

Pure-Text *paragraphs*

The following are short passages that in their entirety exemplify a single text structure. Immerse students in one organizational type at a time. Point out the transitions and key components of each.

Eventually explain that most texts utilize a combination of text structures.

Chronological: Informational Text

The Fire

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.

Source: “Teaching Text Structure 4th-6th Grade, Supplemental Resources” from South Bay Union School District

Harry Houdini

Harry Houdini was born in Hungary in 1874 and moved to Wisconsin when he was four years old. As a young boy, he became captivated by magic when he saw a magician perform. Harry directed his energy to becoming a magician, but some of his first shows were a flop. After five years he almost gave it up. But the “needle trick changed all that. In this trick he swallowed needles and thread and coughed them back up with all the needles threaded through their eyes. Harry was on his way up! Harry went on to perform amazing stunts and tricks including in 1910 escaping out of the mouth of a cannon just before it blew up. No wonder Harry Houdini became a household name. Harry Houdini died on Halloween in 1926.

Source: “Teaching Text Structure 4th-6th Grade, Supplemental Resources” from South Bay Union School District

Wood Thrush: baby birds

Male and female wood thrushes build their nests in late spring. The eggs take about 13 days to hatch. After the babies emerge from the eggs, both parents help to feed them. The parents take care of the young birds for about a month. Then the little fledglings are ready for life on their own.

Source: “Teaching Text Structure 4th-6th Grade, Supplemental Resources” from South Bay Union School District

Gail Devers

Devers experienced the highlight of any sprinter’s career, as she stood on the huge platform in the giant stadium and received an Olympic gold medal.

Eighteen months earlier she wasn’t thinking about running. She was hoping that she would be able to walk again.

Just four years earlier, in the summer of 1988, as Devers was training for the Olympic Games, to be held in Seoul, South Korea, she began to feel very tired all the time and failed to make the Olympic finals.

Source: Text Structures: Nonfiction Organizational Patterns PPT

Chronological: Informational Text

Diary of the Monarch Butterfly

February 19, 2007 — It's too early for spring migration, but monarch butterflies are on the move! They are spreading down the rivers in search of water. These early signs mean the winter season is coming to a close. Monarch butterflies have been in Mexico since November. Can they survive all winter with little or no food? Let's find out.

March 1, 2007 — It's March. The days are getting longer and temperatures are rising in Mexico. Within the month these butterflies will leave their winter home and begin the trip to North America. Get ready to track the spring migration.

March 10, 2007 — Here come the monarchs! Spring migration begins every March in a flurry. The monarchs are in a race against time. They can't stay in Mexico any longer. They can't move north too quickly either. The timing of their spring migration must be precise. How do they know when to leave, and why do they leave now?

Source: "Teaching Text Structure 4th-6th Grade, Supplemental Resources" from South Bay Union School District

Chronological

The Lazy Student

When Tim woke up, he didn't want to go to school. His mom took him anyway. So, he went to school, but he didn't do any work. The days passed, and Tim still didn't do any work. Mr. Morton called Tim's house, but Tim still wouldn't do any work. Finally the report cards came out, and Tim failed his classes. Tim was sad.

Source: Text Structures: Nonfiction Organizational Patterns PPT

Chronological: How-To

Riparian Buffer Zone

Planting a riparian buffer zone is easy, but requires some planning. The first step is to observe the area. What is already growing there? Next, decide what you would like to plant. Trees like river birches, pin oaks, and sycamores provide habitat for wildlife as well as a good buffer zone. A shrub like sweet spire is both ornamental and well-suited to the wet area. After you have decided on the plants, gather the necessary tools. Then you can get started on your riparian buffer zone!

Source: "Teaching Text Structure 4th-6th Grade, Supplemental Resources" from South Bay Union School District

Deviled Eggs

Pop out (remove) the egg yolks to a small bowl and mash with a fork. Add mayonnaise, mustard powder, vinegar, salt and pepper and mix thoroughly. Fill the empty egg white shells with the mixture and sprinkle lightly with paprika. Cover lightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for up to one day before serving.

