


How Teachers can use Text Structure to Improve Student Comprehension and Writing

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Jordan School District
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Agenda

- Whole Group
 - Text Structure, Importance & Use
- Small Groups
 - Primary Grades: Janet
 - Upper Grades: Georgia
- Wrap-up
 - Discussion (including Q&A)
 - Book Drawing

Why Use Informational Text?

- Develops Essential Skills
 - ability to **comprehend** and **compose** necessary for success (Marinak & Gambrell, 2009; Seidenberg, 1989; Williams et al., 2007)
 - literacy needs of children
 - 4th grade slump lessened through exposure to informational text in primary grades (Chall et al., 1990)
 - By sixth grade more than 75% of students' reading demands are with informational text (Venezky, 1982)
 - Increase motivation for reluctant readers (Abrahamson & Carter, 1991)
 - adult literacy needs of adults
 - 86% of texts read by adults are informational (Duke, 2000; Duke, Bennett-Armistead, & Roberts, 2002)

| Grade | Literary | Informational |
|-------|----------|---------------|
| 4 | 50% | 50% |
| 8 | 45% | 55% |
| 12 | 30% | 70% |

Source: National Assessment Governing Board (2008). Reading Framework for the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

How Can We Help Children Access IT?

- Significant benefits for expert, novice, and struggling readers who recognize and use informational **text structure** (Armbruster, Anderson, & Ostertag, 1989; Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker, 2001; Mayer, 1984; Taylor, 1992)
- National Reading Panel (2000) – teach **text structure** combined with the use of graphic organizers
- Institute of Education Sciences Practice Guide (2010) – teach **text structure** to students to improve comprehension
- Common Core State Standards (CCSS) – teach students to read and write informational texts using **text structure**

How Can We Help Children Access IT?

- Well-Structured Exemplar Text improves student abilities:
 - Construct accurate meaning, acquire new content knowledge, ask relevant questions, predict forthcoming information, summarize the text, and monitor comprehension (Hall & Sabey, 2005; Meyer, et al., 2002; Richgels, McGee, Lomax, & Sheard, 1987)
 - Double the amount of information students remembered (Meyer et al., 1980)
 - Once learned from model texts, readers use their understanding of text structures to reorganize complex, less well-structured texts to aid comprehension and recall (Armbruster & Anderson, 1984; Meyer & Rice, 1984; Williams, Stafford, Lauer, Hall, & Pollini, 2009)

How Can We Help Children Access IT?

- What is a “Well-Structured Exemplar Text”?
 - conforms to one of the five types of expository text structures
 - follows a single structure from beginning to end
 - uses cue words and other text features to signal important transitions (Shanahan et al., 2010; Williams et al., 2009)

| Informational Text Structure | Attributes | Signal Words |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Description | A major idea is supported by details or examples | for example, most importantly, another kind, described as |
| Sequence | A main idea is supported by details that must be in a particular sequence, a logical order | first, second, next, finally, then, before, after, when, until, and other words that signal sequence of time or process |
| Question/Answer (Problem/Solution) | A question or problem is considered | the question is, the problem is, therefore, if...then, who, what, why, when, where, how |
| Cause/Effect | Details explain the causes of a main idea or the results produced by the main idea | because, since, therefore, as a result, thus, hence |
| Compare/Contrast | Details of two or more main ideas indicate how those concepts are similar or different | similarly, on the other hand, compared to, different from, same as |

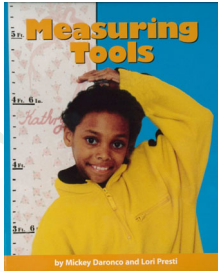
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Q/A Text Structure

| | | |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Question/Answer (Problem/Solution) | A question or problem is considered | the question is, the problem is, therefore, if...then, who, what, why, when, where, how |
|------------------------------------|--|--|

Problem & Solution Diagram

Problem/Solution Text Structure Example



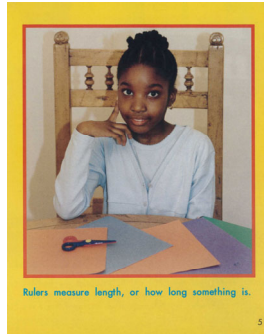
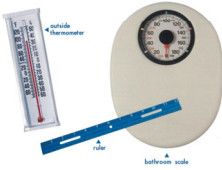
Measuring Tools
by Mickey Doranco and Lori Presti

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| Which Tools Do We Use to Measure Time? | 14 |
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Which Tools Do We Use to Measure Length?

