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HOW TO WRITE A KILLER COMPARATIVE

By Lisa Tran

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A list of Comparative texts referenced* in this study guide

1984 & Stasiland
Black Diggers & Longest Memory
Bombshells & The Penelopiad
Invictus & Ransom
I am Malala & Made in Dagenham
Photograph 51 & The Penelopiad
Reckoning & The Namesake
Stasiland & Never Let Me Go
The Crucible & Year of Wonders
Tracks & Charlie's Country

*Referenced means the text has been used as an example or has been used in an essay. I have incorporated all Year 12 Comparative texts. This study guide is not intended to be a text-specific study guide but rather, a strategic guide on how to approach and write a killer Comparative essay. No matter which two texts you're studying, the numerous examples throughout this study guide will enable you to use the advice and apply them to your own texts.

Start Here

A lot of people think they're terrible at English simply because they don't have that natural 'English' gift others have. Maybe you didn't read as much when you were younger, or maybe you just aren't as into English as much as Mary over there, who quotes Shakespeare when she talks to her English teacher (seriously, who does that?).

I was what you'd call an average English student. I didn't write essays that scored aces, didn't participate in class discussions (because I had nothing to say), and overall, wasn't particularly interested in the subject. I would've never guessed that by the end of Year 12, I - the self-proclaimed Maths and Science student - would achieve a raw study score of 45 out of 50, placing me in the top 2% of the VCE cohort.

How did I do it?

I always struggled with English because it had no singular answer to questions like my Maths subjects. However, over time, and with many experimentations, I came to develop my own method for English. I realised that despite English being a humanities subject, one can still adopt a process so that a killer essay is created. In this book, I'll share with you that secret recipe.

Don't get ahead of yourself though. I won't be teaching you a rigid formula that commands you to include 10 quotes per body paragraph and to have exactly 5 sentences in your conclusion so you can achieve A+ (which, just to set the record straight is not my

recommendation). I firmly believe that English exists in the equilibrium between analytical and creativity.

What this book will do is offer you the right tools to get you started. I will show you the inner workings of my brain when I compare two texts - what I think, how I think about it, and why I think about it in a certain way. By showing you the why, I hope to guide you to take a step in the right direction, and to be confident with your skills so you can keep venturing beyond this book's philosophy.

I strongly believe it's important for all students to understand that a method (like CONVERGENT AND DIVERGENT discussed in this book) is not the be all and end all. It took me a long time to develop this recipe for myself, and I'll be continuously improving and refining it even after this book is written. This may be a great starting point for you, or perhaps you have your own method and will incorporate some of my techniques into your own, but ultimately it's essential that you create something that works for you. Develop and refine your own method for success, because everyone has unique recipes that work for them.

Let's kill it.

- Lisa Tran



The golden rule of CONVERGENT and DIVERGENT

Most people commonly mistake Comparative (also known as Reading and Comparing, and an array of other names) as just two Text Responses rolled into one essay. They think that Comparative *is* Text Response, except that instead of writing about one text, you're writing about two.

And boy are they wrong.

I'm going to give *you* the benefit of a doubt. Since you've purchased this ebook, I have a strong feeling that you're someone who is looking to up their game, and that you already know that Comparative is quite different from Text Response (and if you didn't, well now you know!).

Most people are also aware that the main difference is that in Comparative, we look at similarities and differences between the two texts. However, this is where the challenge begins.

As you study your texts in detail, you'll come to realise that majority of students keep using the same old examples - example X for similarities, and example Y for differences.

To stand out from hundreds of other students studying the same texts as you, you need a strategy. You need something that will *wow* your examiners and catapult you to the top of the VCE cohort.

Drum roll

Introducing you to my golden rule, the **CONVERGENT** and **DIVERGENT** strategy.

This strategy is simple. It's simple to understand and it's simple to incorporate into your essays. It's beauty is that despite it's simplicity, it'll advance your essay beyond the average English student. All my students who have applied this strategy have seen their English scores improve by at least one grade (from B+ to an A, or from an A to A+).