Source: Text Structures: Nonfiction Organizational Patterns PPT

How to Use the Microscope

1. Plug in the lamp.
2. Place a sample of what you wish to observe on a slide.
3. Adjust the mirror so it reflects light from the room up into the objective lens.
4. Place your slide with the specimen directly over the center of the glass circle on the stage.
5. With the LOW POWER objective lens placed over the slide, use the coarse focus knob.
6. Look through the eyepiece with one eye while closing the other eye.
7. Use the fine focus knob to fine.

Source: Text Structures: Nonfiction Organizational Patterns PPT

Enumeration: Topic Descriptive

Coconuts

A coconut is a tropical fruit. It comes from Asia originally, but it grows in Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Central America, and South America. A coconut grows on a coconut palm, which looks like a palm but actually is taller and has more leaves. The coconut appears to be shades of brown and has a hairy shell. On the inside, there is a watery liquid called coconut milk. After you break through the shell, you find what is called the coconut meat. Both the meat and the milk are white. Dried coconut meat is called copra. The coconut is a very interesting fruit.

Humpback Whales

The humpback whale is huge. She is longer than a school bus and weighs 35 tons, but she preys on some of the smallest inhabitants of the sea world—tiny shrimp-like creatures that aren't much bigger than a piece of popcorn called krill. To feed, she opens her mouth wide, taking in hundreds of gallons of water in a single gulp. A humpback whale has no teeth. Instead, attached to its upper jaw are rows of long, thin fingernail-like material called baleen. Each piece of baleen is about three feet long and has bristles at its end that act like a strainer. When the whale takes in a mouthful of water, it forces the water out through the baleen with its tongue, trapping thousands of tiny krill inside its mouth. Humpback whales eat A LOT of krill – up to 4,400 pounds per meal!

Wood Thrush: food

In spring and summer, wood thrushes often hunt for insects on the forest floor. They will hop along dead logs and poke their beaks into the leaf litter to find their food. Unfortunately, many people clean up the dead leaves from their yards. The wood thrush has trouble finding food when this happens. But you can help the wood thrush. Put aside a small section of your yard for leaves, dead logs, and rocks. This way, the wood thrush will have a place to search for food.

Enumeration: Topic Descriptive

Jupiter

Jupiter is one of the nine planets in our solar system. It is called the giant among the planets because it has a diameter ten times as big as the earth. It also has twelve moons! Many scientists believe that the matter of which Jupiter is composed is in the form of a gas; it is not solid like the rock that makes up the earth and the moon. The truth in this hypothesis must await further exploration. Scientists do know that Jupiter's rotation period is about ten hours, and its revolution period is about twelve years. This means that Jupiter spins very rapidly on its axis as it makes its orbit around the sun. The atmosphere surrounding this planet is probably made up mainly of ammonia and methane, and its temperature is far, far below zero. Since it has no water, no oxygen, and extremely low temperatures, it is unlikely that it could support life. This giant among planets does not seem like a friendly place for humans.

Icebergs

Icebergs—giant blocks of ice that float in the sea—come in many shapes, sizes, and colors. Some are deep blue or green. Some look like floating sculptures. Old icebergs that have been worn down by the weather sometimes look like pillars of ice. Usually, only about one-fifth of an iceberg appears above the surface of the water. The other four-fifths of the “berg” is hidden underwater, out of sight. Sometimes, an iceberg has what is called a “foot,” an extension completely underwater. These are especially dangerous for ships. It was an iceberg “foot” that sank the Titanic in 1912, killing 1,503 people.

Compare/Contrast

Frogs v. Toads

You are walking along a pond when you see a frog – or is it a toad? How can you tell the difference? Frogs and toads have many physical attributes that can be used to identify which is which. Frogs have smooth skin, and rely on their large, powerful legs. Frogs are also, slimmer, smaller, and more streamlined than toads. Toads have warty skin in contrast to frogs. Toads are fatter and slower than frogs. Unlike frogs, toads can puff themselves up with air. Although frogs and toads are different, they also have some similarities. Both frogs and toads are classified as amphibians. They both have lungs, but can breathe through their skin. Using sounds to attract their mates is another similarity between the two. Toads and frogs both have diets that consist of insects, worms and more. As you can see, frogs and toads can easily be mistaken for one another, but when you know what to look for, telling the difference becomes easy.

