Compare Two Accounts of the Same Event

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In this estimated 40-minute lesson, learners compare two fictional accounts of one event. They identify shared and account-specific details, connect each speaker's position to the account's focus, distinguish omission from contradiction, and limit claims to textual support.

Compare accounts carefully

An account is one person's description of an event. Mark details both accounts include, details only one includes, and statements that cannot both be true. Ask what each speaker could see or do and what the speaker emphasizes. An omitted detail is not automatically a contradiction. Use the words on the page to support your comparison, and avoid deciding who is correct unless the evidence lets you.

Nora's account — the library display

Invented instructional example.

At 9:10, I checked our book display beside the library window. Sunlight made one blue title card hard to read, so I shifted two labels and asked Sam to check from the doorway. It still looked pale. We moved the table to the inside wall and turned the books outward. I felt relieved when the card was easier to read. Later, someone read a title aloud, but I didn't see which book the visitor chose.

Sam's account — the library display

Invented instructional example.

At 9:15, I stood in the doorway while Nora's group tested the display. The bright window made one title card hard to read from where I stood. We moved the table to the inside wall and turned the books outward. From the doorway, the titles looked easier to read. Later, a visitor stepped closer to read the blue card aloud. I didn't hear which book the visitor picked.

Modeled practice

Read Nora's and Sam's accounts of the library display. Find two details they both include, one detail that appears only in Nora's account, and one detail that appears only in Sam's. Explain how their positions or roles shape what they notice. Do the accounts disagree about which book the visitor chose? Compare your thinking with the model.

> Both describe a bright window making a title card hard to read, and both say the group moved the table to the inside wall and turned the books outward. Nora alone mentions shifting two labels and feeling relieved. Sam alone reports that a visitor stepped closer to read the blue card. Nora worked with the labels; Sam watched from the doorway, shaping what each noticed. Neither account identifies which book the visitor chose, so the accounts do not disagree about that choice.

Imani's account — the direction sign

Invented instructional example.

Before visitors arrived for Community Art Night, I taped our “Art room →” sign to the hallway door. A few minutes later, one corner of the tape started to peel. I took the sign down, noticed a fold in the paper, and smoothed it. I carried it to the corkboard by the entry and taped it there. I felt annoyed that the arrow looked wrinkled. From my spot, people could still see the arrow.

Luis's account — the direction sign

Invented instructional example.

I was greeting visitors during setup for Community Art Night. A few minutes before the doors opened, I saw Imani carry the sign from the hallway door to the corkboard near the entry. I held the corkboard steady while she attached it there. Then I checked from the hall and could read the arrow. I was watching for people who needed directions, so I didn't look closely at the paper or notice whether it had a fold.

Guided practice

With a partner, compare Imani's and Luis's accounts of the direction sign. Mark two details both accounts include. Then name one detail or concern that appears only in Imani's account and one focus that appears only in Luis's. Explain how their roles shape what they notice. Luis says he did not notice a fold; does that contradict Imani's account? Point to the words that support your answer.

Partner comparison notes

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Dev's account — the paper-animal table

Invented instructional example.

Our paper animals were on a low table near the hallway turn. When the first visitors stopped to look, a blue paper fish slid toward the edge as coats brushed past. I asked the group to move the table to the wall and set the fish in the center. We turned the fox and two birds toward the doorway. I was thinking about keeping our artwork flat and easy to see. After the move, I could look at the fish without holding it.

Ari's account — the paper-animal table

Invented instructional example.

I was standing near the entry when three visitors stopped beside the art table. The group moved the table away from the corner and against the wall so people could walk past. They turned the paper animals toward the doorway and placed the blue fish in the middle. I checked the path from the entrance; it felt wider once people could pass without going around the table. I did not ask the artists whether any animal had slid before we moved it.

Independent practice

On your own, compare Dev's and Ari's accounts of moving the paper-animal table. Write a short response that (1) names at least two details both accounts share, (2) compares one detail or emphasis unique to each account, (3) explains how each speaker's position or role shapes the account, and (4) states one thing the accounts do not establish. Decide whether any difference is a contradiction or an omission, and support that decision with the words on the page. Use the optional organizer if helpful.

Independent comparison response

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Compare two accounts

Use this optional organizer with Dev's and Ari's accounts. Record what each account says before you compare. An omitted detail is not automatically a contradiction; the organizer gives space but does not supply answers.