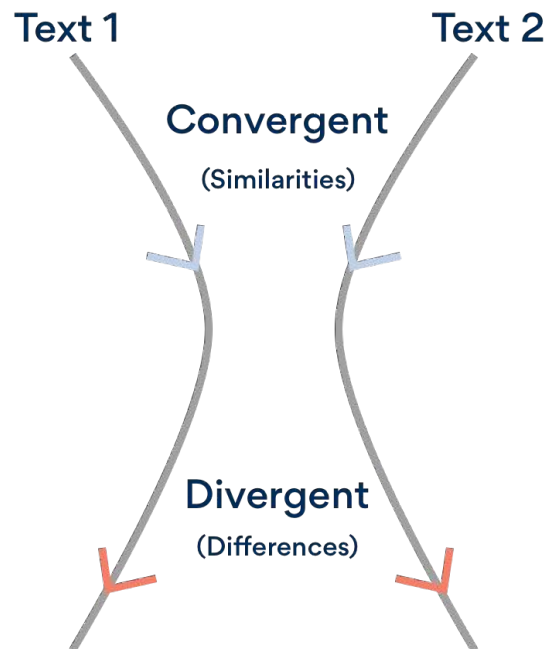
Let me explain.

PART 1 - CONVERGENT

The word, 'convergent' means coming closer together. When we start looking for similarities in Comparative, keep this word **CONVERGENT** in mind. Having **CONVERGENT** at the forefront of your mind will ensure that you are always aware of the fact that your examples are *never* the same. Notice how the blue arrows in the graph on the next page never touch.

Sometimes, students fall into the trap of referring to examples in each text as the ‘same’, but this won’t ever happen to you if you keep **CONVERGENT** in mind. Other students think that by just throwing this phrase in their essay, ‘similarly to Text 1, Text 2 also...’ is enough of a ‘similar’ comparison.

We’re going to advance our essays by doing more than just a ‘similarly to text A, text B also...’ comparison. I’ll dive deeper into the **CONVERGENT** theory through essay examples later this ebook.



PART 2 - DIVERGENT

The word, ‘divergent’ means developing in different directions. We can use the **CONVERGENT** and **DIVERGENT** strategy for *any* example you include in your essay. Since no examples from two texts are exactly the same, this means there is always opportunity for you to firstly, compare the similarities, then compare the differences.

If you’ve ever received feedback that you needed to ‘elaborate’, ‘go into more detail’, or ‘more analysis’ needed in your essays - this strategy will help eliminate all those criticisms. It will also show your teacher how you are comfortable writing an in-depth analysis using fewer examples, rather than swamping your essay with as many examples as possible because you barely have anything to say about each one.

Too many students miss out on the opportunity to elaborate or expand on an example because they either only write about the similarity or, the difference. But with the **CONVERGENT** and **DIVERGENT** strategy, we can see that no matter what example you choose from each text, there is *always* opportunity to discuss both similarity and differences. This also means that I’ll recommend you the Integrated Essay Structure which works to show off your **CONVERGENT** and **DIVERGENT** skills. Later, I’ll offer you two Advanced Essay Paragraph Structures which truly showcase the power of the **CONVERGENT** and **DIVERGENT** strategy.