Oceans and Ponds – How are They Different?

To a small child, the ocean and the pond seem very much the same. However, there are important differences to point out. To begin with, a pond is a very small body of water. The ocean covers more than half of the earth's surface. Ponds are very shallow, but the ocean is several thousand miles deep in most places. Some green pond plants are rooted in mud on the floor of a pond. Because of the ocean's depth, the sunlight can't reach the ocean's floor, hence no green plants grow there. Ponds contain fresh water, which means there is no salt content. The ocean, though, is the largest body of salt water on earth. While they are both bodies of water, there are clearly major differences between the ocean and a pond.

Compare/Contrast

Different Schools for Aztec Kids

Aztec children went to one of two different kinds of schools. One kind was for the sons and daughters of nobility, or wealthy people high up in society. There, children learned to read, write, and do math. They learned to play musical instruments. Some children studied to be priests. They learned the secret language of the priesthood, how to predict eclipses and comets, and how to keep track of the days on the sacred calendar. Other children learned how to work with silver and how to carve wood and stone. The priests were strict with the children at these schools, giving harsh punishments if a child broke a rule. Children of common people went to a different kind of school. The priests were less strict with these children, and they allowed the children to go home sometimes. In both kinds of schools, children learned about religion and war. They learned songs, poems, and dances to honor their gods. They memorized stories of the gods and how they ruled the earth.

Vernal Pool or Puddle?

If you take a walk in the forest in March or April, you might notice a large pool of water. What is it? Are you looking at an ordinary puddle, or a vernal pool?

Vernal pools are different from ordinary puddles. Both vernal pools and puddles are formed by rainfall or the melting of snow. But a puddle lasts only a few hours or a few days before it dries up. Vernal pools, on the other hand, can last for weeks or months. They finally dry up in the heat of the summer.

Animals can visit both vernal pools and puddles. But vernal pools are very important for some kinds of animals. Mole salamanders and wood frogs will only lay their eggs in vernal pools. In vernal pools, young salamander larvae and tadpoles can grow up without being eaten by fish.

Vernal pools and puddles can both be found in forests and fields. Small invertebrates called copepods live in both puddles and vernal pools. These tiny creatures are only 5 mm long, but they dart quickly through the water! Another kind of invertebrate, the fairy shrimp, is only found in vernal pools.

While vernal pools and puddles have some similarities, they also have some differences.

Compare/Contrast

Fluttering Beauties

You're outside on a beautiful summer day. The light breeze brings the flutter of brightly colored wings. What is that lovely creature? Is it a butterfly or a moth?

Butterflies and moths are common insects. However, most people can't tell them apart. They have many similarities. Both are insects. This means that they have three body parts and six legs. Also, both have large wings. Sometimes these wings are plain. Sometimes they are covered with fancy patterns.

But there are ways to know if you are looking at a butterfly or a moth. Some differences have to do with how the insects look. For example, butterflies have thin antennae. Moths have feathery antennae. You can see another difference in the wings. Butterflies have small scales on their wings. On the other hand, moths have larger scales. These scales make moths look fluffier than butterflies.

It can be hard to catch a butterfly or moth to take a close look at the antennae or wings! You can also look at how the insects behave to tell them apart. Most butterflies are active during the day, while most moths are active at night. Another behavior difference can be seen in the way that the creatures rest. Butterflies usually sit on a flower with their wings folded together. On the other hand, moths keep their wings spread out while resting.

Next time that you enjoy a lovely summer day, take a closer look at the winged beauties fluttering about. Are they butterflies or moths? Now you can decide!

Source: "Teaching Text Structure 4th-6th Grade, Supplemental Resources" from South Bay Union School District

Sports at Ericson

There are two popular sports played at Ericson, basketball and volleyball. Both take place inside of the gym at Ericson. Also, each sport has two teams of people. In basketball, however, the ball can be played off of the floor, and in volleyball, the ball cannot touch the floor or it is out of play. Basketball and volleyball are popular sports at Ericson.