Two details both accounts include

One detail or emphasis only Dev includes

One detail or emphasis only Ari includes

How each speaker's role or position shapes the focus

Contradiction, omission, or different focus? Point to the words.

One thing the two accounts do not establish

Teacher directions

Grade 6 ELA. Adapt the reading and response demands to your students and curriculum.

Prerequisites: Learners can read or listen to a short fictional account and point to a sentence or detail. No prior lesson on point of view is required.

Materials: Learner pages in print or editable format.; Pencil; two colored pencils or highlighters are optional for marking details both accounts share and details only one includes.; Board or display for the modeled comparison; optional.

Estimated preparation: 5 minutes. Basis: Estimate to read the account pairs and keys, prepare learner copies, and optionally prepare a two-column board chart.

Estimated teaching: 40 minutes. Basis: Planning estimate: opening 3 minutes, strategy 5, model 8, guided comparison 10, independent response 12, closure 2.

Before teaching (about 5 minutes, estimate): read all three fictional account pairs and the keys; prepare learner copies; optionally draw columns labeled “both accounts,” “Nora/Account A,” and “Sam/Account B” for the model. No external passage is needed.

Opening — 3 minutes (estimate): ask, “If two people describe the same event, what might each person notice?” Invite one or two low-stakes responses about position or role. Clarify that today's accounts are invented examples and that one account is not automatically more reliable because it includes more details.

Strategy — 5 minutes (estimate): teach the learner sequence: (1) identify the event, (2) mark what both accounts state, (3) mark details only one states, (4) ask what each speaker was positioned to see or do, and (5) name an exact difference or a limit. Explain that an omitted detail is not automatically a contradiction. A contradiction occurs when two statements about the same point cannot both be true; do not invent a conflict from silence.

Model — 8 minutes (estimate): read Nora's and Sam's library-display accounts aloud. Think aloud through two shared details, one account-specific detail from each, and how Nora's work on labels and Sam's doorway position shape their focus. Notice that neither account identifies the visitor's chosen book. Do not infer which book was picked or why the visitor stopped.

Guided practice — 10 minutes (estimate): pairs compare Imani's and Luis's sign accounts. First mark the move from hallway door to the entry corkboard in both. Then compare Imani's attention to the fold and arrow with Luis's attention to directions and visitors. Ask, “Does Luis say the paper had no fold, or that he did not notice one?” Accept concise paraphrases tied to the words; do not treat omission as disproof.

Independent response — 12 minutes (estimate): learners compare Dev's and Ari's paper-animal-table accounts. The organizer is optional and does not supply answers. Score the four criteria separately: shared details, distinct emphases, role/position connection, and careful limits. Accept other accurate details and defensible limits, not only the key's exact choices.

Closure — 2 minutes (estimate): ask learners to complete, “One detail both accounts share is ___. One speaker notices ___ because ___.” Remind them that two accounts can give different views without one being false or complete.

Shortened 30-minute option (estimate): opening 2 minutes; strategy 4; model 6; guided comparison 7; independent response 9; closure 2. Keep the independent pair and all four comparison moves. Shorten the partner share-out, not the evidence check or distinction between omission and contradiction.

Support: read either account aloud or provide text-to-speech, show one account at a time, and let learners mark a shared detail with one symbol and an account-specific detail with another. Offer oral rehearsal or a dictated response when writing is not the target; record the response mode. Keep the comparison reasoning in view. Confirm individual access needs locally; generic suggestions do not replace an access plan.

Extension: ask learners to write a third short account of the same paper-animal-table event from the perspective of a visitor at the doorway. Include two details already stated in the pair and one new

observation the visitor could plausibly make from that position. Label the added detail as invented and avoid claiming it was in Dev's or Ari's account.

Common confusions: an account that omits a detail does not show that the detail did not happen; a different focus does not by itself establish a contradiction; a speaker's role may help explain focus but does not prove motive; one short account does not provide a complete record of the event. Ask learners to point to the exact wording before making a comparison.

All account pairs and the strategy wording are original fictional instructional examples.

Model — intended evidence: Learner identifies accurate shared and account-specific details, links a speaker's position to an emphasis, and avoids turning an omission into a contradiction.

Guided practice — intended evidence: Learner compares the sign's move from the hallway door to the entry corkboard, distinguishes Imani's attention to the paper from Luis's attention to visitors, and recognizes that Luis's lack of notice does not disprove the fold.

