FREE STARTER

GRADES 3–5

Text Structure Detective: Case Files for Grades 3–5

6 complete activities from Text Structure Detective, each with a worked answer.

Read	Find	Explain
Read the passage closely.	Underline the words that prove it.	Tell how the clues fit together.

HOW TO USE

1. Read the situation and the evidence first.
2. Show your thinking in the work boxes, not only an answer.
3. Explain how you know your answer makes sense.
4. Try the new problem at the bottom of the page.

6 activities • 3 answer pages • From the 20-activity collection

10 US Letter pages • Print at 100% / Actual Size

Original Bobotemp educational printable • Fictional names, places and prices

Name _____ Date _____

Signal Word Detective Sort

LEVEL 1 ●○○

Read each word card. Write it in the column for the structure it most often signals. Star the two context cards.

Word cards: such as, then, unlike, first, one solution, because, also, for example, as a result, the problem is, similarly, after that. For this activity, set aside 'then' and 'also' as context cards. Sort the other ten cards, two per structure. Then explain why the two context cards can appear in different structures. Bonus mystery card: in contrast. Clue 1: It does not tell about order in time. Clue 2: It tells how two things are different. Which column does the mystery card belong in?

SORT THE 12 WORD CARDS (10 TO SORT, 2 CONTEXT CARDS) + MYSTERY CARD: IN CONTRAST

sequence	cause/effect	compare/contrast	problem/solution	description

1. Sort the 10 other cards into the columns above, two per column.

2. Star the two context cards. Explain why each needs the surrounding sentences to tell its job.

3. Use both clues to place the mystery card.

TRY IT • Where would the card 'consequently' go? Explain using a purpose question.

Name _____ Date _____

Description Feature Web: Deserts

LEVEL 1 ●○○

Read the numbered passage. Use the clues to name its structure, then build a feature web.

(1) A desert is a place that gets very little rain. (2) Many deserts have wide stretches of sand, rock, or gravel. (3) Desert plants, such as cactuses, can store water in their thick stems. (4) Some desert animals, for example many lizards, rest in the shade on hot afternoons. (5) In many deserts, the air cools quickly after the sun goes down. Clue 1: The passage has one topic, not two subjects being compared. Clue 2: No sentence names a problem, a cause, or a next step. What is the structure?

STRUCTURES: CROSS OUT

Structure	Clue 1	Clue 2
sequence		
cause/effect		
compare/contrast		
problem/solution		
description		

FEATURE WEB

Topic

Feature | Feature | Feature | Feature

EVIDENCE TO USE

- Topic: deserts
- 5 numbered sentences
- Signal words: such as, for example
- Organizer: feature web

1. Name the structure.

2. Cite 2 sentence numbers that prove it.

3. Write the topic in the Topic box of the web and add 4 features.

TRY IT • Write one more sentence that would fit this passage's structure.

Name _____ Date _____

Cause and Effect Chain Builder: The Beaver Pond

LEVEL 2 ●●○

Put the scrambled events into a chain. Each arrow in your chain means 'led to.'

These events are scrambled. A: Ducks and frogs move to the pond to find food. B: Beavers pile sticks and mud across a stream to build a dam. C: Water plants and insects grow in the still water. D: The dam slows the stream, so water backs up and forms a pond. Put the events in a cause/effect chain from the first cause to the last effect. How many arrows does the finished chain need?

DRAW YOUR CHAIN HERE

EVIDENCE TO USE

- 4 events: A, B, C, D
- Each arrow means 'led to'
- Only one event has a signal word

1. Order the events from first cause to last effect.

2. Draw the chain in the box above and label each arrow 'led to.'

3. Count the arrows and explain your count.

TRY IT • A fifth event is added at the end: 'Herons visit the pond to hunt the frogs.' How many arrows does the chain need now?

Name _____ Date _____

Comparison Matrix: Frogs and Toads

LEVEL 2 ●●○

Read the passage. Build a comparison matrix with a row for each subject and a column for each category.

(1) Frogs and toads are amphibians, and many begin life in water. (2) Most frogs have smooth, moist skin. (3) Most toads, however, have dry, bumpy skin. (4) Frogs usually have long back legs for leaping. (5) Toads have shorter legs and tend to hop or walk. (6) Many frogs lay eggs in round clumps, while many toads lay eggs in long strings. Build a matrix with one row per subject and one column per category: skin, legs, eggs. How many detail cells will you fill?

BUILD YOUR MATRIX HERE

EVIDENCE TO USE

- Subjects: frogs, toads
- Categories: skin, legs, eggs
- Likeness sentence: 1

1. For each category (skin, legs, eggs), write the sentence numbers that tell about it.

2. Draw your matrix in the box above. Fill each cell and cite its sentence.

3. Tell how many cells you filled and where sentence 1 goes.

TRY IT • The author adds a fourth category, sounds, with one detail for each animal. How many cells does the matrix have now?

