

Transitional, to other side of contrast.

Contrast, noting differences. Discusses several aspects of one town, then turns to the other.

("Shady ladies": colloquial.)

Simple, direct use of contrast.

games, or shady ladies. But anyone who wants a wilder time than the square dance sponsored monthly by the Town Board can always go up to Eden, where there's only one church, poorly attended and in need of paint, but five thriving taverns. Most of these feature shady ladies, dark dance floors, and wicked-looking card rooms in back. Several broad-minded couples even formed a "free-trade society" called the Swinging Dingles. But last year in Riverton when a new dentist tried to start a similar diversion, they promptly arrested him for disturbing the peace and took him to the county jail over on the coast.

MARK TWAIN

MARK TWAIN was the pen name of Samuel Clemens (1835–1910). He was born in Missouri and became the first author of importance to emerge from "beyond the Mississippi." Although best known for bringing humor, realism, and Western local color to American fiction, Mark Twain wanted to be remembered as a philosopher and social critic. Still widely read, in most languages and in all parts of the world, are his numerous short stories (his "tall tales," in particular), autobiographical accounts, and novels, especially *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). Ernest Hemingway called the last "the best book we've had," an appraisal with which many critics agree.

Two Ways of Seeing a River

"Two Ways of Seeing a River" (editor's title) is from Mark Twain's "Old Times on the Mississippi," which was later expanded and published in book form as *Life on the Mississippi* (1883). It is autobiographical. The prose of this selection is vivid, as in all of Mark Twain's writing, but considerably more reflective in tone than most.

Now when I had mastered the language of this water and had come to know every trifling feature that bordered the great river as familiarly as I knew the letters of the alphabet, I had made a valuable acquisition. But I had lost something, too. I had lost something which could never be restored to me while I lived. All the grace, the beauty, the poetry, had gone out of the majestic river! I still kept in mind a certain wonderful sunset which I witnessed when steamboating was new to me. A broad expanse of the river was turned to blood; in the middle distance the red hue brightened into gold, through which a solitary log came floating, black and conspicuous; in one place a long, slanting mark lay sparkling upon the water; in another the surface was broken by boiling, tumbling rings that were as many-tinted as an opal; where the ruddy flush was faintest was a

smooth spot that was covered with graceful circles and radiating lines, ever so delicately traced; the shore on our left was densely wooded, and the somber shadow that fell from this forest was broken in one place by a long, ruffled trail that shone like silver; and high above the forest wall a clean-stemmed dead tree waved a single leafy bough that glowed like a flame in the unobstructed splendor that was flowing from the sun. There were graceful curves, reflected images, woody heights, soft distances, and over the whole scene, far and near, the dissolving lights drifted steadily, enriching it every passing moment with new marvels of coloring.

I stood like one bewitched. I drank it in, in a speechless rapture. The world was new to me and I had never seen anything like this at home. But as I have said, a day came when I began to cease from noting the glories and the charms which the moon and the sun and the twilight wrought upon the river's face; another day came when I ceased altogether to note them. Then, if that sunset scene had been repeated, I should have looked upon it without rapture and should have commented upon it inwardly after this fashion: "This sun means that we are going to have wind to-morrow; that floating log means that the river is rising, small thanks to it; that slanting mark on the water refers to a bluff reef which is going to kill somebody's steamboat one of these nights, if it keeps on stretching out like that; those tumbling 'boils' show a dissolving bar and a changing channel there; the lines and circles in the slick water over yonder are a warning that that troublesome place is shoaling up dangerously; that silver streak in the shadow of the forest is the 'break' from a new snag and he has located himself in the very best place he could have found to fish for steamboats; that tall dead tree, with a single living branch, is not going to last long, and then how is a body ever going to get through this blind place at night without the friendly old landmark?"

No, the romance and beauty were all gone from the river. All the value any feature of it had for me now was the amount of usefulness it could furnish toward compassing the safe piloting of a steamboat. Since those days, I have pitied doctors from my heart. What does the lovely flush in a beauty's cheek mean to a doctor but a "break" that ripples above some deadly disease? Are not all her visible charms sown thick with what are to him the signs and symbols of hidden decay? Does he ever see her beauty at all, or doesn't he simply view her professionally and comment upon her

unwholesome condition all to himself? And doesn't he sometimes wonder whether he has gained most or lost most by learning his trade?

