Comparing and Contrasting

Learning the Skill

Have you ever read a story that reminded you of another story you had read? What were some things the two stories had in common? In what ways were they different? When you ask yourself these kinds of questions as you read, you are comparing and contrasting information.

When you compare two or more subjects, you explain how they are similar. When you contrast them, you explain how they are different.

Use the following guidelines to help you compare and contrast while you read:

- Ask yourself what things—people, places, events—are being compared or contrasted in the text.
- Look for signal words in the text to see if the author is presenting information to compare or contrast.
  - Some comparison signal words are same, at the same time, like, and still.
  - Words signaling contrasts may include some, others, different, however, rather, yet, but, and or.
- Determine common categories, or areas, to use for comparing and contrasting.
- Look for similarities and differences within the common categories.
- Organize your comparisons and contrasts in a chart.

Practicing the Skill

Directions: Read the passage below, and then complete the activity that follows.

Russia contains a variety of landforms. Rugged mountains and plateaus lie in the south and east. In the north and west, vast lowland plains reach the horizon.

Most of European Russia lies on the Northern European Plain. This fertile area has Russia’s mildest climate, and about 75 percent of Russians live here. Much of Russia’s agriculture and industry are found on the Northern European Plain.

To the far south of European Russia are the rugged Caucasus Mountains. Located near a fault line, the Caucasus area is prone to destructive earthquakes.

East of the Ural Mountains is Asian Russia, which includes Siberia. Northern Siberia has one of the coldest climates in the world. It is a vast treeless plain that remains frozen much of the year. The few people who reside here earn a living by fishing, hunting seals and walruses, or herding reindeer.

To the south of the northern plains area is a region of dense forests where people earn a living by lumbering or hunting. Plains, plateaus, and mountain ranges cover the southern part of Siberia.

Mountains also rise on the far eastern Kamchatka Peninsula. These mountains cause many volcanoes.
Comparing and Contrasting  The chart below is called a comparison frame. Use information from the previous page to fill in the empty cells. Note that the subjects being compared and contrasted are written across the top as headings. The left side of the chart lists the categories being compared and contrasted. Underline the similarities you find between the two regions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>European Russia</th>
<th>Asian Russia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landforms</td>
<td>Vast treeless plain in the north; southern Siberia has mountains, plateaus, and plains.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>milder climate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Few people live in this area.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of work available</td>
<td>agriculture and industry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Applying the Skill

Directions: Read the passage below. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, complete the activity that follows.

Railroads were the primary means of transportation during the Soviet Era and are still important today. The heavily populated area west of the Urals is covered by an extensive railroad network. This system is linked to the famed Trans-Siberian Railroad that runs from Moscow in the west to Vladivostok in the east.

Russia still lacks an effective highway system. No multilane highways link major cities, and the roads that do exist are in poor condition. The government is currently building a 6,600-mile highway across the country.

One reason that highway improvements are needed is because Russian car ownership is increasing. In Soviet times, few families had cars. Now about 50 percent of Russian families own a car.

Russia's communication systems also need improvement. For years, telephones were less common in Russia than in most European countries. Since the early 1990s, however, major improvements have occurred. New phone lines allow for the rapid transfer of information, making it easier to use the Internet in Russia. Rural areas, however, still have poor phone service.

Comparing and Contrasting Compare and contrast the transportation and communication systems of the Soviet Era to the present. Create a Venn diagram to show the similarities and differences.