Understanding Text Structures

What is a text structure?

- A "structure" is a building or framework

- "Text structure" refers to how a piece of text is built

What is a text structure?

- Builders can use different kinds of structures to build different things
- A skyscraper, for example, is a different kind of structure from a house

What is a text structure?

- Writers use different structures to build their ideas
- Each text structure communicates ideas in a different way

Chronological order

- Authors use chronological order to explain how things happen in order

- Chronological order is also called sequence or time order

Chronological order

- You will know that you are reading a text in chronological order because you will see words like *first*, *next*, *later*, *then*, and *finally*

Chronological order

- You will often see chronological order in directions:

  Have you ever made macaroni and cheese? It's simple! First, boil some water and make some macaroni. Then, make your cheese sauce. After the cheese sauce is ready, mix it with the macaroni. Bake the entire thing in the oven. Finally, it's time to eat!

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Which paragraph is in chronological order?

Pennsylvania has many historic sites. You can visit Revolutionary war sites, like Valley Forge. You can also visit important locations from the Civil War, like Gettysburg. Finally, you can also see the site of the first oil well in Titusville. Pennsylvania has many neat places to visit!

Through the ages, Pennsylvania has seen many interesting events. The state was founded in 1681 by William Penn. Later, Pennsylvania was the site of important Revolutionary War battles. After that, Pennsylvania was home to new factories during the Industrial Revolution. Today, Pennsylvania continues to make history.

Which paragraph is in chronological order?

This is the paragraph in chronological order. Can you find the clue words that show this order?

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Think about it!

- What is a structure?

- What does chronological order mean?

- What are some clue words that show chronological order?

Another text structure

- But what if an author doesn't want to show how something happened in sequence?

- The author would need to use another text structure!

Another text structure

- Suppose an author wanted to explain how these two birds are similar and different
- Chronological order wouldn't work---there is no order of events
- The author would need to use compare and contrast

Another text structure

The cardinal and the cedar waxwing are two common birds. Both have crests on their heads. Both are common at birdfeeders. But the birds have some differences. The male cardinal is a bright red, while the waxwing is brown. The cedar waxwing often migrates from place to place. On the other hand, the cardinal stays in one place year after year.

Compare and contrast clue words

When authors use the text structure of compare and contrast, they often use special clue words to show this text structure.

Can you find the clue words in the paragraph?

Can you find the clue words?

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Here they are!

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Compare and contrast graphic organizer
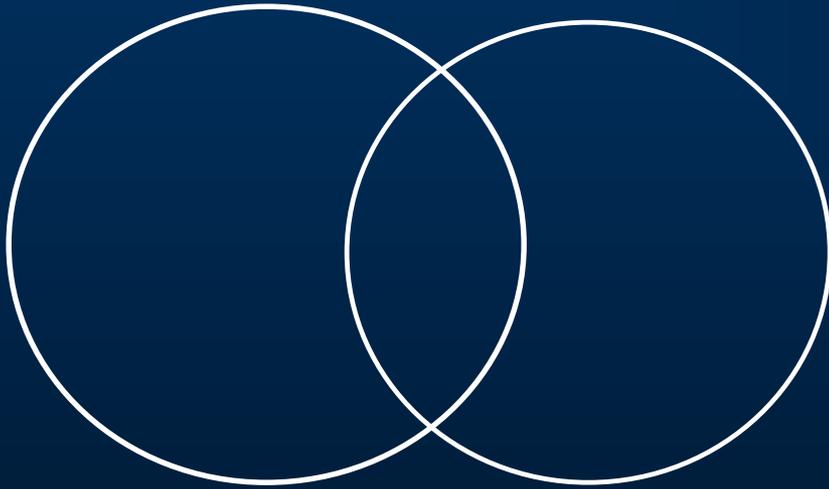
- To organize details from a paragraph in compare and contrast, use a Venn diagram

Review

- Can you explain the difference between chronological order and compare and contrast?

- How can clue words help you as a reader?

Another text structure

- Sometimes, a writer will want to explain how one event leads to another

- This kind of text structure is called cause and effect

Cause and effect clue words

- When authors write paragraphs to show causes and effects, they use words like *cause, effect, as a result, consequently*, and *so*

Can you find the clue words?

The night's snowstorm had many effects. People were out shoveling snow from their sidewalks. The power lines were draped with ice. Snow plows drove down every street. Children were the happiest of all. The unexpected snow caused school to be cancelled!

Can you find the clue words?

The night's snowstorm had many effects. People were out shoveling snow from their sidewalks. The power lines were draped with ice. Snow plows drove down every street. Children were the happiest of all. The unexpected snow caused school to be cancelled!

