“The first seven years” by Bernard Malamud - Prewriting Assignment

**Activity One: Analyzing the Prompt**

Read the writing prompt below:

In Bernard Malamud’s short story, “The First Seven Years,” characters show their views of love in different ways. Pick any two characters in the story and write a short essay comparing what they seem to be saying or showing about love. Your essay should have a clear thesis, introduction, body paragraphs (two) with appropriate and correctly embedded quotations, and a conclusion.

1. What specific items do you need to compare?
2. Underline the statement in the prompt that explains the purpose of your writing assignment. Why exactly are you comparing these two characters’ perspectives about love?

**Activity Two: Writing a Thesis Statement for a Compare/Contrast Essay**

Like thesis statements for literary analysis papers, a thesis statement for a compare/contrast essay answers the question of the writing prompt and expresses your position on or interpretation of a particular subject. However, compare/contrast thesis statements need to be include additional information to help your readers understand the direction of your essay.

In order to write a compare/contrast thesis statement, you must include:

* the items you are comparing.
* the relationship between the two items OR the reason that one item is better than another.

When writing your thesis statement, do not simply state that the two items are alike or different. Instead, use your thesis statement to identify why the comparison is useful or important to understand. You want your readers to understand how comparing and contrasting these items helps them better understand the characters, tones, or themes of the text.

Now, review the writing prompt for your compare/contrast essay.

In Bernard Malamud’s short story, “The First Seven Years,” characters show their views of love in different ways. Pick any two characters in the story and write a short essay comparing what they seem to be saying or showing about love. Your essay should have a clear thesis, introduction, body paragraphs (two) with appropriate and correctly embedded quotations, and a conclusion.

Write your own thesis statements that addresses the writing prompt:

While Bernard Malamud presents \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (insert your first character’s name here) perspective

regarding love as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, (insert point of view regarding love) (insert point of view regarding love)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (insert your second character’s name here) actions and words reveal that love

is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ . (insert point of view regarding love) (insert point of view regarding love)

**Activity Three: Writing Introductions for Compare/Contrast Essays**

When writing compare/contrast essays about a literature topic, you will want to follow some of the same organizational strategies for developing your introduction as you would follow when you write literary analysis papers. In your introduction, you will want to include some background information about the characters you are comparing and contrasting, as well as provide reasons as to why the comparison is significant or how the comparison helps you understand an idea better.

Write an introduction for you compare/contrast essay, following the general outline below:

* Background information (What is my subject?):
* What are you comparing/contrasting? (Identify the title and the author of the text as well as the characters you are comparing/contrasting.) In the short story “The First Seven Years” by Bernard Malamud…
* What points of comparison will you use? (Identify the common category for the point of comparison):
* What is your purpose for writing this essay? (In general, what will you be discussing in this essay?):
* Thesis Statement (Why is this comparison significant?):

**Activity Four: Organizing and Developing A Comparison**

When organizing your compare/contrast essay, you first need to determine the categories, or points of comparison you will discuss.

Below, list possible points of comparison you could use to address the writing prompt.

* Character One View on love
* Character Two View on love

Each paragraph of a compare/contrast essay will need a topic sentence/assertion, textual evidence, and commentary that helps the reader of your essay understand how your evidence supports your arguments.

**Activity Five: Writing a Compare/Contrast Paragraph (8-9 sentences)**

Write a paragraph that explains how your first character views love.

**Topic Sentence:**

**Introduction to the quotation, quotation, and citation using** (Malamud ).

**Reasoning or commentary about your first character’s perspective regarding love (at least two sentences)**

**Assertion/Transition to introduce your character’s second perspective regarding love (use the Transition Toolbox):**

**Introduction to the quotation, quotation, and citation using** (Malamud ).

**Reasoning or commentary about your first character’s perspective regarding love (at least two sentences)**

**Concluding Sentence** (Why is your character’s perspective about love important in helping readers understand the theme of the text?

**Activity Six: Writing a Compare/Contrast Paragraph (8-9 sentences)**

Write the second paragraph that explains how your second character views love.

**Topic Sentence:**

**Introduction to the quotation, quotation, and citation using** (Malamud ).

**Reasoning or commentary about your second character’s perspective regarding love (at least two sentences)**

**Assertion/Transition to introduce your character’s second perspective regarding love (use the Transition Toolbox):**

**Introduction to the quotation, quotation, and citation using** (Malamud ).

**Reasoning or commentary about your first character’s perspective regarding love (at least two sentences)**

**Concluding Sentence** (Why is this character’s perspective about love important in helping readers understand the overall meaning of the text?)

**Activity Seven: Writing a Conclusion for a Compare/Contrast Essay**

When writing a conclusion for compare/contrast essays, you want to avoid repeating the assertions or listing the similarities and differences you have already covered in your paper. Instead, focus on explaining what new connections readers can make between the two items you are comparing. Is one character’s perspective on love better or worse than the other? Why is the relationship between these two ideas important? While conclusions do not need to be lengthy, they do need to tie together for readers the points of comparison made in the body paragraphs to the argument you presented in your thesis statement.

When thinking about your conclusions, consider the following questions:

* Are the items you are comparing and contrasting more alike, or are their differences more important?
* Why is it important for readers to think about your comparison?
* What important or interesting conclusions can you draw about these two characters now that you have looked at their similarities and differences?

In the space below, write a conclusion for your compare/contrast essay in which you discuss why you think one character’s view of love is more significant to the overall meaning of the text.