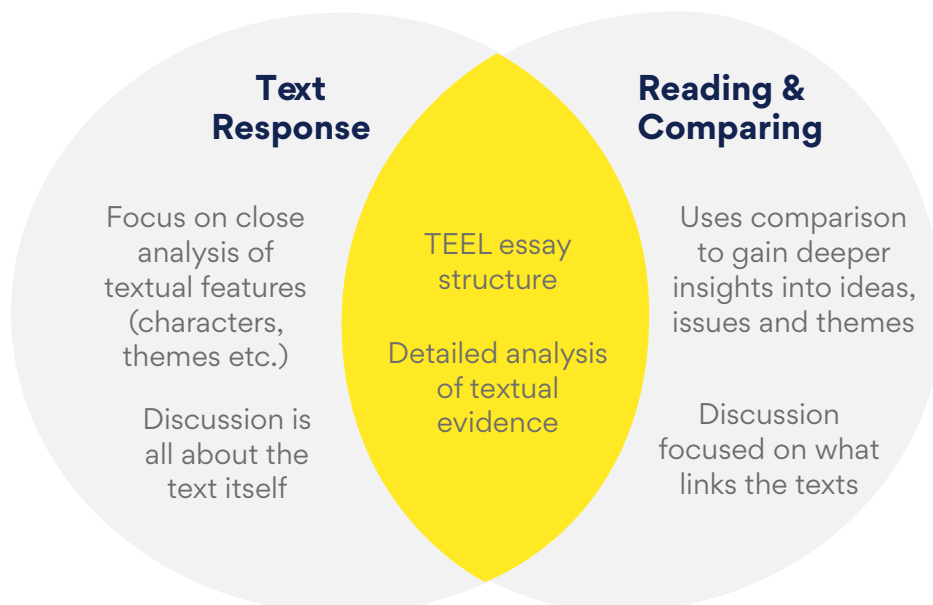
I’ll go further into detail with the **CONVERGENT** and **DIVERGENT** strategy as I show you it in action throughout the examples and A+ essays in this ebook. Let’s get started!

WHAT IS COMPARATIVE?

WHAT IS IT?

	UNIT 1	UNIT 2	UNIT 3	UNIT 4
AOS 1	Reading & Creating	Reading & Comparing	Reading & Creating	Reading & Comparing
AOS 2	Analysing & Presenting Argument	Analysing & Presenting Argument	Analysing Argument	Presenting Argument

This is part of the English and EAL syllabus in Units 2 and 4. Overall, it is intended to show how comparing two texts can give a better understanding of the **ideas, issues and themes** discussed in each. This unit may be taught by dividing up ideas, issues and themes and addressing each individually. Given that the way we discuss them is very similar, however, this guide will not address their differences and will refer to them as 'ideas'.



WHAT ARE YOU EXPECTED TO DO?

The task is to compare texts in order to better understand **ideas, issues** and **themes** and how they relate to **the world** (history, society) and **humanity**. To do this, we examine the **language, conventions and structure** of the texts, and explore the choices available to text creators. Unit 4 also puts a strong focus on exploring how **values** are reflected in texts.

What should I focus on?

- What you have learnt in Text Response (including the **THINK and EXECUTE strategy** discussed in *How To Write A Killer Text Response*)
- Important similarities and differences,
- How related ideas, issues and themes are dealt with in each text and from different

Example: Values in *The Crucible*, Arthur Miller

Evidence	Values
The gradual descent of the Salem community into total disorder and chaos	Charity and coherence among human beings (and what happens when it is lost)
The recurring need felt by many characters to justify their actions in a Christian manner	Purity of spirit and of conscience

What should I aim for?

- **Unusual or alternative points of view** on the text beyond what is immediately apparent or obvious
- Analyses and discussions of your ideas which are **intricate and in-depth**

HOW TO APPROACH COMPARATIVE

Before we can begin structuring or writing a comparative response, we need to do the ‘mental work’ of actually **figuring out how the texts are similar or different**.

STEP

1

Read/Watch your text

This is an obvious one! Even though everyone has ‘that one friend’ who didn’t read the book but got an A+ on all their assessments, this doesn’t mean it’s a good thing to do, especially when we’ve got to make significant links between texts.



Tip: The analogy of Building a Bridge

You can’t build a bridge between two points of nothing – each end of the bridge has to have somewhere to join on to. Each end that holds up a bridge is like a text, and the bridge is like the comparison. Thorough **knowledge of BOTH texts**, and both ends of the bridge, is necessary for your comparison to work, and for the bridge to exist!