Source: Text Structures: Nonfiction Organizational Patterns PPT

Compare/Contrast

Beastly Bee-havior

Scientists have a joke about killer bees: How can you tell the difference between a regular honeybee hive and a “killer” bee hive? Kick the hive and see how far you run! “Regular bees might buzz you for 100 feet or so,” explains insect expert Margaret McMichael. “But ‘killer’ bees might chase you for two miles!” In many ways, killer bees and honey bees are similar. A killer-bee sting is no more deadly than a regular bee sting. Like killer bees, all honeybees have venom (poison) in their stingers. In many ways, killer bees also behave like regular honeybees. For example, all bees attack when they think their hive is in danger. But some differences in behavior make killer bees more deadly than honey bees. Compared to ordinary honeybees, killer bees have:

- quick triggers — Unlike a honey bee, it takes very little to get killer bees riled up. “They can sense you walking from about two car-lengths away,” says Margaret.
- big colonies — Killer beehives can hold more than 50,000 bees, that is many more than in a honey bee hive. When a killer bee hive is disturbed, there are many more bees to react.
- staying power — when killer bees get angry, they will chase you for much longer than honey bees will if they are angry.
- smoke them out: “Smoke makes them think their house is on fire,” says Margaret. “To get energy to fly away, they swallow a bellyful of honey. It’s hard to sting with a full belly!”

Adapted from Scholastic’s SuperScience Blue

Wood Thrush v. Robin

The wood thrush is a cousin to the robin. Both birds lay eggs that are a pretty turquoise blue. When robins are babies, they have spotted chests like the wood thrush. And both kinds of birds migrate in the winter. However, there are some differences. The wood thrush prefers deep forests, while the robin can live in towns and backyards. The wood thrush builds a neater nest than the robin. Both birds are fun to see flying around.

Compare/Contrast

Three Types of Circus Clowns

Generally, there are three categories of circus clowns—whiteface, august and character. Each has a specific makeup style and costume. Each has a typical act as well.

The neat whiteface is usually a strict, in-charge character who sets up the punch line for the joke with a partner. His facial features are neatly detailed in red or black.

Circus legend has it that the august clown got his name from a German nickname for someone who is clumsy. The august wears lightcolored makeup, but white is used around the mouth and eyes, and there's a big red nose. This clown performs a great deal of slapstick humor.

Character clowns perform as different personalities—cowboys, scarecrows, grandmothers or symphony conductors. The most famous character clown, however, is the tramp. Tramps wear different styles of makeup and costumes that are torn or shabby. Some tramp clowns are happy-go-lucky. Others are extremely sad. Still others act like gentlemen who just happen to be out of money.

Cause/Effect

Volcano

Have you ever thought about what makes a volcano erupt or what happens afterward? When the temperature rises deep under the Earth's crust, it becomes hot enough to melt rock and turn it into magma. Sometimes this melted rock blasts through the Earth's surface, which causes rock, ash, and deadly gases to fly into the air. The lava that flows out of the volcano can knock down trees and destroy houses and even whole towns. Although volcanoes can cause lots of destruction, the volcano's eruption also creates new land. Many times this new land forms an island in the ocean. You might even live on land created by a volcano!

Sun bear: An Endangered Species

The sun bear, native to Southeast Asia, is an endangered species for two reasons. First, people in this part of the world hunt the sun bear for body parts such as the gall bladder, the claws and the meat. The body parts are valuable because some people believe that eating them will help heal broken bones and bruises. They believe this because the sun bear appears to fall out of trees without injuring itself. Additionally, special restaurants serve bear paws and bear meat to diners who think that eating this kind of meal will bring good health. In addition to being hunted, the sun bear's habitat is being destroyed. The jungles where the sun bears live are being cleared to make way for homes and farms. Legendary beliefs can be harmful to nature.

Old Batteries: A Nuisance or a Hazard?

When batteries are thrown into the trash, they are harmful to the environment. If batteries are not properly disposed of, they can crack or become damaged. As a result, the toxic substances inside the batteries leak, and the surrounding water and soil are contaminated. Likewise, when batteries are incinerated, or burned, the air is contaminated by toxic fumes. Since incineration produces ashes, the ashes contain toxic substances. Over time, the ashes are buried and the toxic substances make their way into the soil and water. Finally, old car batteries are also harmful because they can crack open when they are dropped. If a neighborhood trash collector drops an old battery in the street or driveway, the toxic contents may spill and pose a health hazard for pets and small children. So it is very important to properly dispose of old batteries to protect our environment.