This girl wants to make a card for her mom. She needs to cut the paper in half. Which tool should she use to measure the paper?



Rulers measure length, or how long something is.


This man is building a house. He wants to buy some lumber. He needs to know how long the lumber is. Which tool should he use to measure the lumber?



When we measure things that are long, it is easier to use a tape measure than a ruler. A tape measure is longer than a ruler.

Which Tools Do We Use to Measure Weight?

This woman wants a pound of cheese. She is going to make a lot of sandwiches. Which tool should the grocery use to measure the cheese?




A grocery scale
measuring tape
watch
bathroom scale

Grocery scales measure weight, or how heavy something is.

8

This girl thinks her cat has gotten fat. She wants to know if her cat is heavier than it was last year. Which tool should she use to measure her cat?

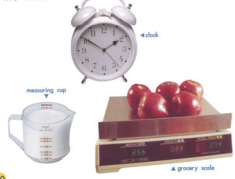


A bathroom scale measures weight, too.

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Which Tools Do We Use to Measure Volume?

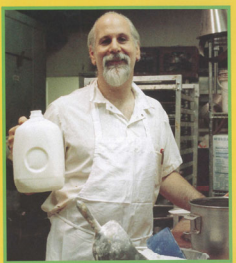
This baker is making a cake. He has put the flour, sugar, and eggs into the bowl. Now he needs to add the milk. Which tool should he use to measure the milk?



measuring cup
clock
grocery scale

A measuring cup measures volume, or how much space something takes up.

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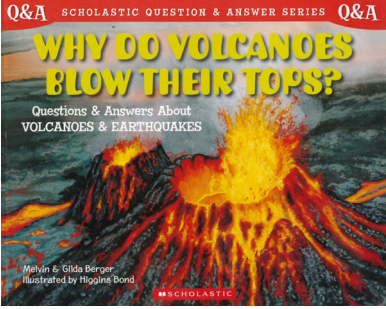


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Q&A SCHOLASTIC QUESTION & ANSWER SERIES Q&A

WHY DO VOLCANOES BLOW THEIR TOPS?

Questions & Answers About VOLCANOES & EARTHQUAKES



Melvin & Gilda Berger
Illustrated by Higgins Bond
SCHOLASTIC

VOLCANOES—WHY AND HOW

Why do volcanoes blow their tops?
 Because they erupt with such tremendous force. The force can knock the top off a mountain!

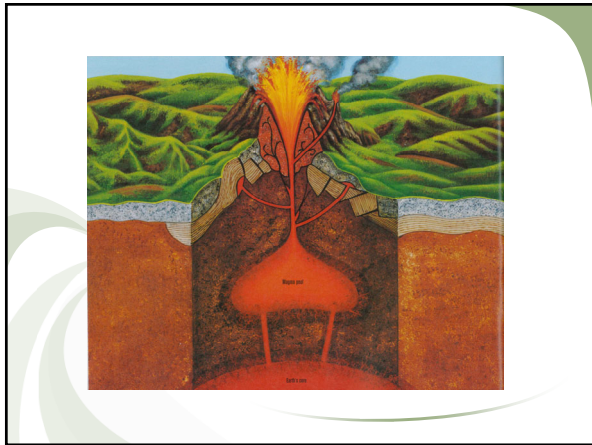
The volcano's force comes from deep within the earth. It is so hot at our planet's core that rock melts. Melted rock becomes thick, mushy magma. The great heat makes the magma expand. It rises and collects in an underground pool.

Solid rock presses hard against the pool of magma. The pressure forces magma into cracks in the rock. Suddenly, the magma finds a way up to the earth's surface. BOOM! The melted rock blasts out of the ground. Another volcano blows its top!

