



Focused Lesson Plan

Understanding Text Structure: Problem/Solution

Preparation

Learning Objective(s)

Students will improve their understanding of a news article by learning to understand problem/solution 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 *problem/solution* text structure shows the development of a problem or problems and one or more solutions.

Why use this lesson plan?

This lesson plan suggests an instructional sequence that *focuses* on understanding problem/solution 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 problem/solution text structure. For the lesson to work most effectively, the problem and solution must both be stated in the article.
3. Print a copy the news articles for each of your students. Optionally, print a copy of the *Sample Problem/Solution Paragraph and Problem/Solution Questions*. (See below.)
4. Write the *Problem/Solution Questions* on the board. (See sidebar below.)

Teaching Routine

Before Reading

Introduce Lesson

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

Teacher Direct Instruction/Modeling

- Explain that understanding text structure improves understanding. In a text with problem/solution structure, readers look to see what the problem is and what the solution is.
- Read the paragraph, *Making Way for Eels*, out loud to your class, or ask your students to read the paragraph. (See below.)
 - Review the answers to the *Problem/Solution Questions* with your students.
 - Explain that in articles that follow the problem/solution pattern, the problem is often stated early in the text. Sometimes, however, the text might start with the solution and end with stating the problem.
 - Ask students how *Making Way for Eels* might begin if it started with the solution.
- Tell students that you are now going to read a news article that uses problem/solution text structure. The problem and solution in the news article will not be as obvious as it is in *Making Way for Eels*.
- 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 problem/solution structure.
- Briefly discuss what students think the article is about.



Problem/Solution Questions:

- What signal words indicate that this might be a problem/solution text?
- What is the problem?
- Who is trying to solve the problem?
- How did that person try to solve that problem?
- What are the results of these solutions?
- Is the problem solved? Do any new problems develop because of the solutions?

Student Practice

Ask students which of the problem-solution 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 problem/solution questions can help them find evidence of the problem/solution 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 problem/solution pattern.

Student Practice

- When they are done reading the first section of text, ask students to respond to the problem/solution questions that they can answer at this point. They may revise some of their earlier responses.
- If necessary, remind them that the problem may not be stated in the beginning of the 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 problem/solution questions and discuss student responses.

Student Practice

- Ask students to restate the problem and solution(s) in their own words using their answers.
- If possible, extend the discussion by discussing new problems created by the solution to the original problem.
- Ask students how identifying problems and solutions helped them understand the text.

Apply Strategy to Future Reading

- Ask students to bring a text to class that provides a different solution to the problem or provides a solution to a new problem created by the solution to the original problem. 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 Problem/Solution Paragraph

Making Way for Eels

American eels face a problem: their number is becoming fewer. One reason for this is because dams are getting in the way. Eels are born in the salty ocean. Baby eels must make their way from the ocean to their homes in fresh water. To do this, they must swim upstream. However, dams often block their way and as a result, more and more eels do not make it. Scientists are working on a solution to help eels pass through the dams called “eelways.” Eelways use less water than the passages already created for fish because eels swim in slow moving water. Scientists hope the eelways will help bring back the eels.

Sample Problem/Solution Questions with Sample Responses

- **What signal words indicate that this might be a problem/solution text?**
“problem”, “one reason for this,” “as a result”, “solution”
- **What is the problem?**
The number of eels is becoming fewer because dams are getting in the eels way.
- **Who is trying to solve the problem?**
scientists
- **How did that person try to solve that problem?**
Creating eelways
- **What are the results of these solutions?**
Does not say; scientist are stilling hoping this will solve the problem
- **Is the problem solved? Do any new problems develop because of the solutions?**
Does not say; does not say but maybe the solution will be too expensive