Author Blueprints: Spotting Text Structure

Teacher		**Class**	Grade 4
Subject	ELA	**Topic**	Text structure
Date		**Room**	
Lesson length	60 minutes	**Country**	United States

Students learn four text structures authors use to organize ideas. They read parts of a text and make blueprint posters to name each structure.

Curriculum links

- Describe the overall structure of events, ideas, and concepts of information in a text or part of a text. [1]

Learning objectives

- Students will name four text structures and what each organizes.
- Students will describe the overall structure of part of informational text.
- Students will use signal words and details to prove structure choice.

Success criteria

- I can name chronology, comparison, cause/effect, and problem/solution.
- I can describe how a part of a text is organized.
- I can use clue words and details to prove the structure.

What students already know

Ask: When you follow directions to make something, why does order matter? Take 2 quick examples, then ask how comparing two games helps you choose.

Key words

structure	how an author puts ideas in order [4]
chronology	events told in time order [7]
comparison	shows how things are same or different [7]
cause and effect	tells why something happened and what followed [4]
problem and solution	names what is wrong and how to make it right [7]

Materials

- Slides 1-12 and projector
- Video clip 1 "5 types for grades 3-5" (0:00-5:00) on slide 6, tested
- Worksheet Task E copies - Annotate a text: Study the lines and mark the evidence using Passage "A Playground Problem" paragraphs 1-4, one per student
- Large paper, one sheet per group, and markers
- Choice board with four poster starters

Before the lesson

- Print Worksheet Task E - Annotate a text: Study the lines and mark the evidence using Passage "A Playground Problem" for each student
- Print or draw choice board poster starters with boxes for structure name, signal words, visual
- Test Slide 6 Video clip 1 (0:00-5:00) for sound and picture
- Set desks for groups of four with large paper and markers

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Lesson outline

0–5 min **Starter** 5 min · Whole class

Hook students with the blueprint idea and recall why order and comparison help readers.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 1 and say the hook, then show Slide 2 objectives in student words.
2. Show Slide 5 and read the question aloud for think, pair, share.
3. Give 30 seconds think time, 60 seconds pair talk, then take 2 answers.
4. Link answers to goal: today you will draw the author's blueprint for part of a text.

STUDENTS DO

1. Listen to hook and objectives.
2. Think, then tell a partner what would happen if a cookbook did not list steps in order.
3. Share ideas with the class.

Say: Architects draw blueprints before they build. Today you will draw the author's blueprint! Text structure is the way authors organize their writing [4]. Today we will name four structures and prove each choice.

Ask: A cookbook lists steps in order. What if it did not? (Steps would be out of order, food could burn or not mix right, harder to follow.) · If you were teaching how to plant a seed, would you list steps in order or compare two kinds of seeds? (List steps in order for how to plant; compare only if helping choose which seed.)

Check understanding: Thumbs up if you can say what an author's blueprint shows. If unsure, restate: it shows how the author organized ideas.

Support: Let students answer with a drawing or gesture for first, next, last before speaking. **Stretch:** Ask students to give one time when comparing two things helps more than listing steps.

Use: Slides 1-2, Slide 5

5–15 min **Teaching** 10 min · Whole class

Teach four structures, signal words, and why following structure helps memory.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 3, teach each word with a hand motion for time order, balance, chain, and fix.
2. Show Slide 4 and explain that kids who follow the structure recall more of what they read [6].
3. Play Slide 6 Video clip 1 (0:00-5:00) and ask students to catch clue words like first, because, but.
4. Recap four patterns: chronology shows order in time, comparison shows alike and different, cause/effect shows why, problem/solution gives a fix.

STUDENTS DO

1. Repeat key words and motions with the teacher.
2. Watch and listen for the 5 patterns and clue words.
3. Tell a neighbor one clue word they heard.

Say: Authors use patterns on purpose. The five most common structures are description, compare and contrast, sequence, cause and effect, and problem and solution [7]. We will focus on four: chronology, comparison, cause/effect, and problem/solution. Clue words point to the pattern.

Ask: Why does noticing the author's plan help you? (You know what to look for and you remember more of what you read.) · Which clue words often show sequence and cause and effect? (Sequence: first, second, next, finally; cause and effect: because, as a result of, therefore [4].)

Check understanding: Cold-call 3 students to name a structure and one clue word. Reteach any missing one with an example motion.

Support: Keep Slide 3 words posted and point to each as you say it. **Stretch:** Ask students to predict what kind of graphic each structure matches: timeline, Venn, chain, arrow.

Use: Slides 3-4, Slide 6 (Video clip 1 0:00–5:00)

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15–25 min **Guided Practice** 10 min · Whole class

Model how to use clue words and details to name the structure of a short passage.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 7 and remind students that spotting signal words helps you know what comes next.
2. Show Slide 9 example A and think aloud step by step to name chronology.
3. Show Slide 9 example B and think aloud to name comparison with a partner check.
4. Show Slide 10 to contrast cause and effect that asks what happened and why with problem and solution that asks what is wrong and how to fix.

STUDENTS DO

1. Underline clue words in the air and say them with the teacher.
2. Turn and tell a partner the structure and one detail that proves it.
3. Compare cause and effect and problem and solution patterns with the class.

Say: Good readers ask questions and find signal words to see the author's pattern [4]. We will underline clue words, ask what the author is doing, then refer to details and examples in the text to explain our choice [1].

Worked example: A: 'First, stir batter. Next, bake 20 minutes. Last, cool.' Step 1: underline First, Next, Last. Step 2: ask, is this time order? Yes, steps to follow. Choice: chronology. B: 'Bikes are fast, but scooters cost less. Both have two wheels.' Step 1: underline but, cost less, Both. Step 2: ask, does it show same and different? Yes, fast vs cost less, both have two wheels. Choice: comparison.