How hot is it inside the earth?
 Very hot. And the farther down you go, the hotter it gets. A few miles (kilometers) within the earth, temperatures may reach as high as 1,600 degrees Fahrenheit (870°C). That's much hotter than your oven at home—and hot enough to melt rock into magma.

Does all rock melt?
 No. Only the edges of the plates that make up the earth's crust melt.

When two plates push against each other, one of the plates may be forced under the other. Down, down it slides to where it's hot enough to melt rock. The edge of the plate melts and becomes magma.



What makes a volcano erupt?
 Pressure. It pushes on the underground pool of magma. The magma bursts through to the surface. The explosion is like toothpaste shooting out of a tube when you give it a hard squeeze.

Also, the magma is filled with bubbly gases. These gases make a mighty fountain that helps blast out the magma. It is just like liquid squirting out when you pop the cap off a bottle of warm, shaken soda.

When magma reaches the earth's surface, it becomes lava.

What is the difference between lava and magma?
 None. Lava is magma after it hits the air. It comes out as a red-hot liquid. Later the lava cools and becomes solid.

What else do volcanoes spit out?
 Pieces of rock called tephra (TEH-fuh). Tephra is magma that hardened under the surface or after being sprayed from the volcano.

Tiny bits of tephra form volcanic dust. Clouds of dust from a big volcano turn the sky black and reduce the amount of sunlight reaching Earth.

Slightly bigger pieces of tephra are called volcanic ash. When the ash mixes with water and spreads across the land you have a mudflow.

Large pieces of tephra are called volcanic bombs. Big bombs can measure more than 4 feet (1.2 m) across and weigh many tons (tonnes). Those who study volcanoes up close wear protective clothing. Good idea!

Why do volcanoes smell bad?
 Because they give off gas. Most is steam. But mixed in are other gases. Some are poisonous; some, like hydrogen sulfide, just smell bad.



Teaching Q/A Text Structure

Preparation

- Select several texts (5-6) that exemplify the Q/A structure
- Select a graphic organizer that matches the Q/A structure
- Prepare read-alouds that focus on sharing your think-alouds about the Q/A text structure and signal words

Teaching Q/A Text Structure

Before Reading

- Explain to students how informational text can be organized to help the reader better understand the information. One method of organization is 'question and answer.' Explain the meaning of Q/A and why this is important to reading and writing about information.
- Identify with students some 'signal words' for Q/A structure
- Introduce the graphic organizer and explain how it visually represents the a Q/A organization.
- Emphasize how noticing the Q/A organization can help students better understand the information in the text.
- Introduce the selected text and conduct a 'text-feature walk'

Teaching Sequential Text Structure

During Reading

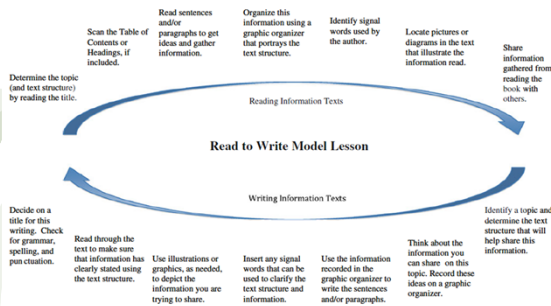
- Share your think-alouds that emphasize the Q/A text structure
- Model & guide students to take notes on the graphic organizer
- Highlight the use of signal words in the text
- Read aloud several exemplary models of Q/A organization
- As students become more familiar with the Q/A text structure, guide students to
 - develop and share their own think-alouds about the text structure
 - add post-it notes with signal words in places where the meaning could be made more clear

Teaching Sequential Text Structure

After Reading

- Discuss how the Q/A structure is necessary to accurately portray the information
- Challenge students to find & share other examples of Q/A structure
- Use the Q/A graphic organizer as a planner for writing Q/A informational texts