More with cause and effect

Baby painted turtles spend all winter in their nests. They have special chemicals in their blood that can keep their blood from freezing. As a result, baby painted turtles can survive freezing temperatures!

More with cause and effect

Baby painted turtles spend all winter in their nests. They have special chemicals in their blood that can keep their blood from freezing. As a result, baby painted turtles can survive freezing temperatures!

This is the cause

More with cause and effect

Baby painted turtles spend all winter in their nests. They have special chemicals in their blood that can keep their blood from freezing. As a result, baby painted turtles can survive freezing temperatures!

This is the effect

Review

- Which text structure tells about how things are similar and different?

- *Compare and contrast*

- Which text structure explains how things happen in time order?

- *Chronological order*

Another kind of text structure

- Sometimes, an author will want to explain a problem, and then show one or more solutions

- This kind of text structure is called *problem and solution*

An example of problem and solution

Park School had a terrible problem. Every day at recess, students would argue over the slides. Teachers had to spend time every day taking care of the arguments. Finally, one teacher came up with a great solution. They bought another set of slides that everyone could enjoy.

An example of problem and solution

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- *Can you find the problem and the solution in this paragraph?*

An example of problem and solution

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Here is the problem

An example of problem and solution

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← Here is the problem

← Here is the solution

Of course, problem and solution is not always so simple

- Often, authors will signal problem and solution structure with clue words like problem and solution, just like in the last paragraph

- Sometimes, authors will use related words

Of course, problem and solution is not always so simple

- Synonyms for problem include *difficulty, struggle, uncertainty, worry, threat,* and *trouble*

- Synonyms for solution include *possibility, hope, bright spot, answer,* and *future*

A more difficult problem and solution paragraph

The Chesapeake Bay faces an uncertain future. Issues such as pesticides, too many nutrients, and habitat loss all threaten the Bay's water quality and animal life. However, scientists are hopeful that the future may be brighter. If everyone in the Chesapeake Bay watershed works together, solutions may be found.

A more difficult problem and solution paragraph

What is the problem?

What is the solution?

The Chesapeake Bay faces an uncertain future. Issues such as pesticides, too many nutrients, and habitat loss all threaten the Bay's water quality and animal life. However, scientists are hopeful that the future may be brighter. If everyone in the Chesapeake Bay watershed works together, solutions may be found.

A more difficult problem and solution paragraph

Problem

→

The Chesapeake Bay faces an uncertain future. Issues such as pesticides, too many nutrients, and habitat loss all threaten the Bay's water quality and animal life. However, scientists are hopeful that the future may be brighter. If everyone in the Chesapeake Bay watershed works together, solutions may be found.

Solution

→

Text structures we've learned so far

- Chronological order

- Compare and contrast

- Cause and effect

- Problem and solution

Match the clue words!

Can you figure out the text structure that these clue words point to?

however, on the other hand, similarity, like, unlike

Compare and contrast

Match the clue words!

Can you figure out the text structure that these clue words point to?

as a result, consequently, therefore, so, cause, effect

Cause and effect

Match the clue words!

Can you figure out the text structure that these clue words point to?

problem, solution,
threat, difficulty, hope,
answer, possibility

Problem and
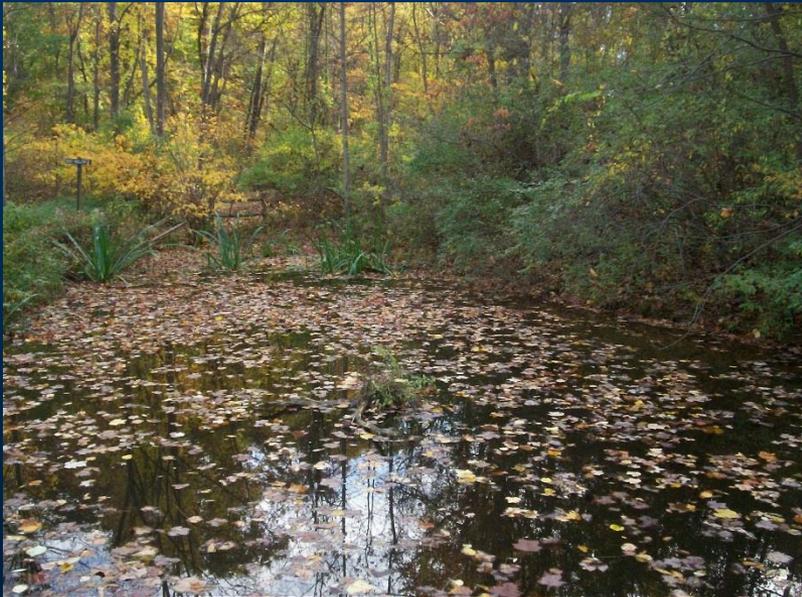solution

Are there any other text structures?