Name _____ Date _____

Misleading Signal Word Alert: Two Hares

LEVEL 3 ●●●

This passage contains signal words that point to the wrong structure. Find them, then decide the real structure from how the ideas relate.

(1) Snowshoe hares and black-tailed jackrabbits are both hares with long back feet. (2) First, look at where they live: snowshoe hares live in snowy northern forests, but jackrabbits live in dry deserts and grasslands. (3) Next, compare their coats: a snowshoe hare's fur turns white in winter, while a jackrabbit's stays brownish gray. (4) Finally, a jackrabbit's huge ears help it give off heat, but a snowshoe hare's ears are shorter. Clue 1: Removing the three order words does not change the meaning. Clue 2: The text is about features, not events. Clue 3: It has two subjects. What is the real structure?

CROSS OUT (CLUES 1-3)

Structure	1	2	3
sequence			
cause/effect			
compare/contrast			
problem/solution			
description			

MATRIX

	Snowshoe	Jackrabbit
habitat		
coat		
ears		

EVIDENCE TO USE

- Possible decoy words: three order words
- Subjects: snowshoe hare, black-tailed jackrabbit
- Matrix categories: habitat, coat, ears

1. Name the signal words that point to the wrong structure.

2. Name the real structure and cite 2 sentences.

3. Complete a matrix for habitat, coat, and ears.

TRY IT • Explain how 'first' could mislead a reader here: 'The first problem with the old schedule was that trucks came only once a week.'

Name _____ Date _____

Paragraph-by-Paragraph Map: The Mill Pond Bridge

LEVEL 3 ●●●

Label the structure of each paragraph. Then decide the overall structure that ties the paragraphs together.

P1: (1) In the fictional town of Willow Creek, students walked the long way around Mill Pond to reach school. (2) The trip took twenty minutes.
P2: (3) The town compared two bridge designs. (4) A wooden bridge cost less, but a steel bridge would last longer.
P3: (5) Workers first set posts in the pond bed. (6) Next, they laid a steel deck.
P4: (7) Now the walk takes five minutes. (8) Because the trip is shorter, more students walk to school.
Clue 1: P1 sets up a difficulty that the text answers. Clue 2: P3 and P4 show a fix and its result, not just events. What is the overall structure?

STRUCTURES: CROSS OUT

Structure	Clue 1	Clue 2
sequence		
cause/effect		
compare/contrast		
problem/solution		
description		

PARAGRAPH MAP

Part	Structure
P1	
P2	
P3	
P4	
Overall	

EVIDENCE TO USE

- 4 paragraphs, 8 sentences
- Paragraph signals: but (P2), first/next (P3), because (P4)
- Map: one label per paragraph plus one overall label

1. Label the structure of each paragraph.

2. Name the overall structure and cite 2 sentences.

3. Explain how P2 and P3 serve the whole text.

TRY IT • If P1 were removed, what overall structure would the text seem to have, and why?

1. Signal Word Detective Sort

LEVEL 1

The mystery card 'in contrast' belongs in compare/contrast. Sequence: first, after that. Cause/effect: because, as a result. Compare/contrast: similarly, unlike. Problem/solution: the problem is, one solution. Description: for example, such as. Context cards: then, also ('then' is also a common sequence signal).

WORKED REASONING • Ask each column's purpose question. 'First' and 'after that' answer What happened in order? 'Because' and 'as a result' answer Why did it happen? 'Similarly' and 'unlike' answer How are they alike and different? 'The problem is' and 'one solution' answer What went wrong and how was it fixed? 'For example' and 'such as' answer What is it like? 'Then' can bring in a later stage in one passage and an attempted fix in another, and 'also' can add a feature, a likeness, or another effect, so both need the surrounding sentences. Clue 1 removes sequence. Clue 2 leaves only compare/contrast.

WATCH FOR • Students may think every word has exactly one home. Words like 'then' and 'also' connect ideas in many structures, so the relationship between the ideas matters more than any single word.

TRANSFER • Cause/effect. 'Consequently' tells what happened as a result, so it answers Why did it happen?

2. Description Feature Web: Deserts

LEVEL 1

The structure is description. Accepted citations: any two of sentences 2, 3, 4, 5 (3 and 4 are strongest because of 'such as' and 'for example'). Web center: deserts. Features (any four of these five): very little rain, sand/rock/gravel, plants store water in stems, animals rest in shade, air cools after sunset.

