

## Analyzing Text Structure



Authors use a variety of writing styles. These styles or organizational patterns are referred to as *text structure*. Writing is either narrative or expository. Narrative writing tells a story, while expository writing (the type of writing found in textbooks) is informational or factual in nature. Students learn to analyze narrative text structure at an early age when they are asked to examine the beginning, middle, and end of a story. Typically, however, they are never taught to analyze the variety of text structures found in textbooks. This lack of knowledge of how to interact with text structures is one of the reasons for poor comprehension.

Students may be able to read (decode) textbook material, but even good decoders sometimes have trouble comprehending what they have read. The words they read are just that — words. Many students are not able to organize those words into a pattern that provides meaning.

Good readers read not only for pleasure but also to gain information and deepen their understanding. They, perhaps instinctively, recognize the organizational patterns found in textbooks. They are able to select strategies that allow them to graphically organize the information they are reading. Poor readers, on the other hand, may lack the ability to organize what they have read into meaningful patterns.

Teachers can help students increase comprehension by teaching ways to organize information to make it meaningful. Teachers who **analyze text structure** actually teach students to read like authors. The following chart summarizes some of the text structures found in textbooks. The chart defines each structure and provides cue words that can be used to identify a particular text structure.

TEXT STRUCTURE	DEFINITION	CUE WORDS
Main Idea/Supporting Details	The text resembles an outline. Each section has a main idea, followed by supporting details, e.g., life in colonial America, the compromises from the Constitutional Convention.	For example, for instance, in addition, in some instances, who, what, when, where, why
Order/Sequence	The text tells the order of something, e.g., the steps in a recipe; a series of events; a biographical excerpt.	Next, first, last, second, another, then, additionally, finally, in the beginning, before, after
Compare/Contrast	The text describes the differences and/or similarities of two or more things, e.g., a comparison of two or more people, events, places, ideas.	<b>Compare:</b> Like, same as, similar, likewise, and, also, too, both, just as, in comparison <b>Contrast:</b> However, unlike, by contrast, yet, although, whereas, different from, on the other hand, but, as opposed to
Cause/Effect	The text tells the result of an event, detailing the reasons it occurred, e.g., causes a war; causes of the Great Depression.	Consequently, therefore, as a result, thereby, leads to, because, so that, so, since

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**To Teach** the Analyzing Text Structure strategy, make a transparency of Selection 4. Instead of a transparency, you may write the information on flip chart paper. Then, give the students a copy of Graphic Organizer 6 and Selection 5 or 6. Go over the steps in the left box as the whole class answers each question on the graphic organizer..

1. Use Selection 4 to teach students the names and characteristics of various types of text structures.
2. Have students read the title of Selection 5. Then have them complete question 1 on Graphic Organizer 6.
3. Have the class brainstorm how they think the text is organized. (You may want to use the Think-Pair-Share strategy to do this.) Record all ideas and then come to a class consensus.
4. Have students read Selection 5. As they read, have them individually list words on the chart.
5. Have individual students share their list with the class. Make a class list of the words.
6. From the class discussion, come to consensus on the text structure found in Selection 5.
7. As a variation, you may want to assign half the class Selection 5 and half Selection 6 and complete an analysis of both readings simultaneously.

## ANALYZING TEXT STRUCTURE

**1. From the title, what do you think the reading is about?**

*Compromise of 1850*

**2. Based on prior reading, how do you think the text will be organized?**

*The text will be sequenced*

**3. As you read, write down any words in the text that are like those found in the following chart describing text structure.**

TEXT STRUCTURE	CUE WORDS	WORDS IN TEXT
Main Idea/Supporting Details	For example, for instance, in addition, in some instances, who, what, when, where, why	
Order/Sequence	Next, first, last, second, another, then, additionally, finally, in the beginning, before, after	<i>Finally</i>
Compare/Contrast	<b>Compare:</b> Like, same as, similar, likewise, and, also, too, both, just as, in comparison <b>Contrast:</b> However, unlike, by contrast, yet, although, whereas, different from, on the other hand, but, as opposed to	<i>On the one hand</i> <i>On the other hand</i>
Cause/Effect	Consequently, therefore, as a result, thereby, leads to, because, so that, so, since	

**4. Based on the words you have found, what text structure did the author use?**

*Compare and Contrast (although a case could be made for sequencing)*

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## Selection 4 - Analyzing Text Structure

Text structure is a term used to describe how an author organizes written material, especially in textbooks. The following chart summarizes examples of text structure. It also provides cue words to help you identify the text structure of particular written text

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## Selection 5 - The Compromise of 1850

In 1848, gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill in California. People from all over the nation moved west to find gold. By late 1849, the population of California was over 100,000, enough to ask for statehood. In 1850, there were fifteen slave states and fifteen free states. California's constitution did not allow slavery. If California became a state, the slave/free balance in the U.S. Senate would change. For eight months, what was later called "the Great Debate" went on as Congress tried to agree on what to do about California.

Finally, Congress passed five laws, later called the Compromise of 1850. They offered something to please both North and South. On the one hand, the following provisions favored the North: (1) California came into the Union as a free state, (2) slave trading was stopped in the District of Columbia, and (3) Texas gave up the idea of annexing New Mexico and making it part of a slave state. On the other hand, these provisions favored the South: (1) The territories of New Mexico and Utah would be allowed to decide if they wanted to be slave or free, (2) District of Columbia residents could keep the slaves they had, and (3) Congress would pass a law stating that slaves who ran away to free states would be returned to their owners.

## Selection 6 - Abolitionists

Many northern whites and free blacks, called *abolitionists*, worked to get rid of slavery. They made speeches, wrote books and articles, and offered their homes as "safe houses" for runaway slaves. William Lloyd Garrison published a newspaper called *The Liberator*. Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote about slaves as individuals, rather than as a group, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Although Stowe, who grew up in Connecticut, had seen slaves only once when visiting in Kentucky, her book described some of the worst things about slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law. Three hundred thousand copies of the book were sold in a year, and the information in it caused northerners to like slavery less and abolition more.

Freed slave Sojourner Truth was famous for her speeches, which asked for freedom for all blacks. Others, like Harriet Tubman, helped slaves escape from the South to free northern states. Tubman was a leader in the underground railroad. She personally led over 300 slaves to freedom. The underground railroad was a chain of homes, farms, and churches where runaway slaves could rest and hide from slave catchers. One person or small groups moved from place to place at night until they reached a free state or Canada. Tubman and others like her, helped up to 50,000 slaves escape through the underground railroad between 1830 and 1860.

## ANALYZING TEXT STRUCTURE

1. From the title, what do you think the reading is about?
2. Based on prior reading, how do you think the text will be organized?
3. As you read, write down any words in the text that are like those found in the following chart describing text structure.

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4. Based on the words you have found, what text structure did the author use?