer the question, look for details in the text about each monkey.

How is the character of the monkey in "How the Monkey Became a Trickster" similar to and different from monkey in "The Monkey"? _____

What details from the two texts support your comparison? _____

A CLOSER LOOK

Reread the last two paragraphs of the story and the last nine lines of the poem. Circle words and phrases that tell what happened to the main character and what the main character may have learned.

Continue reading the story and then the poem. Then answer the questions.

How the Monkey Became a Trickster *continued*

5 At last, he reached the corner of the garden where the wonderful fruit tree grew. He had never seen it look so beautiful. The rosy-cheeked fruit glowed in the bright sunlight. The monkey could hardly wait to make his bow, say the long hard name over twice, and ask for the fruit with a “please.” What a beautiful color and what a delicious odor that fruit had! The monkey had never in all his life been so near to anything which smelled so good. He took a big bite. What a face he made! That beautiful sweet-smelling fruit was bitter and sour, and it had a nasty taste. He threw it away from him as far as he could.

6 The monkey never forgot the tree’s long, hard name and the little tune he had sung. Nor did he forget how the fruit tasted. He never took a bite of it again; but, after that, his favorite trick was to treat the other beasts to the wonderful fruit just to see them make faces when they tasted it.

The Monkey *continued*

- 15 He came and made his compliment;
“Sire,” said he, “I know a treasure meant
For your high majesty. I will show
The spot where it lies hid.”
The monkey went at Reynard’s bid—
- 20 And was caught in a trap.
The fox exclaimed,
“How do you think to govern us,
When, after all, with all your fuss,
You cannot well, do what you may,
- 25 Keep e’en yourself out of harm’s way.”
The animals agreed,
That royal power suits very few indeed.

Think about the lesson that the monkey learns about the fruit and the point the fox makes about being a leader. How are they similar?

Think about the descriptions in the genre chart on page 219.

How are the lessons of the two stories similar?

- A Both teach that monkeys are not reliable leaders.
- B Both teach that animals can never really trust a fox.
- C Both teach that tricking others never leads to good outcomes.
- D Both teach that some things are not as good as they first seem.

What characteristics of the two stories help you determine the genre?



DISCUSS IT

In the poem and story, the monkeys do not end up getting what they want. Turn to another student and talk about how things ended for the monkey in the first story and the monkey in the poem.

A CLOSER LOOK

Underline details in each story that tell about the setting.

Circle words and phrases in each story that tell what the characters learn.

Read the two stories. Then answer the questions.

What The Yen Tzi Taught The Hunter

- 1 ONE day a hunter was looking for a fox in the wilderness, when suddenly he saw thousands of birds coming toward the river, and he lay quite still and waited for them all to come.
- 2 The Yen Tzi¹, or Kind Birds, were talking together, and the hunter listened. One asked, "Is all our company here?"
- 3 And the Leader Bird said, "No, little One-Month-Old and Two-Month and Mrs. This-Year are not here yet."
- 4 And the Leader Bird said to the Lookout Birds, "You must go after them and help them to the river before five days. Our boats are dried and ready to sail. It is growing cold, and we must all go south together."
- 5 So the Lookout Birds flew all around the country to hunt the lost birds. They found one with a broken wing, and a little one with not enough wing feathers to fly far, and one with a wound in his leg made by a hunter, and others that were tired or very hungry. They found every missing bird, and this great family of friends were soon all together again.
- 6 But while the Lookout Birds were seeking the lost ones from their own family, they heard another bird cry, "Save me! Save me, too!" They stopped and said, "Who is calling? Someone must be in trouble." They flew to a lemon tree and saw a Tailor Bird with her leg all covered with blood. The Kind Birds said, "Friend, how came you in such trouble? What is your name, and where do you live?"
- 7 The Tailor Bird said, "I live in the South Province, 800 miles away. I came here to see my friends and relatives. Three of my children are with me, and we were on our way home to the south. We had gone 60 miles, when I asked my children to stop and rest in this lemon tree, and now I do not even know where they are. I fear the hunter got them. I am hurt, too, and I do not think I shall ever see my home again. I shall lose my life here, I fear."
- 8 The Yen Tzi heard all the Tailor Bird said. They talked together and were sorry for her who had no one to care for her, for they knew her children had been killed by the hunter. "If we do not save her life, she will surely die," they said.

¹**Yen Tzi, or Kind Bird:** a species of the fly-catcher family found in China. They are very gentle, never fight among themselves or with others, share their nests with each other or even with other birds. Hence the name "Kind Birds."

9 So they asked, “Would you like to go with us? We know you eat different food. We live on rice and fruit and a few bugs. We do not know that you can live as we do. And we must ride on our boats, many, many hours.”

10 The Tailor Bird answered, “Yes, I will go gladly, and will eat what you have and cause you no trouble.”

11 The Kind Birds helped the Tailor Bird to their company and put her in one of their boats, and two or three birds fed her and cared for her until she was well.

