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
Five-Tab Book

1. Fold a sheet of paper in half like a hot dog.
2. Fold the paper so that one-third is exposed and two-thirds are covered.
3. Fold the two-thirds section in half.
4. Fold the one-third section (single thickness) backward to form a fold line.

The paper will be divided into fifths when opened. Use this foldable to organize information about five countries, dates, events, and so on.
Text Structures Foldable

Label outside tabs:
• Chronological/Sequential
• Compare & Contrast
• Cause & Effect
• Problem & Solution
• Description
Chronological order - Sequencing

• Authors use chronological order to explain how things happen in order
• Chronological order is also called sequence or time order
Chronological order - Sequencing

- 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 - Sequencing

• 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!
Chronological order - Sequencing

• 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!
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.
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Compare and Contrast

- Similarities and differences are presented between two or more things.
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
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 signal words

Similar, different, however, on the other hand, both, compared to, in common

Can you find the clue words in the paragraph?
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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
Cause and Effect

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

• The author tells about a cause and one or more possible effects.
Cause and effect signal 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

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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
Problem and Solution

• 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*
Signal Words – Problem Solution

• Some signal words are:
  – problem, solution, since, so that, in order to, one reason for
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.
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• Can you find the problem and the solution in this paragraph?
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

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.
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
Description

• Provides information about a topic.

• Describes something
Description
Describes something

looks like

smells like
tastes like

feels like

sounds like

examples are

for example
to begin with
in addition
most important
in front
about
has

Signal Words
characteristics are
also
such as
another
beside
is
have

for instance
in fact
to illustrate
furthermore
near
are
does

(Adapted from Tompkins, 2006)
Shared by Beckv Cox. Valley Center
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.
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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
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.
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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
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What’s the text structure?

• Chronological order

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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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Try another!

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

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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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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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• Compare and contrast
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- Compare and contrast
- Notice how this paragraph is comparing Chicago BEFORE the fire to Chicago AFTER the fire
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
- Description
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.

• Compare and contrast
• Cause and effect
• Main idea
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.
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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