

Baruch COLLEGE | WRITING CENTER

COMPARING AND CONTRASTING WORKSHOP

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LEARNING GOALS

At the close of the workshop, students will be able to:

- Select and use an appropriate graphic organizer in order to identify significant similarities and differences between two provided visual texts.
- Develop thesis statements from observed sets of significant similarities and differences.

OVERVIEW

In this workshop, students participate in two primary activities designed to develop strategies for comparing and contrasting with significance:

- In order to practice essential comparative skills, students identify similarities and differences between two print advertisements, organizing their findings in a Venn diagram. Students then collaborate in drafting thesis statements based on this material.
- Students again compare and contrast a pair of ads, but do so with the explicit aim of emphasizing key differences among a pattern of similarities; they again draft thesis statements based on their observations, concluding with peer review.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction

Begin by asking students why compare-and-contrast assignments are so common. Engage students in a brief discussion to identify comparison as an analytical method to make revelations and develop ideas that would be otherwise impossible. In other words, introduce comparing and contrasting not as an end in itself, but a means to an end: it helps writers develop and structure claims with significance.

Part One: Identifying Similarities and Differences

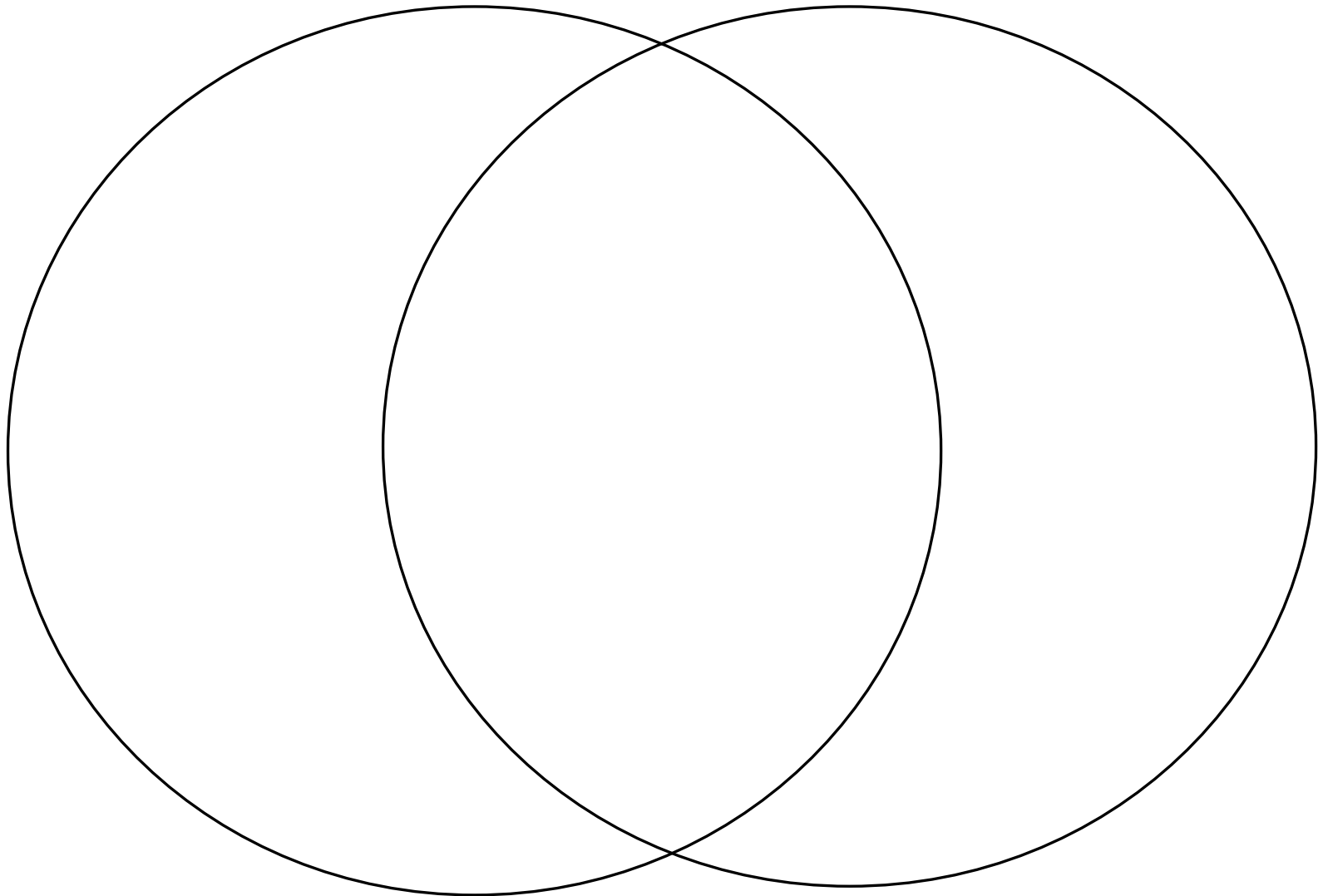
1. **Distribute Handout 1, “Brainstorming Strategy (Venn Diagram),”** and introduce the Venn diagram as a strategy for brainstorming similarities and differences.
 - Remind students that comparing and contrasting can be performed on virtually any set of objects.
 - Explain that today’s workshop will use recent print advertisements.
2. **Distribute Handout 2: “Nike Men’s Ad” and Handout 3: “Nike Women’s Ad”** and briefly identify the images as recent ads for Nike.
 - Encourage students to observe similarities and differences in both visual and textual elements
 - Provide time for independent recording on Handout 1.
3. **In a Venn diagram, record on the whiteboard as students share out and discuss their observations.** Aim for a relatively even distribution of similarities and differences.
4. **Ask students, “How can these notes be developed into a thesis statement? What kinds of theses can you generate from this material?”**
 - Facilitate collaborative verbal drafting of potential thesis statements, recording as students speak.
 - Discuss strengths and weaknesses of the group’s results, **emphasizing that merely identifying key similarities and differences—while necessary—isn’t sufficient for a comparative thesis to have *significance*.**
 - Explain that while Venn diagrams can be useful in brainstorming and observing, they often can’t help a writer with the next, more important step: developing significance for comparisons (or, a response to the “so what?” question).
 - Introduce Part Two as providing strategies for precisely this.