12 The hunter who told this story said, “I have learned many things by watching and studying the habits of the Kind Birds. I will never kill birds again.”

13 EE-SZE (Meaning): In time of trouble, man should help not only his own, but others.

The Squirrels of Central Park

1 Ben was the absolute ruler of Central Park. No one questioned his authority, for no other squirrel knew the park like he did. When Ben told the others to back away from a bag of popcorn dropped by a screaming child, they listened and they obeyed. When they were told to stay out of the big oak tree near Columbus Circle, they did.

2 One day, a new squirrel happened into the park. She was reddish brown, like the others, but she had a white splotch on the tip of her tail. The other squirrels were intrigued. They gathered around the newcomer. Her name was Sheila, and she told them she had come from Battery Park. She described her harrowing journey along the streets of New York, dodging cars and avoiding barking dogs. She showed the other squirrels how she had climbed over snow banks along the side of the road, and how she had stood near subway vents to keep warm. The other squirrels listened intently, for they had never met such a brave squirrel.

3 But Ben was not so impressed. “You cannot stay here, for it’s winter and we do not have enough food for even one extra mouth,” he said firmly.

4 Slowly, reluctantly, the others began to turn and run away. But Sheila moved closer to Ben. She flicked her whiskers and said in a strong steady voice, “I would like to stay right here. I have traveled a long way, and I need a new home. I can help you find a new source of food.”

5 The other squirrels turned around quickly to glance at Ben. They wondered what he would say and do. But Ben, too, was confused. A new source of food? It can’t be, he thought. I know every oak tree in this park, every trash can along its paths.

6 But Sheila turned and walked toward a shrub, one the others hadn't noticed before. It was prickly and green, but Sheila was undeterred. She scampered under the shrub and called to the others. "This plant here has soft green stems near the base. They are tender and delicious, even in winter." The others crept close to Sheila and tasted the stems themselves. She was right, they were soft and nutty tasting.

7 The other squirrels turned to Ben, who hesitated, but just for a moment. "Oh, I suppose you can stay," he grumbled. "You might even be a good addition to our community."

8 **Moral:** Do not turn your back on newcomers, for they likely have something to contribute.

Who are the main characters of both stories, and what does this tell you about the genre?

1 Part A

How is Ben's reaction to Sheila joining their group different from the Kind Birds' reaction to the Tailor Bird joining their group?

Part B

Why might the author of "The Squirrels of Central Park" have taken this approach?



What ideas do you get from the hunter and from the mention of the subway?

2 Part A

How are the settings of the two stories different?

- A** One is set in the spring, and one is set in the autumn.
- B** One is set in the morning, and one is set in the evening.
- C** One is set long ago, and one is set in modern times.
- D** One is set in the wilderness, and the other is set in a city park.

Part B

Which details from the stories *best* support your answer to Part A?

- A** "It is growing cold, and we must all go south together;" "it's winter, and we do not have enough food"
- B** "Our boats are dried and ready to sail;" "dodging cars and avoiding barking dogs."
- C** "a hunter was looking for a fox in the wilderness;" "Ben was the absolute ruler of Central Park"
- D** "we must ride on our boats, many, many hours;" "One day, a new squirrel happened into the park."

Think about what the hunter learns and what the squirrels learn. How will the characters benefit from what they have learned?

3 Explain how the morals or lessons of the two stories are alike and how they are different.



Read two passages. Then answer the questions.

THE MACHINE STOPS

by E. M. Forster

I

THE AIR-SHIP

Written in 1909, E. M. Forster's short story forecasts a futuristic world where people no longer live on Earth's surface, but instead in underground cells. In this scene, a mother and son talk to each other through a platelike invention that projects their images.

- 1 An electric bell rang.
- 2 "I suppose I must see who it is", she thought, and set her chair in motion. The chair, like the music, was worked by machinery, and it rolled her to the other side of the room where the bell still rang.
- 3 "Who is it?" she called. Her voice was irritable, for she had been interrupted often since the music began. She knew several thousand people, in certain directions human intercourse had advanced enormously.
- 4 But when she listened into the receiver, her white face wrinkled into smiles, and she said:
- 5 "Very well. Let us talk. I will isolate myself. I do not expect anything important will happen for the next five minutes—for I can give you fully five minutes, Kuno. Then I must deliver my lecture on 'Music during the Australian Period.'"
- 6 She touched the isolation knob, so that no one else could speak to her. Then she touched the lighting apparatus, and the little room was plunged into darkness.
- 7 "Be quick!" She called, her irritation returning. "Be quick, Kuno; here I am in the dark wasting my time."
- 8 But it was fully 15 seconds before the round plate that she held in her hands began to glow. A faint blue light shot across it, darkening to purple, and presently she could see the image of her son, who lived on the other side of the earth, and he could see her.
- 9 "Kuno, how slow you are."
- 10 "I have called you before, mother, but you were always busy or isolated. I have something particular to say."
- 11 "What is it, dearest boy? Be quick."
- 12 "I want you to come and see me."
- 13 Vashti watched his face in the blue plate.
- 14 "But I can see you!" she exclaimed. "What more do you want?"
- 15 "I want to see you not through the Machine," said Kuno. "I want to speak to you not through the wearisome Machine."
- 16 She replied that she could scarcely spare the time for a visit.
- 17 "The air-ship barely takes two days to fly between me and you."
- 18 "I dislike air-ships."
- 19 "Why?"
- 20 "I dislike seeing the horrible brown earth, and the sea, and the stars when it is dark."
- 21 "I want to see the stars. They are curious stars. I want to see them not from the air-ship, but from the surface of the earth, as our ancestors did, thousands of years ago. I want to visit the surface of the earth."
- 22 She was shocked again.