Cause/Effect

Populating the Cities

In recent decades, cities have grown so large that now about 50% of the Earth's population lives in urban areas. There are several reasons for this occurrence. First, the increasing industrialization of the nineteenth century resulted in the creation of many factory jobs, which tended to be located in cities. These jobs, with their promise of a better material life, attracted many people from rural areas. Second, there were many schools established to educate the children of the new factory laborers. The promise of a better education persuaded many families to leave farming communities and move to the cities. Finally, as the cities grew, people established places of leisure, entertainment, and culture, such as sports stadiums, theaters, and museums. For many people, these facilities made city life appear more interesting than life on the farm, and therefore drew them away from rural communities.

Headaches

Headaches can have several causes. Many people think that the major cause of headache is nervous tension, but there is strong evidence that suggests diet and environment as possible factors. Some people get headaches because they are dependent on caffeine. Other people may be allergic to salt, or they may have low blood sugar. Still other people are allergic to household chemicals including polishes, waxes, bug killers, and paint. If they can manage to avoid these substances, their headaches tend to go away. When a person has recurring headaches, it is worthwhile to look for the underlying cause, especially if the result of that search is freedom from pain.

Wood Thrush: population

The number of wood thrushes is declining, or going down. A main cause of this decline is habitat loss. The wood thrush is losing habitat in two places—the United States and Central America. In the United States, forests are being turned into shopping centers, developments, and factories. As a result, the wood thrush has fewer places to build nests and raise young. In Central America, tropical rainforests are being cut down to make room for farms. This means that migrating wood thrushes have trouble finding territory for the winter months.

Cause/Effect

What Is A Tsunami?

Do you like to play in waves at the beach? If so, you know that some waves are big, and some are small. But there are waves that are bigger than any you might see on a regular day at the beach. These waves are called tsunamis.

What causes tsunamis? They are not regular ocean waves. A tsunami is a huge wave that is caused by an earthquake at sea. When an earthquake causes the sea floor to rise or drop, water is displaced. This makes a wave that can travel for many miles in the ocean. As the water becomes shallow close to the land, the wave becomes huge.

Tsunamis can have terrible effects. The great wave of water crashes upon the coast with huge force. This force can knock over buildings, tear down forests, and even destroy entire towns and villages. Tsunamis can be deadly and kill many people.

Source: "Teaching Text Structure 4th-6th Grade, Supplemental Resources" from South Bay Union School District

Toxic Lawn Care

Did you know that the way you take care of your lawn can affect the watershed? Many people use pesticides and herbicides to kill insects and weeds. These chemicals can run off into streams and rivers, harming plants and animals.

Source: "Teaching Text Structure 4th-6th Grade, Supplemental Resources" from South Bay Union School District

Failing Classes

Lots of students fail classes. Some students fail because the work is too hard for them. Other times they may fail because they are lazy, and don't do any work. Another reason why students may fail is if they don't go to school. If you're not in class you may miss a lot. Many students fail classes every quarter.

Source: Text Structures: Nonfiction Organizational Patterns PPT

Fewer Toads

Though toads are still around, they no longer are as common in some areas as they were a few decades ago. The growing use of insecticides has reduced their numbers. The chemical sprays usually do not harm toads, but cut down the animals' food supply. Thereby, the toads do not have enough food to survive. There are fewer toads in many areas populated by humans.

Source: Text Structures: Nonfiction Organizational Patterns PPT

Problem/Solution

Astronauts Face Weightlessness

Astronauts face many difficulties in space caused by weightlessness. One of the challenges is floating around the cabin. To solve this problem, astronauts wear shoes that are coated with a special adhesive. This adhesive sticks to the floor of the cabin. Serving food is another difficulty. It won't stay on the table! Experts solved this problem by putting food and drinks in pouches and tubes. Food is preprocessed and only needs to be mixed with water. Weightlessness makes the simple task of turning a doorknob or a wrench a real problem. Since there is no gravity to keep the astronaut down, when he exerts a force one way, the opposite force may flip him over completely. Being very careful about how much force one exerts to do these simple tasks usually solves these problems. On earth, life is much simpler, thanks to gravity.