Part Two: Developing Significance

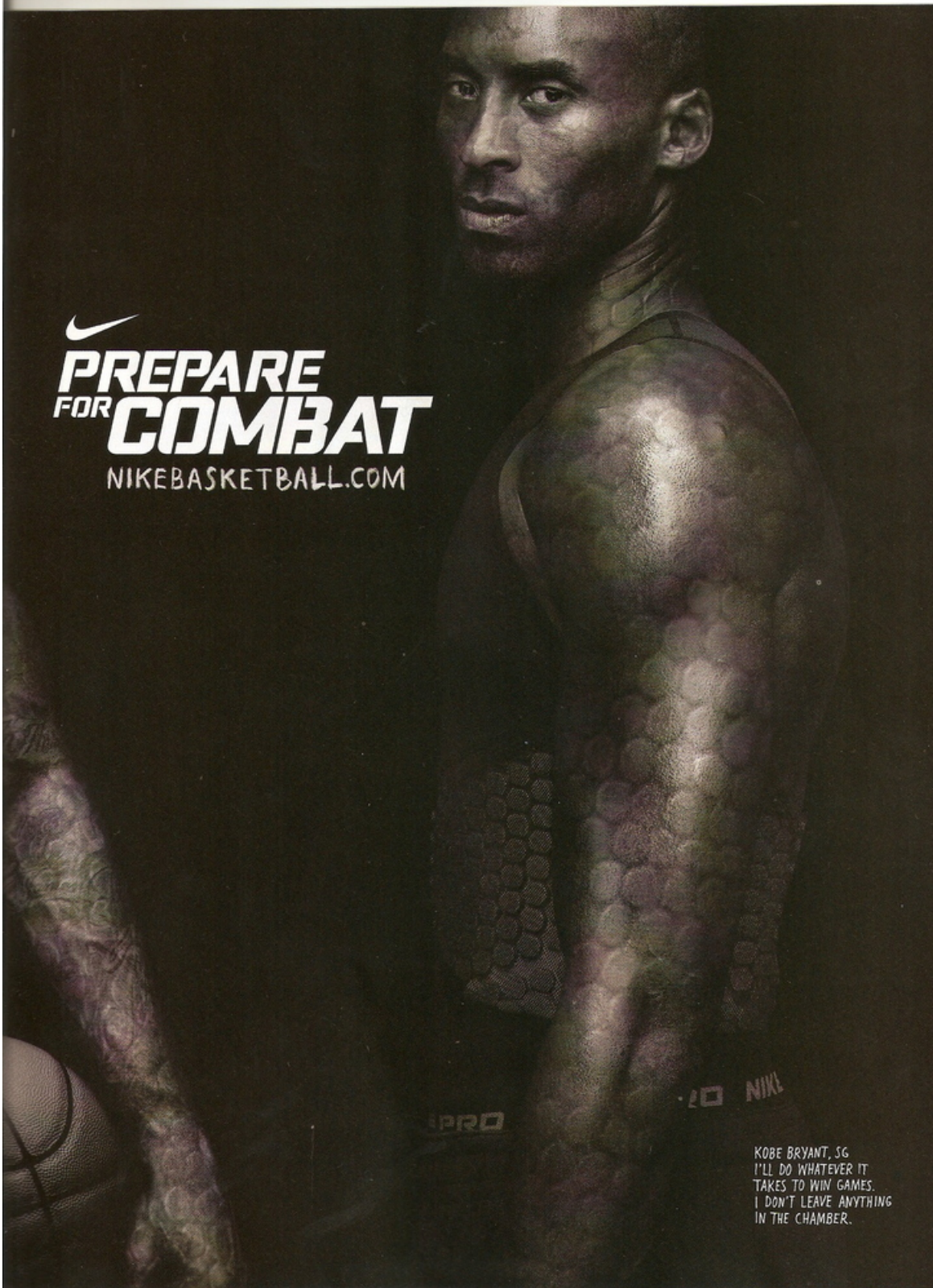
1. Recalling students’ specific work in Part One as possible, **explain that one way to build significance into a comparison is to emphasize a key similarity *or* difference.**
 - **Distribute Handout 4, “Strategies for Significance.”**

- Assist students in understanding these unbalanced Venns as tools for developing claims that identify *significant* differences or similarities—namely, those that depart from an expected pattern.
2. **Distribute Handout 5, “Dove Ad.”**
 - Explain that the group will now compare the Dove ad and the Nike Women’s ad.
 - Ask students to discuss selection between the two types of unbalanced Venns.
 - Encourage them to consider that sometimes one model better suits a comparison than the other, but that generally speaking, either can be used depending on a writer’s interests.
 3. **Using the unbalanced Venn students select, record on the whiteboard** as they compare and contrast the two women’s ads.
 4. **Return to collaborative verbal drafting of thesis statements.** Again ask students:
 - “How can these notes be developed into a thesis statement?”
 - “What kinds of theses can you generate from this material?”
 - Encourage reflection on how the new Venn model shapes observation, and provide sentence-level templates for departing from an expected pattern, such as:
 - While it may seem that A and B have little in common apart from _____, they actually share...
 - Although A and B share _____, they significantly differ in that...
 - A and B appear to have many commonalities, but depart from one another when...
 - Despite many clear differences, A and B overlap in terms of...
 5. **Provide a few minutes for students to write independently.** Ask them to draft a thesis statement based on the board work.
 6. **Briefly share these out,** noting strengths and weaknesses, as well as strategies for refinement.

BRAINSTORMING STRATEGY (VENN DIAGRAM)



NIKE MEN'S AD



NIKE WOMEN'S AD



MY BUTT IS BIG

AND ROUND LIKE THE LETTER C
AND TEN THOUSAND LUNGES
HAVE MADE IT ROUNDER
BUT NOT SMALLER
AND THAT'S JUST FINE.

IT'S A SPACE HEATER

FOR MY SIDE OF THE BED

IT'S MY AMBASSADOR

TO THOSE WHO WALK BEHIND ME

IT'S A BORDER COLLIE

THAT HERDS SKINNY WOMEN
AWAY FROM THE BEST DEALS

AT CLOTHING SALES.

