

EXAMPLE SHORT CONTRAST ESSAY

Prompt: Write an Informative Theme based on your research to contrast gorillas to humans on at least three dimensions. Include at least five paragraphs in your theme. Be sure to include in-text citations where needed as well as a reference list. Use the MLA style.

TITLE OF PAPER: Our Distant Cousins

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Our Distant Cousins

Humans have a distant relative called the gorilla. Indeed, gorillas look so much like humans that explorers thought that gorillas were a tribe of hairy people. They were given their name “gorilla” by an explorer because the word “gorilla” means “tribe of hairy people” (“Gorilla” 2). Like chimpanzees and orangutans, gorillas are anthropoids which means “resembling humans” (“Webster’s” 38). Nevertheless, gorillas are very different from humans because of some aspects of their appearance, their intelligence, and their eating habits.

With regard to their appearance, gorillas would never truly be mistaken for humans because they look so different in relation to their weight, body covering, the size of their arms and legs, and how they move around. First, both male and female gorillas are typically heavier than their human counterparts. Male gorillas weigh about 400 pounds, and female gorillas weigh about 200 pounds (“All about gorillas” 2). The normal weight of humans is much less, with human males weighing an average of 195 pounds and human females weighing about 165 pounds (“Body Weight” 2). Second, most of gorillas’ bodies are covered by thick fur. Only the palms of their hands, soles of their feet, noses, lips, and ears do not have fur. Most humans have hair on just a few spots like their heads, arms, and legs. Third, the muscles in gorillas’ arms are larger than the muscles in their legs. This is the opposite of human legs and arms, where the muscles in their legs are larger than the muscles in their arms. Also, gorillas’ legs are shorter than their arms. Again, this is the opposite of humans, where their legs are longer than their arms.

Finally, gorillas mostly walk around on all fours, putting weight on the knuckles of their hands. They only walk on their feet when carrying something or when defending something. In contrast, humans mainly walk on their feet and appear upright.

Another way gorillas are different from humans relates to their intelligence. Even though gorillas' heads are large, their brains weigh less than half of human brains. Gorilla brains weigh about 500 grams; human brains weigh about 1,250 grams ("Brain facts..." 1). That means gorillas have fewer brain cells than humans. Not surprisingly then, although gorillas communicate with each other using vocalizations, they do not seem to be capable of learning a language like humans do. They make about 22 different sounds ("Gorilla king" 1), whereas humans make hundreds of sounds. Some scientists have been able to teach a few gorillas sign language, but opinions differ on how skilled the gorillas have become with signing. In contrast, humans can learn several languages plus sign language. Furthermore, gorillas do not seem to learn or invent new things in the same ways that humans do. Only a few gorillas have been known to use tools, for example. Humans, on the other hand, are constantly inventing new things, such as technological tools like computers and phones.

A further way in which gorillas are distinct from humans relates to their eating habits. In contrast to humans, who spend only a little time eating every day, gorillas spend most of their time eating. Upon awakening, they eat all morning and then take a nap in the afternoon during the hottest part of the day. In the late afternoon and early evening, they eat until the sun goes down. Overall, they mostly eat plants, including wild banana, wild celery, ginger, and tapioca. They can each eat as many as 40 pounds of leaves and roots in one day ("What do gorillas eat?" 1). Interestingly, they rarely eat something other than plants. They might occasionally eat a bird's egg or an insect. They rarely drink water; they obtain moisture from the plants they eat.

Humans, on the other hand, eat meats, dairy, and grains in addition to plants and fruits, and they do not eat as much food. Their meals are at certain times each day. Humans drink water and other beverages. They are awake most of the day and engage in a variety of activities besides eating and sleeping.

To conclude, gorillas have some characteristics that are distinctly different from human characteristics, including how they look, how intelligent they are, and what they eat. Although they can walk upright in certain situations, their hairy appearance and the fact that they walk mainly on all fours make gorillas look quite different from humans. Despite the fact that a few gorillas have learned some sign language, gorillas do not seem to be as intelligent as humans. Furthermore, they focus their time and activities on eating plants and sleeping. Thus, although they are related to humans, all of these traits make gorillas distant cousins to humans in the animal family.

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