STEP

2

Think and Discuss

Your teacher will hopefully lead your class in insightful, thought-provoking discussions that will help with **getting to grips with both the texts and the links between them**.

If your class has less of a discussion focus and your teacher prefers other techniques, another approach would be to try discussing the texts with your classmates, friends or even parents. A good tutor is also a great place to look for this kind of resource.

Failing even that, you could even just talk aloud to yourself!



Tip: Getting the most out of your discussions

Discussion and argument can be lots of fun, but it’s also an important tool in developing good ideas. First of all, **try to talk to someone who disagrees with you**; this will expose you to points of view that might clash with yours or ones you may not have even considered. It also forces you to defend your views against opposing ones, and tests how well they stand up to criticism!

Don’t just make notes, or an essay plan, or write an essay because that’s what everyone else is doing - get the thoughts down on paper in a way that makes sense to you.

STEP

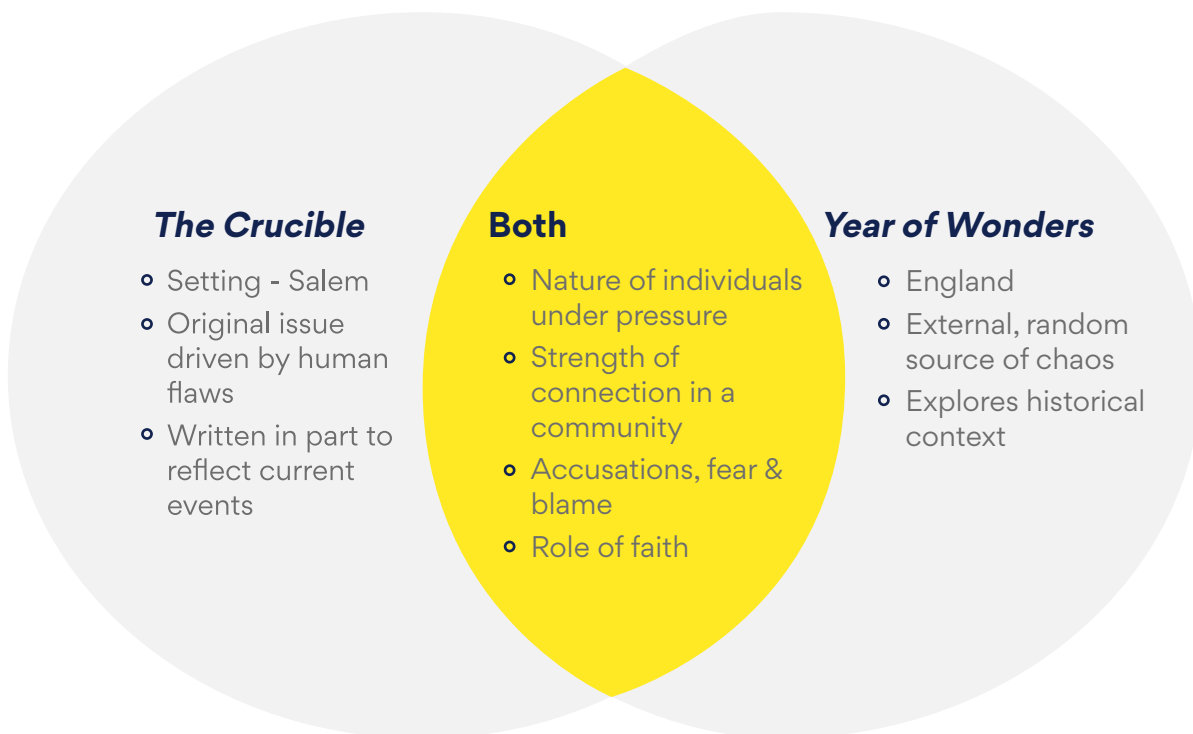
3

Organise Your Thoughts & Ideas

Particularly for the visual learners, graphic organisers are your new best friend. According to the study design, you are required to show ‘...clear, coherent and effective presentation of the insights gained through comparison.’