Reciprocal Nature of Reading & Writing



Teaching Q/A Text Structure

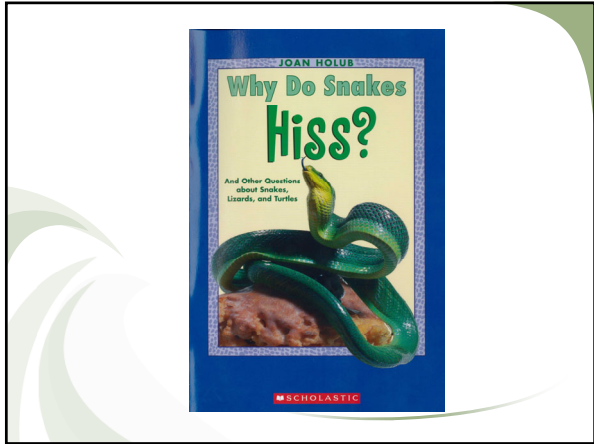
- **Materials**
 - *Why do Snakes Hiss?*, by Joan Holub
Scholastic - Lexile: 730, GRL: Q
 - Problem Solution Graphic Organizer

| Questions | Answers | Evidence/Details (Page #) |
|-----------|---------|------------------------------|
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Remember the graphic organizer needs to match the text structure used in the book

Teaching Q/A Text Structure

- ◆ **Lesson – Why Do Snakes Hiss?**
 - **Explanation:**
 - “Today we will be learning about how authors use text structure to organize information in informational books. The text structure we will study today is the *question/answer* structure. Learning to identify how books are organized or structured can help you remember and understand the information the author presents.”
 - **Teacher Modeling:**
 - “The *question/answer* text structure presents a question or problem and then provides the answer in the text. Let’s look at a *question/answer* text structure using the book, *Why Do Snakes Hiss?*”



Teaching Q/A Text Structure

- ◆ **Why Do Snakes Hiss?**
 - **Teacher Modeling:**
 - Take a picture walk through this book and model for students how to think aloud about the organization of information.
 - "I can see the author is providing facts and details about snakes. I can also see that each page begins with a question and then there is information that answers the question. It looks like the author has used a question/answer organization for this book."

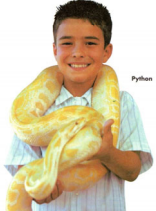
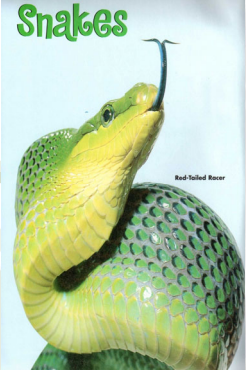
Teaching Q/A Text Structure

- ◆ **Why Do Snakes Hiss**
 - **Teacher Modeling:**
 - I am now ready to read the first page. I notice there is a question at the top of this page: 'How many kinds of snakes are there?' That is a good question. Let's see if the author answers the question (**read the answer aloud**).

Snakes

How many kinds of snakes are there?

There are about 2,600 kinds of snakes. Some well-known snakes are king snakes, garter snakes, cobras, pythons, and rattlesnakes.



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Teaching Q/A Text Structure

◆ **Why Do Snakes Hiss**

■ **Teacher Modeling:**

- The author does provide the answer to the question, 2,600 kinds of snakes. That is a lot of different kinds of snakes.
- Let's use our graphic organizer to help us keep track of this information. I will write the question here, the answer the author provides here, and some details and the page number here."

| Questions | Answers | Evidence/Details (Page #) |
|--------------------------|---------|---|
| How many kinds of snakes | 2,600 | King snakes, garter, cobras, pythons, rattlers (p. 8) |
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Teaching Q/A Text Structure



◆ **Why Do Snakes Hiss**

▪ **Guided Practice:**


- Let's look at the next page. What question is the author asking?
- 'What are the biggest and the smallest snakes?' That is a good question.
- Let's see if the author gives us the answer to the question.

What are the biggest and smallest snakes?

The longest snake is the reticulated python (reh-TIK-yu-lay-ted PI-thon). It can grow up to thirty-three feet long. An anaconda is the thickest snake. The biggest one ever found measured forty-four inches around.



A thread snake is the smallest snake. It is only about four inches long and is as thin as a toothpick. Snakes never stop growing. The longer a snake lives, the bigger it gets.