Fast Food — Good or Bad?

Fast food gets bad press these days, especially since it often contains too much fat, sodium and calories, but it brings much needed convenience to our stressful busy world. Fast food is easily found and varied. At any mall, for example, customers have many choices at the food court. To avoid too much fat or salt, they can choose healthier options: salads, turkey sandwiches and so on. On a busy Saturday, with two hungry kids, a mother out shopping is happy to find exactly the right food to eat. Not only that, but the food will be ready quickly, thus reducing the stress on her from demanding children. Fast food is also inexpensive; most menu items offer a full meal for under ten dollars. It is easy to see why fast food is so popular these days—it is convenient and reduces our stress.

Improving Waterways

Streams face many problems. Chemicals like pesticides, herbicides, and oil can wash into the stream during storms. Dirt and debris from construction sites and bare ground cause problems too. But there is a solution. A riparian buffer zone, or an area of trees and shrubs along a waterway, can dramatically improve water quality.

Problem/Solution

The Flooded City

Venice is a very special city in Italy. What makes it special? Venice is almost completely surrounded by water!

Venice does have streets and roads like other cities. But Venice also has special waterways called canals. People use boats to move along these canals.

The people of Venice have always loved their city. Many people visit Venice to see the beautiful bridges and old buildings. There are hundreds of old houses, famous churches, and lovely fountains.

But the city of Venice is facing a problem. The tides are rising. Each day, there are two high tides. Each day, the water rises and covers streets and roads. The water comes up to the windows of buildings.

The problem is even worse when there are storms. Storms make tides even higher. The city of Venice could be completely flooded!

Scientists have worked to find a solution. They planned a set of 78 steel gates in the water outside of Venice. These gates will be able to open and close. When the water is calm, the gates will be open. But when there are storms, the gates will rise and protect the city.

Will the gates work? No one really knows. But the people of Venice hope that these gates will save their city from the high tides.

Salamander Crossing

In the spring, mole salamanders migrate. They travel on the first rainy March night. Where are they going? These salamanders are moving from their forest homes to vernal pools. Vernal pools are big puddles that last through the whole spring. The salamanders go to the vernal pools to mate and lay eggs.

But mole salamanders face a problem. As people have built more homes, some salamanders have to cross roads to get to their vernal pools. On rainy March nights, this can be a problem. Drivers have trouble seeing the little amphibians. Many salamanders get run over!

In many towns, people have tried to come up with a solution to save the salamanders. Sometimes, volunteers come out with flashlights. They warn drivers and help to make sure that the salamanders get across the road safely. In one town, they have even built a tunnel! The salamanders can crawl through the tunnel and get to their vernal pools.

Problem/Solution

Passing Classes

A lot of students have been failing classes. These students wouldn't be failing classes if they studied more, asked questions, tried harder, and came in for extra help. Even though a lot of students fail classes, they have many options if they want to pass.

Source: Text Structures: Nonfiction Organizational Patterns PPT

Restoring the Toad

Dr. Knapp doesn't want people to sit back and let the toad vanish. He believes that everyone is responsible for restoring the toad species. Dr. Knapp thinks we could help restore the toad population if we stop mowing parts of our lawns and let the grass grow wild to reserve space for the toad. He also believes we need to stop using pesticides and fertilizers. The chemicals kill the insects that toads eat. If we preserve some spaces in our lawns and stop using fertilizers, Dr. Knapp believes we can save the toads.

Source: Text Structures: Nonfiction Organizational Patterns PPT

Proposition/Support

Wetlands

Wetlands are important for many reasons. Not only do they serve as resting places for migrating birds, but they are also breeding grounds for many different types of animals. Wetlands also absorb excess water during storms, helping to prevent flooding. The plants of wetlands help to absorb toxins and improve water quality.

Source: "Teaching Text Structure 4th-6th Grade, Supplemental Resources" from South Bay Union School District