

Generating Writing: Writing with Professional Writers

One productive writing strategy is to use one author's idea or concept to discuss and analyze an example provided by another author. That is, rather than just writing about each author separately in different paragraphs, you make connections between their ideas in one paragraph. Making connections is a refined version of comparison/contrast: rather than stopping after you have discovered any similarities or differences, you use that information to understand something new or something deeper about the example. Making connections can also help you to develop a stronger, sharper claim.

1. Find an **idea (concept or theory)** that interests you from one of assigned course readings. (In some cases, your instructor may provide you with this information.) Find a direct quote that explains the idea and then explain in your own words what the author means.
2. Next choose an **example** from another assigned course reading that you feel is somehow related to the idea or concept. Quote and then restate and explain this second author's example of the first author's idea.
3. Next, look at the two different authors' quotations and list any similarities or differences between the first author's idea and the second author's example.
4. Write at least three-four sentences that use the first author's idea to understand and discuss the second author's example. Your goal here is deeper understanding of the example than you would achieve just by considering the example alone. If you can't write 3-4 sentences, try a different example or concept.
5. Decide what point the first author's idea helped you make about the second author's example. Write a sentence that asserts that point. This should be a point that you can turn into the topic sentence or mini-claim of a paragraph.
6. Finally write a paragraph that puts all the information from 1-5 together smoothly and in the most appropriate order (which most likely is not 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). Make sure to write a clear claim sentence and to include a quotation from both texts. Add more information and discussion as necessary to smooth out the paragraph.

Here is an example that works with Barbara Mellix's "From Outside, In" and Malcolm X's "Coming to an Awareness of Language":

While Barbara Mellix received a college education and Malcolm X was self-educated, both writers share a similar understanding of the special power of language to help you see yourself in a new way. In her essay, Mellix describes how she used to feel uncomfortable writing in Standard English. She felt like she could not express her true self using Standard English. However, after "[w]riting and rewriting, practicing, experimenting," she learned "that through writing one can continually bring new selves into being, each with new responsibilities and difficulties, but also with new possibilities. Remarkable power, indeed. I write and

continually give birth to myself" (111). She discovered that writing allowed her to reinvent herself. While in prison, Malcolm X had a similar experience. His growing knowledge of Standard English allowed him to see himself and his situation differently. He was upset that he had gotten no responses to the letters he wrote to public figures using slang: "I had become increasingly frustrated at not being able to express what I wanted to convey in letters that I wrote" (99). While Mellix became more comfortable with Standard English through writing and revising, Malcolm X learned how to use Standard English by reading and by copying out the dictionary. This work allowed him to forget that he was in prison. As he writes, "up to then, I never had been so truly free in my life" (101). In learning to use Standard English to express themselves clearly, both authors discovered "new possibilities."