Teaching Q/A Text Structure

◆ **Why Do Snakes Hiss**

▪ **Guided Practice:**


- The author does answer the question about the biggest and smallest snakes.
- Let's record this information on our *question/answer chart.*"

| Questions  | Answers  | Evidence/Details (Page #)  |
|---|---|---|
| How many kinds of snakes | 2,600 | King snakes, garter, cobras, pythons, rattlers (p. 8) |
| Biggest and smallest | Longest-reticulated python. Thickest-anaconda. Smallest-thread snake | 33 feet 41 inches around 4 inches, like a toothpick (p. 11) |
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Teaching Q/A Text Structure

◆ **Why Do Snakes Hiss**

- **Guided Practice:**
 - “Are you starting to see how a *question/answer* text structure works?”
 - When the author organizes the information this way, it’s easier for us as readers to understand and find important information.”
 - Let’s do another one together.”



Why do snakes shed their skin?

Snakes shed their skin when they outgrow it. This is called molting. The old skin breaks open and turns inside out in one piece as the snake moves forward and out of it. Snakes molt several times a year.

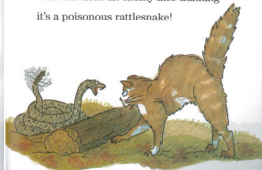
12




Why do snakes hiss?

Some snakes hiss or make other noises to scare enemies away.

A rattlesnake shakes the end of its tail to make a rattling sound that warns: Leave me alone!

A corn snake moves its tail in dry leaves to make a rattling sound. This can trick an enemy into thinking it’s a poisonous rattlesnake!




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| Why do snakes shed skin | They outgrow it | Called 'molting.' Do this several times a year. Skin turns inside out. (p. 12) |
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Teaching Q/A Text Structure

◆ **Why Do Snakes Hiss**

- **Guided Practice:**
 - Read this next page with your partner.
 - Look to see if the author continues to use the question/answer structure.
 - Record the information on the chart.



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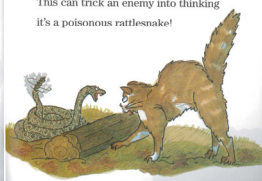
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| Why do snakes hiss | Hiss and make noise to scare enemies away | Rattlesnake Corn snake mimics rattlesnake (p. 13) |
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Teaching Q/A Text Structure


◆ **Why Do Snakes Hiss**

- **Guided Practice:**
 - Read the next two pages with your partner.
 - Notice how the author continues to use the question/answer structure.
 - Here are the next two questions.
 - Record the answers and important details for these two questions on the chart.

| Questions  | Answers  | Evidence/Details (Page #)  |
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| Do all snakes have fangs | | |
| Are all snakes poisonous | | |
| | | |
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Do all snakes have fangs?

Most snakes have four rows of small, pointed teeth in the top of their mouths and two rows in the bottom. Only poisonous snakes have sharp, hollow teeth called fangs. The fangs of some snakes fold in along the tops of their mouths. When the fangs are needed, they flip down and inject poison.



Are all snakes poisonous?

Most snakes are not poisonous but may bite to protect themselves. Sea snakes are the most poisonous snakes. Other poisonous snakes include rattlesnakes, adders, copperheads, cottonmouths, and cobras. Spitting cobras can spit poison as far as seven feet away!



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| Questions | Answers | Evidence/Details (Page #) |
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| Do all snakes have fangs | Only poisonous snakes | Fangs are hollow and sharp (p. 14) |
| Are all snakes poisonous | | |
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| Are all snakes poisonous | Most are not | Most poison—sea snakes Spitting Cobras can spit 7 ft. (p. 15) |
| | | |

Teaching Q/A Text Structure

◆ Why Do Snakes Hiss

▪ Partner Practice:

- Now work with your partner to read the rest of the information about snakes.
- Look for the questions and the answers.
- Record the information on your chart.
- (Students read the remaining pages, identifying the questions, answers, and details and recording the information on the *question/answer* chart.)



How well can snakes smell, see, and hear?

