



Focused Lesson Plan

Understanding Text Structure: Cause and Effect

Preparation

**Learning Objective**

Students will improve their understanding of a news article by learning to understand cause-and-effect 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 *cause-and-effect* text structure shows how facts/events/concepts (effects) are caused by other facts/events/concepts (causes).

Why use this lesson plan?

This lesson plan suggests an instructional sequence that *focuses* on understanding cause-and-effect 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 cause-and-effect text structure. For the lesson to work most effectively, the causes and effects must both be stated in the article.
3. Print a copy of the news article for each of your students. Optionally, print a copy of the *Sample Cause-and-Effect Paragraph and Cause-and-Effect Questions*. (See below.)
4. Write the *Cause-and-Effect Questions* on the board. (See below.)

Teaching Routine

Before Reading

Introduce Lesson

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

Teacher Direct Instruction/Modeling

- Explain that text structure improves understanding. In a text with cause-and-effect structure, you will look to see what happens (the effect) and what caused it to happen. Articles that use a cause-and-effect structure may follow one of these patterns:
 - single cause and single effect
 - multiple causes and single effect
 - single cause and multiple effects
 - an effect that becomes the cause for another effect (a cause-and-effect chain)
- Read the paragraph, *Fire Finds*, out loud to your class, or ask your students to read the paragraph. (See below.)
 - Review the answers to the *Cause-and-Effect questions* with your students.
 - In *Fire Finds*, students may identify a single cause and single effect or may identify a cause-and-effect chain. Prompt students to explore a cause-and-effect chain. Ask them what they think might happen if people other than scientists discover objects from the fires.
- Tell students that you are now going to read a news article that uses cause-and-effect text structure. The cause and effect in the news article will not be as obvious as it is in *Fire Finds*.
- 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 cause-and-effect structure.
- Briefly discuss what students think the article is about.

Cause-and-Effect Questions:

- What signal words indicate that this might be a cause-and-effect text?
- What cause-and-effect pattern does this article follow? (single cause and single effect, single/multiple cause and single/multiple effect, cause-and-effect chain)
- What happens?
- What causes it to happen?
- What are important factors related to the cause?
- Will this result always happen from these causes? Why or why not?

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 cause-and-effect questions can help them find evidence of the cause-and-effect 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 cause-and-effect structure.

Student Practice

- When they are done reading the first section of text, ask students which of the cause-and-effect questions they can answer at this point.
- If necessary, remind them that there may be more than one cause or one effect.
- 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 cause-and-effect questions and discuss student responses.

Student Practice

- Ask students to restate what happened (effect) and why it happened (cause) in their own words using their answers.
- If possible, extend the discussion by exploring additional causes and effects that might not be mentioned specifically in the article.
- Ask students how identifying causes and effect helped them understand the text.

Apply Strategy to Future Reading

- Ask students to bring a text to class that follows a different cause-and-effect 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 Cause-and-Effect Paragraph

Fire Finds

When many years pass, objects from older civilizations are frequently covered up by vegetation or other buildings. So when a fire burns, it can cause objects from long ago to be uncovered. As a result, scientists like to visit wildfire sites. Sometimes, scientists find small things like rock flakes that were made when ancient hunters sharpened arrowheads or beads made from shells. Sometimes, they find larger things like flat-topped boulders that ancient people used as kitchen counters and caves with rock art. After a large fire near Los Angeles, scientists found an old gold-mining camp and a farmhouse from the 1800s.

Sample Cause-and-Effect Questions with Sample Responses

- **What signal words indicate that this might be a cause-and-effect text?**
“cause”, “as a result”
- **What cause-and-effect pattern does this article follow? (single cause and single effect, single/multiple cause and single/multiple effect, cause-and-effect chain)**
Single cause and single effect
Or
Cause-and-effect chain
- **What happens?**
Scientists visit wildfire sites to find objects from the past
- **What causes it to happen?**
Wildfires uncovered the objects.
- **What are important factors related to the cause?**
Objects from ancient civilizations can be covered up by vegetation or other buildings.
- **Will this result always happen from these causes? Why or why not?**
It doesn't say in the article but it is possible that the result won't always be the same. However, there might not be objects in the first place, fires might destroy the objects completely, or people other than scientists might take the objects.