Independent response — intended evidence: Learner identifies shared and distinct details accurately, compares speaker focus using account evidence, distinguishes omission from contradiction, and names a defensible limit.

— key for Model

Both accounts describe a bright window making a title card hard to read, and both say the group moved the table to the inside wall and turned the books outward. Nora alone describes shifting two labels, feeling relieved, and not seeing which book the visitor chose. Sam alone says that a visitor stepped closer to read the blue card. Nora's work with the display helps explain her attention to labels; Sam's doorway position helps explain his attention to how the titles looked from there. They do not disagree about which book the visitor chose: neither account identifies the chosen book.

The shared details establish that both accounts describe the same display move. Their unique details reflect different positions and experiences. Nora does not report seeing the visitor's choice, and Sam does not report hearing it, so silence about the choice is not a contradiction.

Both mention the bright window and moving the table to the inside wall. Nora describes the labels and how she felt; Sam describes looking from the doorway and a visitor stepping closer to read the blue card. Their roles and positions shaped their focus. Neither account identifies which book the visitor chose, so the accounts do not disagree about that choice.

Accept other accurate shared details, including turning the books outward or the card becoming easier to read. Accept any supported Nora-only or Sam-only detail. Do not require the exact model wording. The accounts do not establish which book was chosen; do not infer a disagreement when neither account identifies the chosen book.

Scoring criteria: Criterion 1, Criterion 2, Criterion 3, Criterion 4

— key for Guided practice

Both accounts describe Imani moving a sign from the hallway door to the corkboard near the entry for Community Art Night. Imani alone describes tape starting to peel, noticing and smoothing a fold, and feeling annoyed about the wrinkled arrow. Luis alone describes greeting visitors, holding the corkboard, and checking whether people could read the arrow from the hall. Imani's attention to making the sign

helps explain her focus on the fold and arrow; Luis was watching for people who needed directions. Luis's statement that he did not notice a fold does not contradict Imani: he says he did not look closely, not that no fold existed.

The shared move from the hallway door to the entry corkboard connects the accounts to the same event. Imani describes the paper's condition and her own response. Luis describes his greeting role and the sign's usefulness to visitors. Not seeing a detail is not the same as stating that detail was absent.

They both say the sign was moved from the hallway door to the entry corkboard. Imani noticed a fold and worried about the wrinkled arrow, while Luis was checking whether visitors could read it. Luis did not deny the fold; he says he did not inspect the paper closely.

Accept any two details stated in both accounts, such as the sign moving from the hallway door to the entry corkboard, being attached there, or the arrow remaining visible/readable. Only Luis specifies checking from the hall; do not treat that viewing position or the arrow’s stated destination/direction as shared. Accept a different account-specific detail if supported. Do not infer what caused the tape to peel or the fold to form; neither account establishes a cause.

Scoring criteria: Criterion 1, Criterion 2, Criterion 3, Criterion 4

— key for Independent response

Both accounts describe visitors stopping near the paper-animal table, moving the table to the wall, turning the animals toward the doorway, and placing the blue fish in the middle. Dev alone says the fish slid toward the edge as coats brushed past and explains that he wanted the artwork flat and easy to see. Ari alone describes checking whether visitors could pass and says the path felt wider after the move. Dev's role as an artist helps explain his focus on the fish and artwork; Ari's position near the entry helps explain the focus on the walking path. These differences are not contradictions: both accounts can be true. They do not establish which concern first led the group to move the table or whether every visitor found the path wide enough.

The overlap identifies a shared event. The unique details show that Dev and Ari noticed different effects from their positions. Dev says the group moved the table after the fish slid and describes his concern; Ari describes the path and the visitors. The accounts allow both concerns to matter, but they do not establish which one was the sole or first reason.

Both say the table moved to the wall and the paper animals faced the doorway. Dev notices the blue fish sliding and wants the artwork visible; Ari checks the path for people walking through. Their different roles explain their focus. The accounts do not tell us which concern came first.

Accept other accurate overlap, including visitors stopping and the blue fish being placed in the middle. Accept different unique details when the learner names the account and connects the detail to text. A learner may call the perspectives complementary; do not require a single motive. Do not infer that coats damaged the fish or that all visitors had the same experience.

Scoring criteria: Criterion 1, Criterion 2, Criterion 3, Criterion 4

Scoring criteria and extensions

Criterion 1 — scoring criterion

Identifies at least two accurate details both accounts include about the same event. Example: Both Dev and Ari say the paper-animal table was moved against the wall and the animals were turned toward the doorway. Alternatives: Accept another accurate pair of shared details. Do not count a detail from only one account as shared.