Meanings and Values

1. No selection could better illustrate the intimate relationship of several skills with which students of writing should be familiar, especially the potentials in "point of view" (and attitude), "style," and "tone."
 - a. What is the point of view in paragraph 1? (See Guide to Terms: *Point of View*.)
 - b. Where, and how, does it change in paragraph 2?
 - c. Why is the shift important to the author's contrast?
 - d. Show how the noticeable change of tone is related to this change in point of view. (Guide: *Style/Tone*.)
 - e. Specifically, what changes in style accompany the shift in tone and attitude?
 - f. How effectively do they all relate to the central theme itself? (Remember that such effects seldom just "happen"; the writer *makes* them happen.)
- 2a. Is the first paragraph primarily objective or subjective? (Guide: *Objective/Subjective*.)
 - b. How about the latter part of paragraph 2?
 - c. Are your answers to 2a and 2b related to point of view? If so, how?
- 3a. Does the author permit himself to engage in sentimentality? (Guide: *Sentimentality*.) If so, how could it have been avoided without damage to his theme's development?
 - b. If not, what restraints does the author use?
4. Do you think the last sentence refers only to doctors? Why, or why not?
5. List other vocations in which you assume (or perhaps know) that the beauty and romance eventually give way to practical realities; state briefly, for each, why this hardening should be expected.

Expository Techniques

- 1a. Where do you find a second comparison or contrast? Which is it?
 - b. Is the comparison/contrast made within itself, with something external, or both? Explain.

- c. Is this part of the writing closely enough related to the major contrast to justify its use? Why or why not?
- 2a. In developing the numerous points of the major contrast, would an alternating, point-to-point system have been better? Why, or why not?
 - b. Show how the author uses organization within the groups to assist in the overall contrast.
- 3a. What is the most noteworthy feature of syntax in paragraphs 1 and 2? (Guide: *Syntax*.)
 - b. How effectively does it perform the function intended?
4. What is gained by the apparently deliberate decision to use rhetorical questions only toward the end? (Guide: *Rhetorical Questions*.)

Diction and Vocabulary

1. Why would the colloquialism in the last sentence of paragraph 2 have been inappropriate in the first paragraph? (Guide: *Colloquial Expressions*.)
- 2a. Compare the quality of metaphors in the quotation of paragraph 2 with the quality of those preceding it. (Guide: *Figures of Speech*.)
 - b. Is the difference justified: Why, or why not?

Suggestions for Writing and Discussion

1. Select for further development one of the vocations in your answer to question 5 of "Meanings and Values." How would one's attitude be apt to change from the beginning romantic appeal?
2. Show how, if at all, Mark Twain's contrast might be used to show parallels to life itself — e.g., differences in the idealism and attitudes of youth and maturity.
3. Explore the possibility, citing examples if possible, of being able to retain *both* the "rapture" and the "usefulness."

(NOTE: Suggestions for topics requiring development by use of COMPARISON and CONTRAST are on page 123, at the end of this section.)

E. B. WHITE

E. B. WHITE, distinguished essayist, was born in Mount Vernon, New York, in 1899. A graduate of Cornell University, White has worked as a reporter and advertising copywriter, and in 1926 he joined the staff of *The New Yorker* magazine. Since 1937 he has done most of his writing at his farm in Maine, for many years contributing a regular column, "One Man's Meat," for *Harper's* magazine and free-lance editorials for the "Notes and Comments" column of *The New Yorker*. White has also written children's books, two volumes of verse, and, with James Thurber, *Is Sex Necessary?* (1929). With his wife Katherine White, he compiled *A Subtreasury of American Humor* (1941). Collections of his own essays include *One Man's Meat* (1942), *The Second Tree from the Corner* (1953), *The Points of My Compass* (1962), and *Essays of E. B. White* (1977). In 1959 he revised and enlarged William Strunk's *The Elements of Style*, a textbook still widely used in college classrooms. White has received many honors and writing awards as he gained renown for his crisp, highly individual style and his sturdy independence of thought.

Dog Training

"Dog Training," from *One Man's Meat*, is a good selection in which to study the style and humor that characterize nearly all of White's writing. Classifiable as a familiar essay, "Dog Training" utilizes a running, point-by-point comparison and contrast. The theme will doubtless be familiar to anyone who has ever owned a dog — in the old days or the new.

There is a book out called *Dog Training Made Easy* and it was sent to me the other day by the publisher, who rightly guessed that it would catch my eye. I like to read books on dog training. Being the owner of dachshunds, to me a book on dog discipline becomes a

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