Most paragraphs that we write in school can be called main idea, description, or statement and support paragraphs

Description

- In this kind of paragraph, the author offers a main idea statement, and then supports that statement with several details

Description

The pond was a beautiful place to visit. The falling leaves, all different colors, decorated the surface of the water. At the edges of the pond, small wildflowers grew. The golden forest glowed faintly in the distance.

Main idea paragraphs

Main idea

The pond was a beautiful place to visit. The falling leaves, all different colors, decorated the surface of the water. At the edges of the pond, small wildflowers grew. The golden forest glowed faintly in the distance.
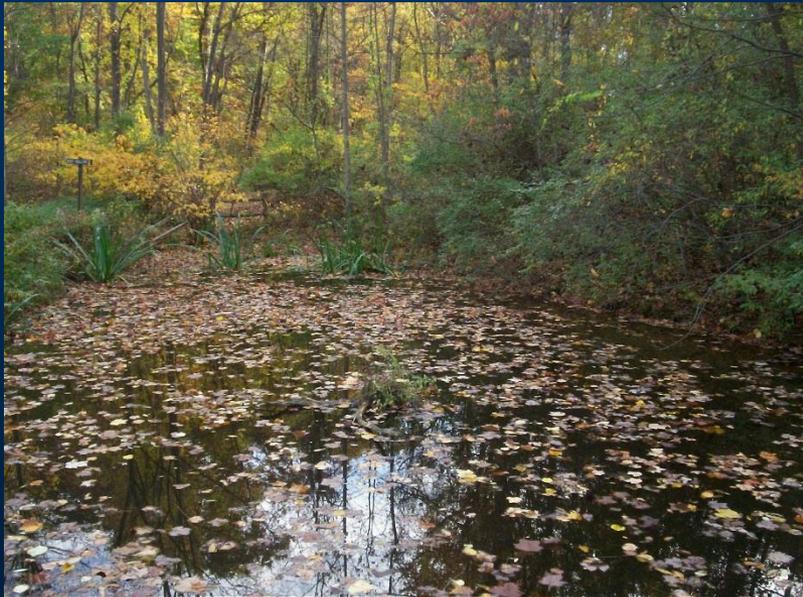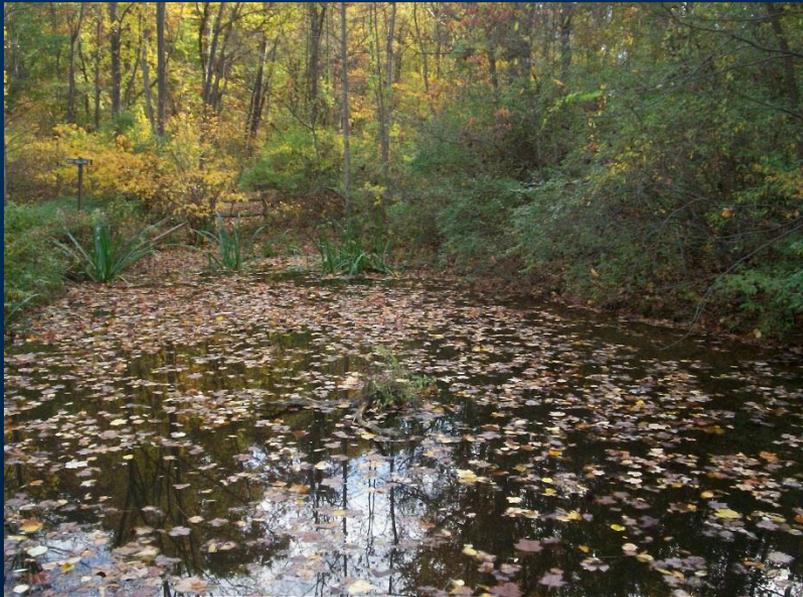
Main idea paragraphs

Main idea

The pond was a beautiful place to visit. The falling leaves, all different colors, decorated the surface of the water. At the edges of the pond, small wildflowers grew. The golden forest glowed faintly in the distance.

All of the other sentences explain why the main idea is true

Main idea paragraphs

- Clue words in these paragraphs may include:

- *One reason, another reason,* and *for example*

Now it's your turn!