Criterion 2 — scoring criterion

Compares at least one accurate account-specific detail or emphasis from each account. Example: Dev describes the fish sliding; Ari describes checking the path for people walking through. Alternatives: Accept any relevant details identified with the correct account. A side-by-side list without a comparison is partial evidence.

Criterion 3 — scoring criterion

Links each speaker's stated role, position, or activity to an emphasis in that speaker's account. Example: Dev focuses on the artwork; Ari checks the path from the entry. Alternatives: Accept other text-based links for both speakers; do not score a guessed motive or personality trait.

Criterion 4 — scoring criterion

Distinguishes contradiction from omission or focus and names a limit on what the accounts establish. Example: Luis did not notice the fold; he does not say it was absent. Alternatives: Accept another precise limit; a clear explanation need not use the word “contradiction.”

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Response teaching: Compare Two Accounts of the Same Event

Compare shared and distinct details, connect focus to role or position, distinguish omission from contradiction, and limit the conclusion.

Use after the original Dev/Ari comparison when a learner lists differences without explaining focus, or calls an omission a disagreement. Check that both accounts were accessible. Read Bea/Tom and model why not seeing a tip does not deny a tip. In Noor/Eli, underline six and five about the same stationary cart at the same clock instant; do not invent a box moving to reconcile them. Ask which wheel detail is merely not noticed. Withhold curtain and mural during this response lesson. Use curtain independently after guided practice and mural on a later occasion. A contradiction identifies incompatible claims; it does not decide which witness is correct.

Planning estimates: preparation 4 minutes; model 4, guided comparison 8, fresh check 7–9. Split model/practice and check if needed; retain all comparison moves.

Use the separate response-teaching, fresh-check and later-check files linked below. Keep the checks aside until the indicated stage. Read-aloud, dictation and other agreed routes can preserve the reasoning target; record the route. These tasks do not assess independent reading when read aloud, and are not validated equivalent tests.

Response teaching — model and guided practice

Reserve: different check after response teaching

Reserve for another occasion: later check

Response practice, fresh check and later check — answer guidance

Noor/Eli: both say Noor wheeled the cart to the hall and parked beside the bench. Noor focuses on wheels and says six boxes; Eli focuses on passage from the doorway and says five. Six versus five on the same stationary cart at the same clock instant is a contradiction. Eli not looking at wheels does not deny Noor watched them. Positions/jobs support these focus links, not a claim about honesty. No independent count establishes which number is correct.

Priya/Owen: both describe music beginning during a curtain/stage observation and both say they carried chairs together after it ended. Priya’s rope check and Owen’s performer row are distinct. Backstage rope handling and audience-facing observation explain focus. Fully closed before the first note versus fully open through that note cannot both describe the same curtain state. Not inspecting the rope is an omission, not denial of the knot. The accounts alone do not establish the actual curtain state or why reports differ.

An/Mel: both describe the large red flower and subsequent brush washing in the sink. An adds two green leaves and checks their shapes from the left; Mel adds an across-room visibility focus while standing back. Cannot make out small shapes does not deny leaves. Neither account tells how viewers judged the completed mural, exact dimensions, or whether other small shapes were present. Accept accurate alternatives with wording-based support.

Fictional response examples — for teacher interpretation

These invented responses illustrate evidence to notice; they are not observations of actual learners or diagnostic ability labels.

Sound: “Both describe moving the cart to the hall and parking by the bench. Noor watches wheels while pushing; Eli watches passage from the doorway. Their six/five counts disagree about the same stationary cart at the same clock instant. Eli not checking wheels does not deny Noor’s concern. We cannot tell which count was right.” Shows the complete guided comparison. Seek independent evidence with curtain; do not infer general historical-source competence from this fictional pair.

Partial: “Noor saw six and Eli saw five. Both say the cart moved to the hall.” Finds the conflicting counts and a shared event, but role/focus, omission and limit remain unstated. Prompt for each exact clause, explain the wheel omission and record the limit before curtain.

Plausible-error: “Eli says Noor is wrong about the wheels because he did not look at them.” Treats a lack of observation as denial. Contrast ‘did not look’ with ‘there were no wheels’ and ask which is actually written. Rebuild the omission explanation using Bea/Tom, then compare Noor/Eli and use curtain unseen.