Compare-Contrast Essay

**Score 4 Benchmark Paper** The writing is focused on the topic and the purpose given in the prompt, conveys a sense of completeness, and follows a sound organizational plan. Similarities precede differences; each is discussed in a well-developed paragraph, with a strong topic sentence. Transitional words (Likewise, Despite these similarities, on the other hand) help point out comparisons and contrasts. Details and examples (Anne Geddes, the famous photographer; painters can paint over an error) support each main point. A mature command of language is evidenced in the use of precise verbs in the active voice (create, display, capture, appreciate) and fluent sentences, which include several infinitive phrases (to look shadowy or bright, To create a painting, to make a sketch, to develop their own photos).

**Score 3 Benchmark Paper** The paper is generally focused on the topic and purpose, although there are some lapses (paragraph 4). The paper is fairly well organized, with similarities preceding differences. However, the information in paragraph 6 belongs in paragraph 2, and the paper has no conclusion. Adequate topic sentences, details, and examples are given in each paragraph. Some word choice is vague and uninteresting (good, Here’s another thing, not so good), but some is precise (smear, spattered). There is some variety in sentence structure and length.

**Score 2 Benchmark Paper** The writing is generally focused on the topic and purpose, but paragraph 8 is off topic, and paragraph 9 is off mode. The paper lacks a sense of completeness and shows little evidence of an organizational pattern. Many potential ideas for comparison and contrast are mentioned, but none are developed in paragraphs with topic sentences, transitional words, or supporting details and examples. There are few precise words and many short sentences.
Compare-Contrast Essay (continued)

Score 1  Benchmark Paper The writer makes an attempt to focus on the topic and purpose, but quickly veers off course and discusses only one of the subjects—photographs. Although the essay presents ideas clearly and supports them with details, the essay fails to discuss similarities and differences.