COMPARATIVE CLAUSES

CEFR Level C2 — Mastery

English Language Worksheets | 4 Worksheets + Answer Key

Worksheet 1: Comparison as a Rhetorical Instrument

At C2, the comparison decides what the reader accepts as the standard.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Rhetorical uses of comparison

Device	Effect	Example
suppressed baseline	The than-clause is withheld; the claim cannot be tested	“Crime is falling. Our streets are safer.”
reproachful equivalence	‘no + comparative’ implies improvement was owed	“Thirty years on, they are no freer than before.”
corrective comparison	‘not so much X as Y’ substitutes the writer's label	“It was not a rescue so much as a seizure.”
ironic ‘no less’	Asserts equality where surprise is the point	“The reformers proved no less venal than the men they replaced.”
escalating correlative	‘the … the …’ converts a claim into a law	“The louder the denial, the surer the guilt.”
false equivalence	Comparing incommensurables to level them	“Both sides were as bad as each other.”
comparative anticlimax	A grand build, a deflating standard	“After every reform, the service is marginally less appalling.”

PART A — **Identify the device**

Name the device in each sentence and explain its rhetorical effect in context.

1. “The new administration proved no less secretive than the one it had denounced.”
Context: a political history

Device: _____ Effect: _____

2. “Our schools are better. Our hospitals are stronger. Our future is brighter.”
Context: a campaign speech

Device: _____ Effect: _____

3. “The more strenuously the company denied liability, the more certain the jury became.”
Context: a courtroom report

Device: _____ Effect: _____

4. “After four inquiries and a decade of promises, the wards are slightly less overcrowded than they were.”
Context: a newspaper leader

Device: _____ Effect: _____

PART B — **Transform for effect**

Rewrite each sentence using the device indicated. The effect must be deliberate.

1 Original: “The treaty was a surrender, not a negotiation.”
Device: corrective comparison
→ _____

2 Original: “Despite the reforms, the prisons remain as brutal as before.”
Device: reproachful equivalence (‘no + comparative’)
→ _____

3 Original: “As the evidence mounted, his denials became more emphatic.”
Device: escalating correlative
→ _____

Score: _____ / 14

Worksheet 2: Precision — Scope, Ellipsis & Ambiguity

Mastery means controlling exactly what is being compared with what.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

PART A — **Study the distinctions**

Contrast	Distinction
than I vs than me	subject vs object of the ellipted clause — different propositions
ellipsis vs subdeletion	delete a whole phrase vs delete only a degree/quantity
not better vs no better	denies superiority vs asserts equivalence with reproach
as … as vs so … as	'so … as' survives mainly under negation and in fixed phrases
any vs any other	the subject is, or is not, a member of the comparison set

Precision cloze: complete each sentence with the ONE form whose logic and register fit exactly.

1. The chairman consulted the auditors more than _____ did the board.
2. Thirty years after independence, its citizens are _____ freer than before.
3. She distrusted the minister more than _____ , who at least admitted his ignorance.
4. The eruption was not so much a disaster _____ a warning.
5. The mountain is higher than _____ other peak in the range.
6. The findings were nothing _____ as conclusive as the press implied.
7. The _____ the deadline slipped, the _____ plausible the excuses became.
8. Its emissions now exceed _____ of the entire aviation sector.

PART B — **Resolve the ambiguity**

Each sentence is ambiguous. Explain the ambiguity, then rewrite it twice — once for each reading.

1. "The editor criticised the reporter more than the publisher."
   Ambiguity: _____
   Reading A: _____
   Reading B: _____
2. "She has known him longer than her brother."
   Ambiguity: _____
   Reading A: _____
   Reading B: _____
3. "More people visited the exhibition than the museum expected."
   Ambiguity: _____
   Reading A: _____
   Reading B: _____

Score: _____ / 14

Worksheet 3: Style Analysis & Rewriting

How comparison carries argument, cadence and concealed judgement.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

PART A — **Analytical reading**

> *The bank's defence rested on a comparison. Its losses, it said, were no greater than those of its competitors; its bonuses were no more generous than the market required; its risk models were nothing like as reckless as the regulator alleged. Each claim was true, and each was worthless, for the standard invoked was itself the thing under examination. The more diligently one searched the submission for an absolute measure, the more thoroughly one found only relative ones. It was not so much a defence as a demonstration: an institution that could conceive of no yardstick beyond its rivals had already told the inquiry everything it needed to know.*

1. Identify SIX comparative structures and name each.

_____

_____

_____

2. The three parallel clauses in the second sentence all use ‘no’ or ‘nothing like’. Analyse the cumulative effect.

_____

_____

3. ‘Each claim was true, and each was worthless.’ Explain, in terms of comparative syntax, how both can hold.

_____

_____

4. Analyse the final sentence: the corrective comparison, the colon, and the relative clause. What verdict is delivered, and by what means?