Visual organisers help us with the ‘clear, coherent and effective’ part; they force us to put the fuzzy ideas you thought of while reading or watching your texts into words, and to carefully show all the ways the texts are similar and different.

Example: *The Crucible* and *Year of Wonders*



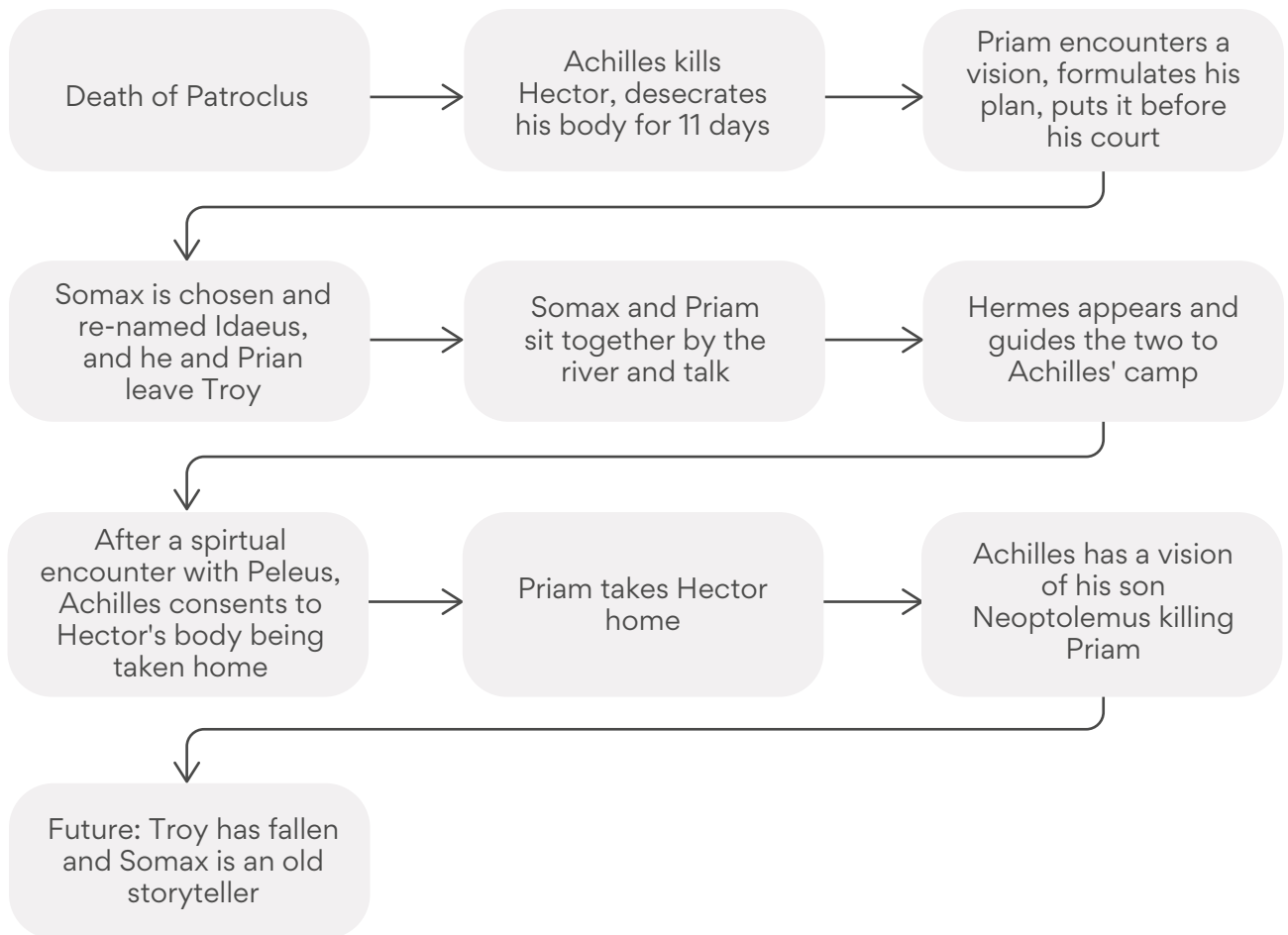
One of the best to try is the tried and trusted **Venn diagram**, which shows you what is unique about each text and what they share.