23 “Mother, you must come, if only to explain to me what is the harm of visiting the surface of the earth.”

24 “No harm,” she replied, controlling herself. “But no advantage. The surface of the earth is only dust and mud, no advantage. The surface of the earth is only dust and mud, no life remains on it, and you would need a respirator, or the cold of the outer air would kill you. One dies immediately in the outer air.”

25 “I know. Of course, I shall take all precautions.”

26 “And besides—”

27 “Well?”

28 She considered, and chose her words with care. Her son had a strange temper, and she wished to dissuade him from the expedition.

29 “It is contrary to the spirit of the age,” she asserted.

30 “Do you mean by that, contrary to the Machine?”

31 “In a sense, but—”

32 His image in the blue plate faded.

33 “Kuno!”

34 He had isolated himself.

35 For a moment, Vashti felt lonely.

The Colony

1 Aisha inspected the almond tree. Yes, it definitely has some kind of disease, she thought, something that we never saw back on Earth.

2 The little colony on Venus had prospered beyond anyone’s wildest dreams. And they had Aisha to thank for it. She had been the one to determine that their need for oxygen could be supplied by growing vegetable plants and fruit trees. It was Aisha who suggested the excess food could be sent back to Earth to help feed the hungry.

3 But now the crops were dying in the Venus colony. The dome that protected them from the sun’s powerful rays and helped keep the colony cool was also fostering an environment perfect for funguses and bacteria. If the almond trees were dying, what next? Maybe the orange groves, maybe the apple trees. Aisha sat back on the rocky soil. The thought sent a shiver through her body. She knew the colony depended on the food. Without it, they would go hungry right here on Venus, for it was nearly impossible to think

of returning to the overcrowding and fighting that had characterized Earth in the last century.

4 “Aisha,” a voice called. Aisha stood up and went to say hello to the scientist she had asked to examine the almond leaves. “I’m afraid we have some bad news,” he reported. Aisha waited, and the scientist went on. “It seems that this is a fungus inherent in the soil here, something with which we have no experience. I guess the sun’s rays kept the fungus dormant, but now that we have the dome, this fungus has sprung to life. There’s really nothing we can do to combat it. I figure we have two, maybe three years at best.”

5 Aisha thanked the scientist and walked toward the marketplace, forcing a smile at the friendly faces she passed. It was bustling, a community that was so different from and better than the one they had left back on Earth. She couldn’t bear to think what it was destined to become—desperate gangs of people fighting over every last resource, poisoned by the environment around them.

- 1 In what way is Aisha's situation different from Kuno's?
- A Aisha wants to leave Venus, while Kuno does not want to live below the earth's surface.
 - B Aisha doesn't want to leave Venus, while Kuno wants to stay below the earth's surface.
 - C Aisha is unhappy living on Venus, while Kuno is happy living below the earth's surface.
 - D Aisha is content with living on Venus, but may have to leave, while Kuno is not content with living below the earth's surface, and wants to leave.
- 2 Complete the chart about the settings of the stories.

The Air-ship	The Colony	Both Stories
An earth that is cold and devoid of life.	A colony on the planet Venus that is protected by a dome.	

Which of the following would go in the blank space in the chart?

- A occur sometime in the recent past
- B are set in a place other than the surface of the earth
- C are set in a place that is cold, rocky, and very dusty
- D occur at a time when Earth's people are at war

3 Part A

Which of the following *best* describes how the tone of the two stories is similar?

- A** Both stories have a dark, depressing tone.
- B** Both stories have a sharp, sarcastic tone.
- C** Both stories have a wistful, hopeful tone.
- D** Both stories have an angry, aggressive tone.

Part B

Which details from the stories *best* support your answer to Part A?

- A** Passage 1: "'Kuno, how slow you are.'"
Passage 2: "'I'm afraid we have some bad news,' he reported."
- B** Passage 1: "'I want to see the stars.'"
Passage 2: "If the almond trees were dying, what next?"
- C** Passage 1: "For a moment, Vashti felt lonely."
Passage 2: "desperate gangs of people fighting over every last resource"
- D** Passage 1: "Her voice was irritable."
Passage 2: "But now the crops were dying in the Venus colony."

- 4** What is similar and what is different about the way the authors write about the futuristic society? Provide two details to support your answer.