_____

_____

PART B — **Neutralise the style**

Rewrite the bank's three claims so that each states an absolute measure rather than a comparison. Invent plausible figures. Then note in one sentence what the comparison was concealing.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What was concealed: _____

Score: _____ / 16

Worksheet 4: Extended Writing — The Architecture of Comparison

Deploy the full repertoire with deliberate, controlled effect.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

PART A **The task**

Write a persuasive, investigative or satirical passage (200–250 words) on a subject of your choosing. Requirements: at least SIX distinct comparative structures, of which at least ONE escalating correlative and ONE reproachful ‘no + comparative’; a consistent register. Underline and label each.

Self-check before submitting	✓
Six or more distinct comparative structures, each labelled	
At least one escalating correlative (the … the …)	
At least one reproachful ‘no + comparative + than’	
Every comparison compares like with like (‘that of / those of’)	
No stranded ‘than’; no double comparatives; ‘any other’ where required	
Every baseline stated, or its absence deliberate	

Word count: _____ Structures labelled: _____ / 6

Score: _____ / 35

ANSWER KEY & TEACHER NOTES

For teacher use only — C2 Level Worksheets

Comparative Clauses | English Language Worksheets

Worksheet 1 – Rhetorical Devices

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
A1	‘no less secretive than the one it had denounced’	**Ironic ‘no less’ — asserts equivalence where difference was promised; the hypocrisy is measured, not merely alleged**
A2	‘better … stronger … brighter’	**Suppressed baseline (with tricolon) — three comparatives, no than-clause: nothing can be tested, and the cadence supplies the conviction the evidence does not**
A3	‘The more strenuously …, the more certain …’	**Escalating correlative — converts an inference into an apparent law, so that the denial itself becomes evidence of guilt**
A4	‘slightly less overcrowded than they were’	**Comparative anticlimax — the long build (‘four inquiries’, ‘a decade’) collapses into a derisory standard; ‘slightly less overcrowded’ concedes that overcrowding remains**
B1	corrective	**e.g. ‘It was not so much a negotiation as a surrender.’**
B2	reproachful equivalence	**e.g. ‘Despite the reforms, the prisons are no less brutal than before.’**
B3	escalating correlative	**e.g. ‘The more the evidence mounted, the more emphatic his denials became.’**

Worksheet 2 – Precision & Ambiguity

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
A	Gaps 1–8 in order	**1 ever, 2 no, 3 I (‘than I did’ — the appositive ‘who …’ requires the subject form), 4 as, 5 any, 6 like, 7 longer … less, 8 those**
B1	who criticised whom	**A: ‘… more than he criticised the publisher.’ B: ‘… more than the publisher criticised the reporter.’**
B2	who has known whom	**A: ‘… longer than her brother has known him.’ B: ‘… longer than she has known her brother.’**
B3	ellipsis scope	**A: ‘… than the museum expected would visit the exhibition.’ (number of visitors) B: ‘… than the museum expected to visit the museum itself.’ (comparing two venues)**

Worksheet 3 – Style Analysis

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
Q1	Six structures	**‘no greater than those of its competitors’ (no + comp. + ‘those of’); ‘no more generous than the market required’ (no + comp. + clause); ‘nothing like as reckless as’ (emphatic negative); ‘The more diligently …, the more thoroughly …’ (correlative); ‘not so much a defence as a demonstration’ (corrective); ‘no yardstick beyond its rivals’ (implied comparison)**
Q2	the three parallel claims	**Anaphoric ‘no … / no … / nothing like as …’ builds a rhythm of self-exculpation. Each asserts equivalence with a peer, and the accumulation exposes the method: the bank can only locate itself relative to others, never against a standard**

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
Q3	true and worthless	**A comparative clause asserts only a relation, not a value. 'No greater than those of its competitors' can be literally true while telling us nothing about whether the losses were acceptable — because the competitors' conduct is precisely what is on trial. The baseline is contaminated**
Q4	the final sentence	**The corrective comparison ('not so much a defence as a demonstration') substitutes the writer's label for the bank's. The colon then supplies the demonstration, and the relative clause ('that could conceive of no yardstick beyond its rivals') buries the indictment in subordination, so the reader draws the conclusion unaided**
B	Absolute rewrite	**e.g. 'The bank lost €4.2bn. It paid €800m in bonuses. Its models assumed a maximum one-day loss of €60m.' Concealed: the absolute scale of the losses, bonuses and risk — figures that would have to be defended on their own terms**

Worksheet 4 – Extended Writing Rubric

Criterion	Descriptor	Marks
Structural range	Six or more distinct comparative structures, deliberately deployed and labelled	0–8
Advanced structures	Escalating correlative + reproachful 'no + comparative', both effective	0–8
Register & control	Register sustained; baselines managed with deliberate precision	0–7
Accuracy	No illogical comparisons, stranded 'than', or double comparatives	0–6
Effect	The passage genuinely persuades or amuses; comparison earns its place	0–6