The diagram shown is fairly simple, so as you analyse your texts you’ll be searching for more depth than this.

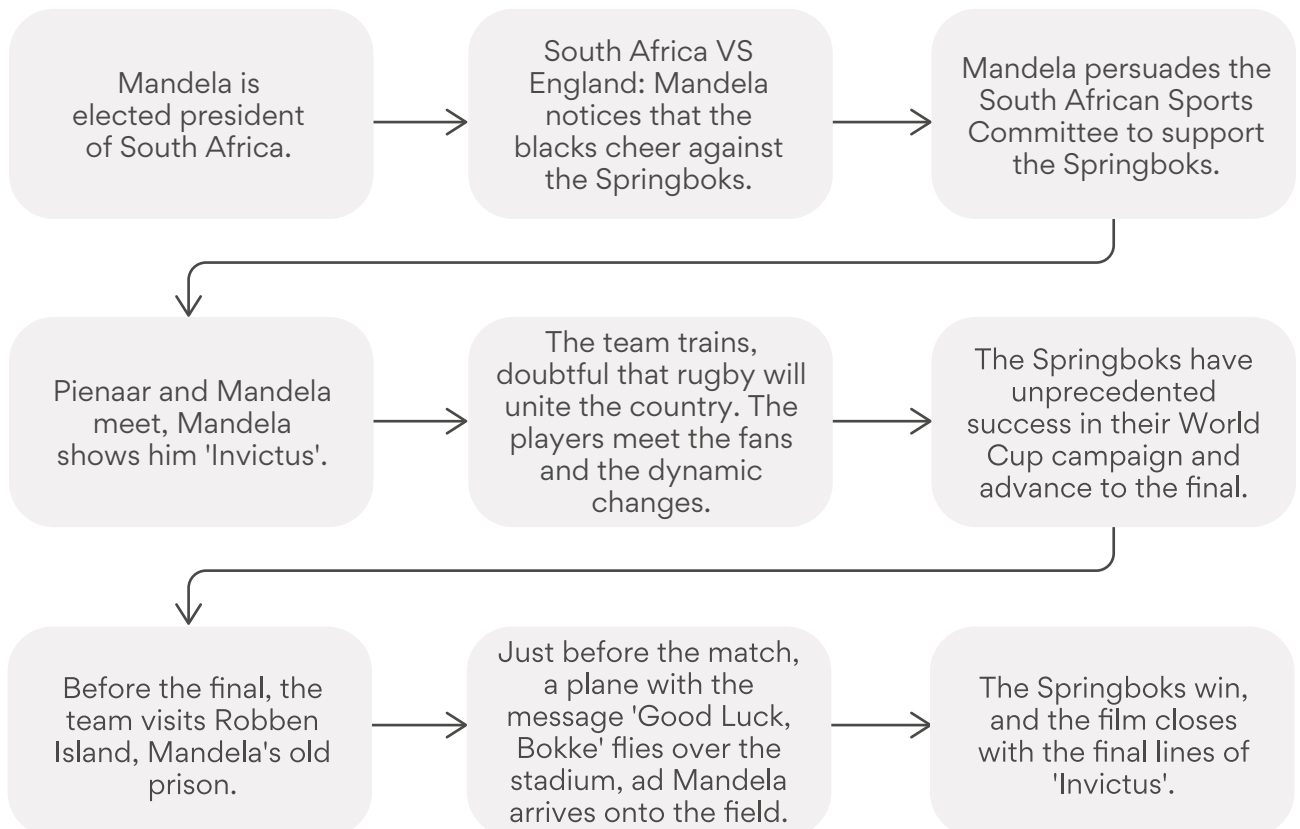
You can also try things like **mind maps**, which are great for showing connections between things. A particularly useful form of mind map is a **character map**, which shows connections between characters. Try making one for each of your texts and then comparing them – are similar characters connected in both versions? How do the kinds of relationships differ?

