

HERZBERG--HEART MOUNTAIN

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[Assignment: Compare, contrast, or compare and contrast a place or a childhood experience as it used to be and as it is today. Remember to compare and contrast two similar subjects for a purpose, in order to make an assertion about them. Use point-by-point or subject-by-subject discussion of their similarities and differences.]

(1) In my dreams, I am walking down a narrow street with colorful Bavarian-style houses. It is peaceful and quiet. I have come from my grandmother's house and my destination is a small lake, not far away, where I will meet some friends and spend some hours tanning, swimming, and having fun in the summer sun. But my dreams are held captive by reality. I look outside the window on rows and rows of suburban housing. I hear loud cars and airplanes. With no heart, I get ready to take my car and spend a hot summer afternoon shopping with friends in a busy, closed-in mall. Herzberg, West Germany, is the little town of my dreams with its quiet, narrow streets and its accessible pleasures. The reality is the suburban Streamwood, Illinois, with its noisy, monotonous thoroughfares and its dull, distant pleasure spots.

(2) Herzberg is a small town located in the Harz Mountain Range of northern West Germany, only ten miles away from the East German border. The town has approximately 15,000 inhabitants and its boundaries are clearly set with no prospects of growth. Herzberg was founded about 400 years ago and therefore the streets are lined with sixteenth century, red-roofed homes. There is an elegant castle atop one of the pinetree-topped mountains surrounding the town, and a small lake situated almost perfectly in the center of town. Herzberg, for me, is a vision of tranquility.

(3) Streamwood, a small suburb located forty miles northwest of Chicago, has about 25,000 inhabitants and is growing tremendously every year with new housing developments going up on every available piece of land. The town is only thirty years old and most of the land is already covered with homes, shopping centers, office buildings, and wide busy streets. Two pools and a number of small parks are scattered within Streamwood as the only recreational areas. This former farmland now transformed into suburbs has no natural or historical landmarks. It is dull to look at and dull to live in.

(4) Walking around town in Herzberg is a favorite pastime of all who live there. No one needs a car to go to a friend's house or to the lively main street for shopping since practically everything is within walking distance. And to take a stroll along the narrow, often cobble-stoned streets lined with trees or flowers is both pleasant and relaxing. Even to get to other towns is relatively easy with the well developed bus and train

systems. This ease in moving from one place to another makes life less stressful and more enjoyable for parents and children. Parents don't have to drive their children around, and the kids have more freedom to move around on their own.

(5) In sharp contrast, Streamwood is not a very likely place for walking. Everyone needs a car to get anywhere from anywhere and since everything is scattered this may involve trips of several miles at a time. Parents are under constant stress from driving children around and children have no freedom of movement on their own. Additionally, the streets are so crowded and busy that walking is hazardous to health. Pleasurable afternoon strolls are unlikely in this suburb.

(6) The people of Herzberg are very active and seldom bored. In the summer, the clear blue lake is the center of all activity. The surrounding mountains with their luscious greenery and bright flowers provide additional areas for hiking. The richly colored, uniquely built castle draws people for afternoon trips summer or winter. There is ice-skating on the frozen lake and wonderful skiing excursions in the white-topped powdery mountains. People get together during the day at the dainty sidewalk cafes or at the lively youth center. Evenings can be filled with promenades around the lake and town or a movie at one of the two cinemas. Older teenagers and adults can meet at the shimmering discotheques and friendly bars.

(7) No such outdoor recreational activities are found near Streamwood, Illinois. One must travel far to find splendid landscapes. Here, in Streamwood, for outdoor entertainment all we have are little park areas and forest preserves. Most of the leisure activities take place indoors. Large, closed in malls, dimly lit bowling alleys or roller rinks, overpopulated movie theaters, and loud blinking video arcades--these are the typical amusements of the suburbanites. There are a few bars and dance clubs but none very enticing. I would rather be in the cool air enjoying the world under the sky.

(8) Every time I have travelled to Herzberg, I have desired to remain there for the rest of my life. It is always very sad and painful to leave the close-knit serene town to come back to the monotonous suburb of Streamwood. That is why in my dreams I am always haunted by wonderful hours spent in Herzberg with family and friends. And I hope that one day my dreams will become the reality.