Smell is a snake's most important sense. A snake smells mostly with its tongue, not its nose. Its tongue darts out to take smells into its mouth. Most snakes don't see or hear well, but can feel the movement and warmth of a nearby animal. Snakes don't have eyelids that shut, so it's hard to tell if they're asleep.

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| Questions | Answers | Evidence/Details (Page #) |
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| Are all snakes poisonous | Most are not | Most poison—sea snakes Spitting Cobras can spit 7 ft. (p. 15) |
| How well can snakes smell, see, hear | Don't see or hear well. Use tongue to smell, most important is smell | Tongue darts to take smells into mouth. No eyelids |

Teaching Q/A Text Structure





◆ **Why Do Snakes Hiss?**

- **Monitor & Assess:**
 - Students have practiced the *question/answer* text structure used by the author to present information about snakes.
 - Discuss with students:
 - How did the *question/answer* text structure help you locate and remember important information?
 - What other books have you read that use the *question/answer* text structure?
 - What are other examples of how an author might use the *question/answer* text structure to share information?
 - Reading-Writing Connection:
 - Have students write a summary about what was learned about snakes from reading this question/answer book.

Teaching Q/A Text Structure

◆ **Why Do Snakes Hiss?**

- **Next Steps:**
 - Read and discuss additional texts that use the *question/answer* text structure allowing students to recognize and apply the use of this structure.
 - Teach a lesson on how to use signal words to identify text structure.
 - Use the graphic organizer as a writing tool to organize students' composition of a question/answer structure informational text.

| Questions  | Answers  | Evidence/Details  |  |
|---|---|--|---|
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The graphic organizer is then used as a planner for writing.

Agenda

- Small Groups
 - Primary Grades: Janet
 - Upper Grades: Georgia

Agenda

- Wrap-up
 - Discussion (including Q&A)
 - Book Drawing

Wrap-up

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading

The K-5 standards on the following pages define what students should understand and be able to do by the end of each grade. They correspond to the College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards below by number. The CCR and grade-specific standards are necessary complements—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity—that together define the skills and understandings that all students must demonstrate.

Key Ideas and Details

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.⁴
8. Define main ideas and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Wrap-up

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing

The K-5 standards on the following pages define what students should understand and be able to do by the end of each grade. They correspond to the College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards below by number. The CCR and grade-specific standards are necessary complements—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity—that together define the skills and understandings that all students must demonstrate.

Text Types and Purposes*

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Production and Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Range of Writing

10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Some Exemplary Models

Question/Answer Text Structure

- *Berger, M. (1999). *Scholastic Q & A: Can It Rain Cats and Dogs?* New York: Scholastic.
- Burton, M., French, C., & Jones, T. (1999). *We use numbers*. Pelham, NY: Benchmark.
- Clyde, M. & Griffiths, R. (2005). *Sand*. New York, NY: DK.
- Cusick, P. (2008). *How's the weather?* Austin, TX: Rigby.
- Daronco, M. & Presti, L. (2011). *Measuring tools*. Pelham, NY: Benchmark.
- *Donovan, S. (2011). *Did President Grant really get a ticket for speeding in a horse-drawn carriage?* Minneapolis, MN: Lerner.
- *Holub, J. (2001). *Why Do Cats Meow?* (Penguin Young Readers, Level 3). New York: Penguin Young Readers
- Levine, E. (1988). *If you traveled on the underground railroad*. New York, NY: Scholastic.
- *Moore, K. (1998). *If You Lived At The Time Of The American Revolution*. New York: Scholastic.
- *Simon, S. (2009). *Seymour Simon's Top 50 Questions Reader: Wild Earth*. New York: Scholastic.

TEACHING TEXT STRUCTURE

Examining the Affordances of Children's Informational Texts

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the affordances of informational texts to serve as model texts for teaching text structure to elementary school children. Content analysis of a random sampling of children's informational texts from top publishers was conducted on text structure organization and on the inclusion of text features as signals of text structure. Our findings showed three limitations to the affordances present in informational texts currently available for elementary school children. Implications of these findings are discussed.

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The ability to read, analyze, and evaluate informational texts is essential to college and career readiness in the twenty-first century and to the de-