To examine similarities and differences in structure, make a **flowchart** (see next page) for each text that shows the main events in order; are there more or fewer events in one text? Are there similar events, and do they fall in the same order?

Example: *Ransom*



Example: *Invictus*



Structural similarities:

- The carrying out of an unlikely-to-succeed plan
- The achievement of success, both personal and national

Structural differences

- *Ransom* begins in unhappy circumstances, crosses sometimes to visions of the future, ends on a reflective scene
- *Invictus* begins in doubtful but hopeful ones, follows present events with one recollection of the past, ends on a triumphant, glorious scene

Another simple but effective way of comparing texts is simply to make a **table** with two columns, one for similarities and one for differences.

Example: Pop culture - *Harry Potter* and *Twilight*

Similarities	Differences	
<i>Harry Potter & Twilight</i>	<i>Harry Potter</i>	<i>Twilight</i>
Adolescent, high school context	Blend of adventure and fantasy with secondary romances	Primarily a love story
Contrast between mortality and immortality	Immortality viewed as a distortion of nature	Glorification of immortals
Stereotype of fight between good and evil	Force of evil depicted as universal and pervasive	Evil concentrated in a small group of individuals

STEP

4

Constantly Revise Your Points

Use these methods regularly to help gain a better understanding of your texts, and keep trying to **increase the complexity of your analysis** leading up to your assessment.

Example: *Stasiland* and *1984*

Increasing Complexity →

Linked by discussion of a totalitarian regime

The varied plight of individuals who pit themselves against a totalitarian regime

What are considered to be basic facets of human nature can invariably be bent out of shape by inflicting universal control and torture under the guise of government

With progress in analysis of texts, we should be aiming to describe links in a more complex manner, like the right-hand side of the arrow. Keep trying to 'go deeper'.

WORD BANKS FOR COMPARATIVE

Comparative words

Words to express similarity:

In addition, likewise, furthermore, moreover, further to this, similarly, on the same note, along the same lines, equally, also, in the same way

Words to express differences:

However, in contrast, on the other hand, contrastingly, conversely, meanwhile, alternatively, in opposition to, although

Comparative words

Longest Memory and Black Diggers

Discrimination, segregation, memory, identity, oppression, conservative, change, racism, status quo

Tracks and Charlie's Country

Culture, identity, integrity, connection, journey, dignity, humanity, tradition, societal norms, stereotype

The Namesake and Reckoning

Immigration, heritage, home, family, culture, identity, memory, nostalgia, displacement, loss

I am Malala and Made in Dagenham

Social norm, power, women's rights, feminism, class struggle, patriarchy, misogyny, role of women, gender equality

You've only learnt part of the **CONVERGENT** and **DIVERGENT** strategy...

How To Write A Killer Comparative includes:



- 47-pages teaching you how to ace comparing two texts
- Comparative examples from 10+ VCE English texts
- Know exactly how to CONVERGE and DIVERGE so you can offer the best possible essay examples
- Plus BONUS high vs low scoring essays, fully annotated (what works and what doesn't) so you know exactly what you need to do

Rated 5 stars across all students

Peter

I thought my teacher had taught me all the essay structures, but this ebook really dives into detail more structures that could potentially work much better for you! Highly recommend.

Simone

The price of this ebook has been so worth it for me because now I'm top of my class! No matter what text you're studying, the examples are universal and you can learn a lot from them!

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