- On the next few slides, you will read some paragraphs about the Great Chicago Fire

- Your task is to decide on the text structure for each one

- Understanding the text structure will help you to understand each paragraph
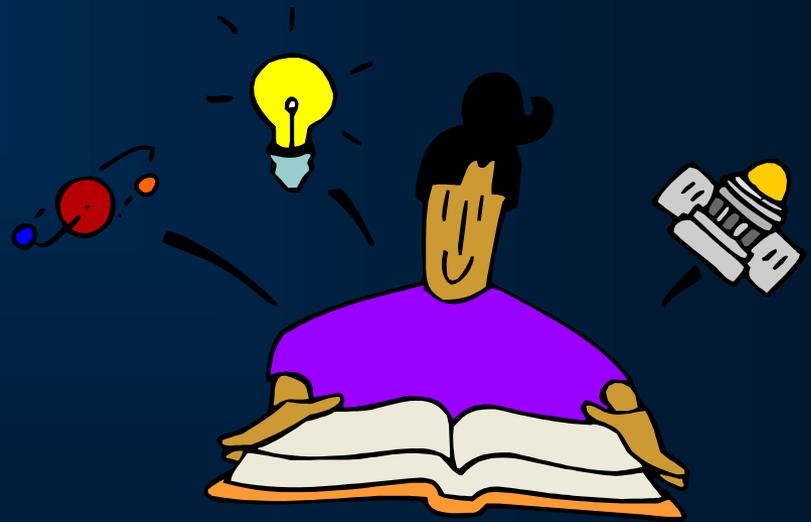
What's the text structure?

- Chronological order

- Compare and contrast

- Cause and effect

- Problem and solution

- Main idea

Daniel Sullivan was the first to notice the flames coming from the O'Leary barn at around 8:30 pm on October 8. A problem with the alarm box made it impossible for the people in the area to call for the fire department. By 9:30 pm, the entire block was blazing. In another 3 hours, there were fires all over Chicago. The heavy wind coming from the lake only made the fire bigger. It would be another day before the fire would be completely out. By that time, 17,500 buildings had been burned.

What's the text structure?

- Chronological order

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What's the text structure?

- Chronological order

- Notice how the paragraph shows how events happen in time order

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What's the text structure?

- Understanding that this text is written in chronological order can help you to understand how the Great Fire started

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Try another!

- Chronological order
- Compare and contrast
- Cause and effect
- Problem and solution
- Main idea

Why was the Great Chicago Fire so disastrous? After all, Chicago had fire departments and fire alarms. One reason for the terrible fire is that the alarm malfunctioned. The local fire company noticed the fire by accident as it was returning from another fire. As another problem, a watchman who saw the flames directed other fire companies to a location that was nearly a mile away from the fire. Because of these two problems, a fire that could have been controlled rapidly spread across the city.

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- Compare and contrast

- Cause and effect

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- Cause and effect

- Notice how the causes (in blue) lead to the effect (in yellow)

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What text structure is here?

- Chronological order
- Compare and contrast
- Cause and effect
- Problem and solution
- Main idea

After the fire, thousands of people were left homeless. Many escaped the fire with nothing except the clothes on their backs. Providing all of these people with food, clean water, and shelter was a huge task. Luckily, the city quickly formed a Relief and Aid Society. This group started giving out the food donations that were pouring in from other cities. The society built places for people to live, gathered the tools that people needed to rebuild their houses, and even vaccinated 64,000 people against smallpox.

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- Problem and solution

- Here is the *problem*

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Can you find the text structure?

- Chronological order
- Compare and contrast
- Cause and effect
- Problem and solution
- Main idea

Chicago changed in many ways after the fire. Before the fire, most of the buildings were less than five stories high. The buildings that were constructed after the fire, however, were some of the first skyscrapers in the country. Before the fire, most of the houses were made of wood. After the fire, people chose to build their houses out of stone or brick. There were changes in where people lived, as well. The poor people in the city lived close to the center of the city before the fire. After the fire, they moved into neighborhoods that were farther away from the downtown area.

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One more paragraph!

By Monday night, the town of Chicago was burning. People described it as terrible, but amazing. The flames were brighter than anything people had ever seen. The harsh winds swept the fire across the city with terrible speed. For many who watched, it was a sight to remember for the rest of their lives.

- Chronological order
- Compare and contrast
- Cause and effect
- Problem and solution
- Main idea

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- Compare and contrast
- Cause and effect

- Main idea

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- Main idea

- Notice the main idea

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- Main idea

- Notice the main idea

- The rest of the sentences explain the main idea

What have you learned about text structures?

- Share your ideas with a partner
- Be sure to explain how you can find the text structure of a paragraph

by Emily Kissner