



Focused Lesson Plan

Understanding Text Structure: Compare and Contrast

Preparation

**Learning Objective**

Students will improve their understanding of a news article by learning to understand compare-and-contrast text structure (strategy).

Brief Definition

Text structure includes both the organization of ideas within a text and the instructional design features and format of the text. The *compare- and-contrast* text structure points out similarities and differences among facts, people, events, ideas, and so on.

Why use this lesson plan?

This lesson plan suggests an instructional sequence that *focuses* on understanding compare-and-contrast text structure. Although you and your students will be employing other strategies as you read, the purpose of this lesson plan is to intensify your students' awareness and understanding of this single strategy so they are prepared to use it in combination with other strategies when they read independently.

Knowledge of text structure can guide students to understand the relationships among ideas in a text and is linked to improved comprehension. It requires direct instruction in recognizing the organization and features of multiple structures. Teaching expository text structure is particularly important because most students are exposed only to the structure of narrative text.

Do before teaching

1. Read through the lesson plan.
2. Select a news article that follows the compare-and-contrast text structure.
3. Print a copy of the news article for each of your students. Optionally, print a copy of the *Sample Compare-and-Contrast Paragraph and Compare-and-Contrast Questions*. (See below.)
4. Write the *Compare-and-Contrast questions* on the board. (See below.)

Teaching Routine

Before Reading

Introduce Lesson

- Explain that in this lesson, students will understand the compare-and-contrast text structure to help them understand a news article.
- Pass out printed copies of the news article.

Teacher Direct Instruction/Modeling

- Explain understanding text structure improves understanding. In a text with compare-and-contrast structure, readers look for similarities and differences among two or more items. Articles that use a compare-and-contrast structure, may follow one of these patterns:
 - first item completely described before the second item is completely described
 - first attribute of both items described before second attribute and so on
- Read the paragraph, *Europe's Warm Winter*, out loud to your class, or ask your students to read the paragraph. (See below.)
 - Review the answers to the *Compare-and-Contrast Questions* with your students.
 - In *Europe's Warm Winter*, it is easy to identify the pattern of describing the first item completely before describing the second item. Prompt students to explore the second compare-and-contrast pattern. Ask them to restate part of the paragraph in a way that compares or contrasts the first attribute of both items before describing the second attribute.
- Tell students that you are now going to read a news article that uses compare-and-contrast text structure. The similarities and differences in the news article will not be as obvious as it is in *Europe's Warm Winter*.
- With the class, preview the article by reading titles, headings, graphics, captions, and the first paragraph. Point out the highlighted vocabulary words and their definitions at the end of the article. This will activate students' prior knowledge and allow them to begin looking for evidence of the compare-and-contrast structure.
- Briefly discuss what students think the article is about.

Compare-and-Contrast Questions

- What signal words indicate that this might be a compare-and-contrast text?
- What compare-and-contrast pattern does this article follow? (first item completely described before the second item is completely described; first attribute of both items described before second attribute and so on)
- What items are being compared and contrasted?
- What attributes are used to compare and contrast the items?
- How are the items alike (similar)?
- How are the items not alike (different)?
- Are the items more similar or more different?

Student Practice

Ask students which of the compare-and-contrast questions they can answer at this point.

During Reading

Teacher Direct Instruction/Modeling

- Explain that good readers look for patterns in the text while they read. Remind them that the compare-and-contrast questions can help them find evidence of the compare-and-contrast pattern in the text.
- Divide the text into two meaningful sections. Sections may include a single paragraph or multiple paragraphs.
- Ask students to read the first section of the text and to mark places in the text where they find information about the compare-and-contrast structure.

Student Practice

- When they are done reading the first section of text, ask students which of the compare-and-contrast questions that they can answer at this point. They may revise some of their earlier responses.
- If necessary, remind them that if the article describes the first item completely, they may not be able to tell many of the attributes that will be compared and contrasted until they've finished reading the entire article.
- Ask students to read the second section of text.

After Reading

Teacher Direct Instruction/Modeling

When students are done reading the whole text, complete the compare-and-contrast questions and discuss student responses.

Student Practice

- Ask students to restate the similarities and differences in their own words using their answers.
- If possible, extend the discussion by comparing and contrasting additional items with items in the article or by using different attributes to compare and contrast items in the article.
- Ask students how comparing and contrasting items or ideas helped them understand the text.

Apply Strategy to Future Reading

- Ask students to bring a text to class that follows a different compare-and-contrast pattern. Plan a time that you can share these texts.
- Ask students to bring a text to class to which they can apply the strategy. Plan time for students to independently apply the strategy to the texts that they have selected.

Sample Compare-and-Contrast Paragraph

Europe's Warm Winter

Winter in Northern Europe is usually quite cold. Temperatures are usually around freezing or below. When the weather is this cold, the trees are bare, rivers like the Danube freeze, and birds fly south for the winter. This winter, however, has been very different. Temperatures in some cities in Northern Europe are between 55 and 60 degrees. In contrast with a more normal winter, trees are flowering, rivers are still flowing, and birds are staying put. Although the warm weather limits some activities like ice skating, many Europeans are still able to enjoy some traditional winter activities like feasting, visiting family and friends, and enjoying the outdoors.

Compare-and-Contrast Questions with Sample Responses

- **What signal words indicate that this might be a compare-and-contrast text?**
“however”, “in contrast,” “although”
- **What compare-and-contrast pattern does this article follow? (first item completely described before the second item is completely described; first attribute of first and second item described before second attribute and so on)**

First type of winter weather is described completely first; second type of winter weather is described second

- **What items are being compared and contrasted?**

Two different kinds of winter weather

- **What attributes are used to compare and contrast the items?**

Temperature, Trees, Rivers, Birds, Winter activities including ice skating, feasting, visiting family and friends, enjoying the outdoors

- **How are the items alike (similar)?**

Some winter activities. feasting, visiting family and friends, enjoying the outdoors

- **How are the items not alike (different)?**

Usually trees are bare, but this year they are flowering.

Usually rivers freeze, but this year they are flowing.

Usually birds fly south, but this year they are staying put.

Ice skating is limited.

- **Are the items more similar or more different?**

They are more different.