WORKED REASONING • Clue 1 removes compare/contrast because only deserts are discussed. Clue 2 removes sequence, cause/effect, and problem/solution. The sentences could be read in a different order and still make sense, and none tells why something happened or how a problem was fixed. Each sentence adds one feature of deserts, which is the job of description. Sentences 3 and 4 use the description signals 'such as' and 'for example.'

WATCH FOR • Some students call sentence 5 sequence because it mentions time ('after the sun goes down'). A time phrase inside one feature does not make the whole passage tell events in order.

TRANSFER • Any sentence that adds a desert feature with no time order or cause, such as 'Some deserts have rocky hills with flat tops called mesas.'

7. Cause and Effect Chain Builder: The Beaver Pond

LEVEL 2

3 arrows. Chain: B (dam built), then D (pond forms), then C (plants and insects grow), then A (ducks and frogs move in).

WORKED REASONING • Find the event that needs nothing before it: the beavers building the dam (B). Ask 'What did that lead to?' The dam slows the water and forms a pond (D). Still water lets plants and insects grow (C). Plants and insects are food, so ducks and frogs arrive (A). Each middle event is both an effect of the one before and a cause of the one after. A chain of 4 events has 4 - 1 = 3 arrows.

WATCH FOR • Students may draw every event coming straight from the dam (one cause, many effects). In a chain, each effect becomes the next cause; the ducks come for the plants and insects, not for the dam itself.

TRANSFER • 4 arrows, because 5 events linked in one chain need 5 - 1 = 4 arrows.

8. Comparison Matrix: Frogs and Toads

LEVEL 2

6 cells (2 subjects x 3 categories). Frogs: smooth, moist skin (2); long back legs for leaping (4); eggs in clumps (6). Toads: dry, bumpy skin (3); shorter legs, hop or walk (5); eggs in strings (6). Sentence 1 is a likeness and goes in a Both note below the matrix.

WORKED REASONING • Sentence 1 names the subjects: frogs and toads. The categories are the things the author checks for both animals: skin (2, 3), legs (4, 5), and eggs (6). A matrix needs one cell for each subject in each category, so 2 × 3 = 6 cells. Sentence 6 fills two cells because 'while' joins a frog detail and a toad detail. Sentence 1 tells how they are alike, so it goes below the matrix as a Both note.

WATCH FOR • Students may make one column per sentence. The categories come from what is being compared (skin, legs, eggs), and one sentence, like sentence 6, can fill two cells.

TRANSFER • 8 cells, because 2 subjects x 4 categories = 8.

13. Misleading Signal Word Alert: Two Hares

LEVEL 3

The real structure is compare/contrast. Misleading words: first, next, finally (they order the categories, not events). Accepted citations: any two of sentences 2, 3, 4 (1 accepted as the likeness). Habitat: snowy northern forests vs. deserts and grasslands. Coat: turns white in winter vs. brownish gray all year. Ears: shorter vs. huge, help give off heat.

WORKED REASONING • Read the passage without 'first,' 'next,' and 'finally.' Nothing changes, because these words order the author's categories, not events, so Clue 1 removes sequence. Every sentence tells about features (where they live, coats, ears), so Clue 2 leaves compare/contrast and description. There are two hares, and 'but' and 'while' set them side by side, so Clue 3 removes description. The structure is compare/contrast.

WATCH FOR • Students who label structure from the first signal word they see will call this sequence. Order words can organize a list of categories; the test is whether events actually happen one after another.

TRANSFER • 'First' counts one problem in a list, not events in time. The sentence alone cannot show the whole text's structure.

14. Paragraph-by-Paragraph Map: The Mill Pond Bridge

LEVEL 3

Overall structure: problem/solution. P1: introduces the problem (1, 2); accept description. P2: compare/contrast (3, 4). P3: sequence (5, 6). P4: cause/effect result (7, 8). Overall citations: 1 and 7 (accept 2 and 8 as alternates).

WORKED REASONING • Map each paragraph. P1 describes a difficulty: a long walk (1, 2). P2 weighs two designs with 'but' (compare/contrast). P3 tells building steps in order with 'first' and 'next' (sequence). P4 gives results with 'Because' (cause/effect). Clue 1 leaves cause/effect and problem/solution. Clue 2 decides: P3 and P4 show an action taken to fix P1's difficulty and its result, so the overall structure is problem/solution. P2 and P3 show how the town chose and built its solution.

WATCH FOR • Students may name the overall structure from the longest or most signal-heavy paragraph. Each paragraph can have its own structure; the overall structure is the idea that connects them all.

TRANSFER • Mostly sequence (choosing, building, the result), because without the difficulty the parts no longer read as a solution. Accept cause/effect if the student explains P4 as the bridge's effects.