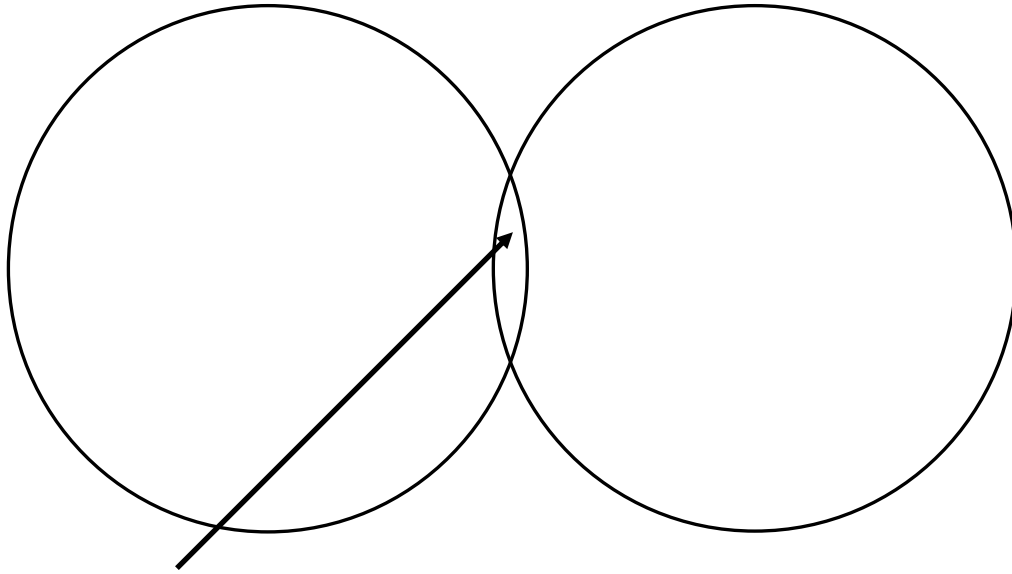
MY BUTT IS BIG

AND THAT'S JUST FINE
AND THOSE WHO MIGHT SCORN IT
ARE INVITED TO KISS IT.

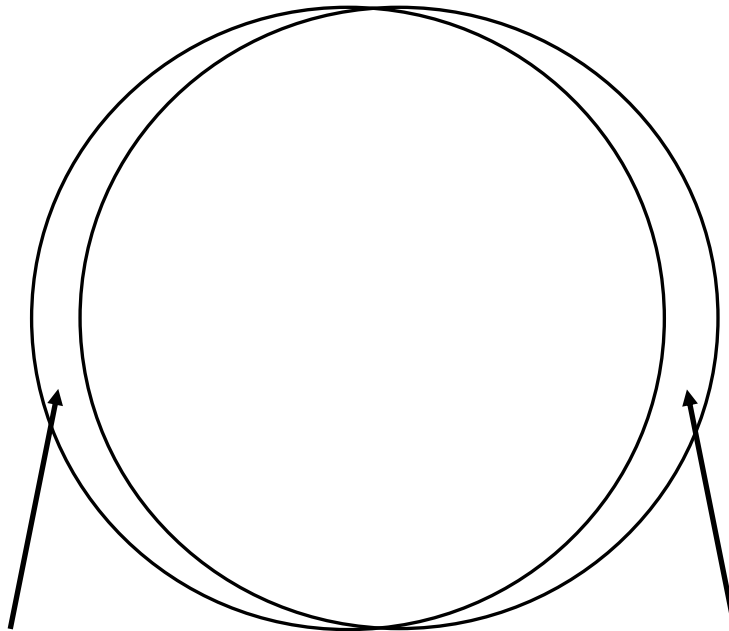
JUST DO IT.