Ask: In Slide 9 example B, what details show comparison? (Bikes are fast, scooters cost less shows different; Both have two wheels shows same.) · How is cause and effect different from problem and solution? (Cause and effect explains why with because, so, therefore; problem and solution names what is wrong then the fix.)

Check understanding: Mini whiteboards: write C for chronology or O for comparison for Slide 9 example B. If split, re-underline Both and but together.

Support: Provide sentence starter: I know this is ___ because the author says ___. **Stretch:** Ask students to change one clue word in Slide 9 example A but keep chronology.

Use: Slides 7, 9-10

25–50 min **Main Activity** 25 min · Groups

Describe the overall structure of part of a text and show it as a blueprint poster.

YOU DO

1. Give each group Worksheet Task E - Annotate a text: Study the lines and mark the evidence using Passage "A Playground Problem" paragraphs 1-4 and assign one paragraph per group.
2. Direct groups to annotate: underline signal words and circle one detail that proves the pattern.
3. Hand out large paper and choice board starters and show poster needs: structure name, signal words, visual like timeline, Venn, chain, or problem-to-solution arrow, since using visual representations helps show the pattern [4].
4. Circulate, ask why questions, and keep time with 5-minute check-ins.

STUDENTS DO

1. Read assigned paragraph, complete Worksheet Task E - Annotate a text: Study the lines and mark the evidence by marking signal words and details.
2. Discuss and agree on the structure for that part of the text.
3. Make poster with structure name, signal words, visual, and proof sentence.

Say: You are architects now. Read only your paragraph, decide if that part uses chronology, comparison, cause/effect, or problem/solution to organize events, ideas, concepts, or information [1]. Make a blueprint poster that proves it with words from the text.

Worked example: Model poster using Slide 9 example A text, not the passage: Title: Chronology. Signal words: First, Next, Last. Visual: 3-box timeline with stir, bake, cool. Proof sentence: The author lists steps in time order to follow.

Ask: What signal words in paragraph 2 point to structure? (because, As a result, pointing to cause and effect.) · What details in paragraph 3 point to comparison? (compared two ideas, One idea was, The other idea was better and different.)

Check understanding: Visit each group to see underlines and poster boxes; if a group is stuck, narrow to two choices and point to first clue word.

Support: Give a choice board with four poster starters so students fill in boxes instead of starting from blank paper. **Stretch:** Have students add a note on why the author likely picked that structure for that part.

Use: Worksheet Task E - Annotate a text: Study the lines and mark the evidence (Passage 'A Playground Problem' paragraphs 1-4)

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50–60 min **Plenary** 10 min · Whole class

Share blueprints and check that students can name and prove structure.

YOU DO

1. Have groups hang posters and point to signal words and details that prove the structure choice.
2. Connect parts: problem in paragraph 1, why in paragraph 2, choices in paragraph 3, fix in paragraph 4.
3. Show Slide 12 Quick quiz and take answers with proof.
4. Restate objectives and preview using structure in writing.

STUDENTS DO

1. Present poster in 1 minute: structure, signal words, visual, proof.
2. Answer Slide 12 quiz with thumbs for structure and spoken proof.
3. Self-rate against success criteria with fingers 1 to 3.

Say: Great architects can explain their blueprint. Point to your clue words and tell us how that part is built. Strong readers refer to details and examples in the text when they explain [1].

Ask: 'First we packed. Next we hiked. Last we sang.' What structure? (Chronology / sequence in time order, clue words First, Next, Last.) · 'Cats nap a lot, but dogs play more. Both are pets.' What structure? (Comparison, clue words but, more, Both; shows same and different.)

Check understanding: Exit ticket on paper: name structure of one new line. If many miss, reteach Slide 10 contrast tomorrow.

Support: Let students point to poster visual instead of full sentence to show proof. **Stretch:** Ask students to suggest a different solution for paragraph 1 that would still fit problem/solution.

Use: Slide 12

Common mistakes

Mistake	How to spot it	How to fix it
Mixing cause/effect with problem/solution	Student calls any because sentence a problem or any fix a cause	Ask: does it only explain why with because, as a result of, therefore [4] or does it name what is wrong then fix it [7]?
Calling comparison only when things are different	Student misses Both, alike, same as and labels as description	Remind that comparison shows alike and different [7]; check middle of Venn for shared details.
Calling any time word chronology	Student sees morning or next and ignores order of steps	Ask: can you draw it as first, second, next, finally in order [4]? If not, look again.

Support

- Give choice board poster starters and pre-underlined clue words for two choices first
- Provide sentence starter: I know this is ___ because the author says ___.
- Allow pointing to visual timeline, Venn, chain, or arrow to show proof

Stretch

- Have students add a note on why the author likely picked that structure for that part
- Have students write a new sentence that still fits the same structure
- Have students argue which structure would work if the author switched topics

For the LSE or teaching assistant

Stay with main activity groups assigned paragraphs 1 and 2; help underline because, so, therefore and prompt proof sentence. Check posters for structure name and one detail.

Check for understanding

Question	Answer
'First we packed. Next we hiked. Last we sang.' What structure and why?	Chronology; signal words First, Next, Last show time order.
Paragraph 2 says puddles stayed because ground was flat. What is the structure of that part?	Cause and effect; because and As a result show why water stayed.
Paragraph 3 says students compared two ideas. What structure and what detail proves it?	Comparison; One idea was sand, The other idea was better and different with stones.

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