NIKEWOMEN.COM 

STRATEGIES FOR SIGNIFICANCE

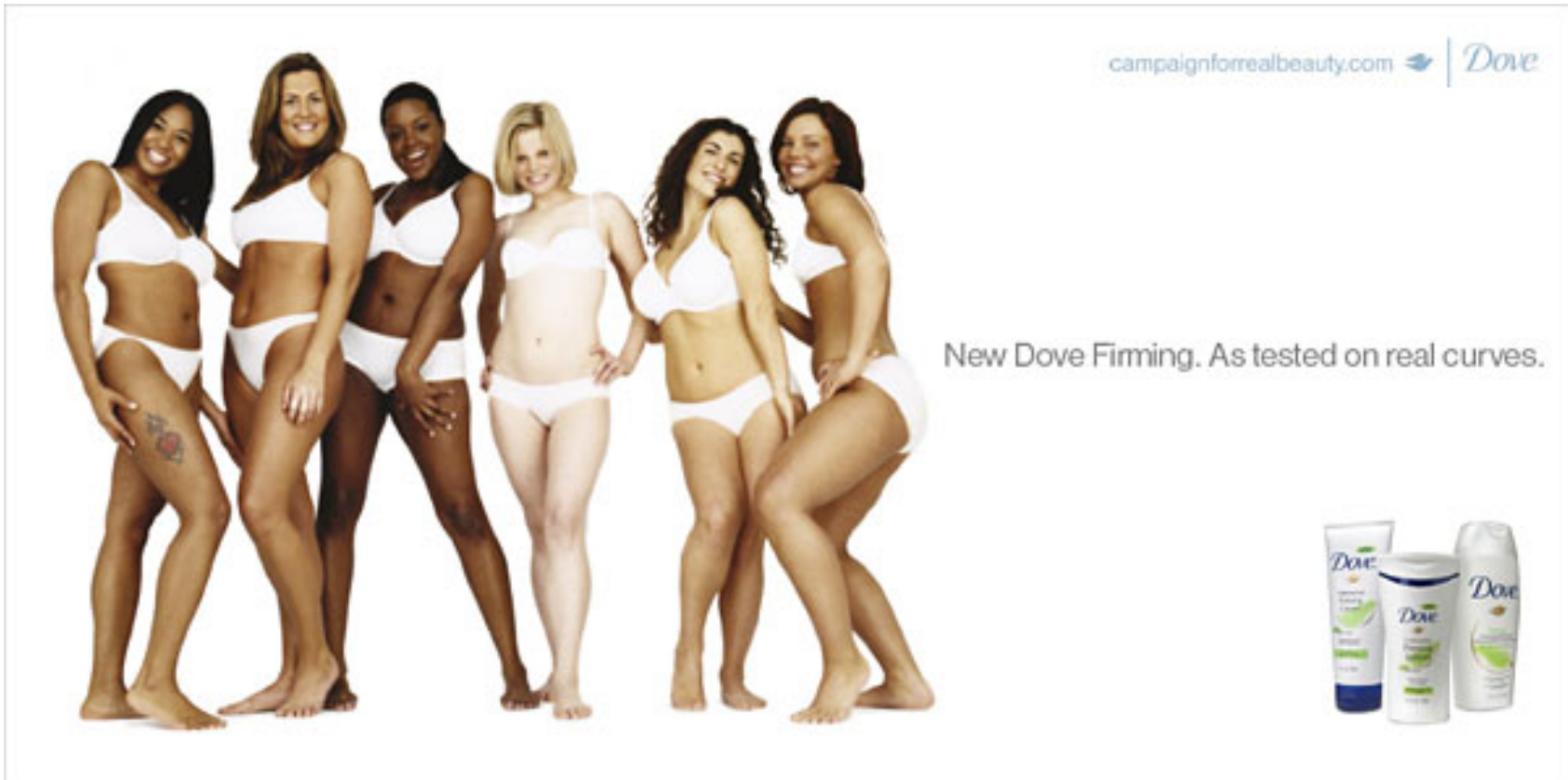


If differences are easy to identify, emphasize an important similarity.



If similarities are easy to identify, emphasize an important difference.

DOVE AD



campaignforrealbeauty.com | Dove

New Dove Firming. As tested on real curves.

The advertisement features six diverse women of various ethnicities and body types, all wearing white bikinis and posing confidently. In the bottom right corner, three Dove Firming products are displayed: a tube of cream, a jar of cream, and a spray bottle. The background is plain white.