

Text Structures-Informational Writing/Mesopotamia Unit

Summary

This 18 day unit explicitly teaches text structures, summary, text features, reading informational text about Mesopotamia, and writing a book about Mesopotamia. Instruction moves from high scaffolding to moderate scaffolding to independent practice as students become familiar with the various text structures, how to identify them, what graphic organizer will work with each text structure, how to use notes recorded in graphic organizers to write summaries, and how to compile an informational book. Mesopotamia is the content used as an anchor.

Main Core Tie

English Language Arts Grade 6

[Writing Standard 2](#)

Additional Core Ties

English Language Arts Grade 6

[Reading: Informational Text Standard 2](#)

English Language Arts Grade 6

[Reading: Informational Text Standard 5](#)

English Language Arts Grade 6

[Reading: Informational Text Standard 10](#)

English Language Arts Grade 6

[Writing Standard 4](#)

English Language Arts Grade 6

[Writing Standard 10](#)

English Language Arts Grade 6

[Speaking and Listening Standard 1](#)

Social Studies - 6th Grade

[Standard 1](#)

Group Size

Small Groups

Life Skills

Aesthetics, Thinking & Reasoning, Communication, Social & Civic Responsibility

Materials

See Bibliography section for literary resources

- [Pre-made Text Structure posters using information](#) (pdf)

- from 2004 USOE CORE Academy Handbook

(see Background For Teachers section for instructions on creating posters)

Student copies for groups of 5-6 students of [text structures and passages](#) (pdf) - p. 3:4, 3:10-13 of the 2004 USOE CORE Academy Handbook

Individual student journals

Access to world atlases

- [Civilization's Lab Sheet](#)

(1 copy for each team of 5-6 students)

- [Text Structure-Mesopotamia Summary Rubric](#)
(1 copy for each student)

Background for Teachers

Background information on Text Structures

- page 3:3 of the 2004 USOE CORE Academy Handbook

Directions for creating [Text Structure posters](#) from the 2004 USOE CORE Academy Handbook (Use one piece of poster board for each poster). Each poster contains:

1. [Name of Text Structure](#)
2. [Definition of Text Structure and associated graphic organizer](#)
. Page 3:17-26
3. [Features of Text Structure and key signal words](#)
. See p. 3:6
4. [Text example for each Text Structure](#)
. See p. 3:10-13

This Unit is designed to move from "high scaffolding" as teacher models new skills, to "moderate scaffolding" as students move to guided practice in small groups, to "independent practice" as students move to working individually. Each text structure is explicitly introduced with high scaffolding included for reading, determining important information to include into a graphic organizer and writing a summary paragraph utilizing the same text structure. Then, students move to using these skills with each text structure in small groups, and finally to using these text structures independently. Watch for the signals: high scaffolding, moderate scaffolding, and independent practice as the unit unfolds. By the end of the unit, students should be at the independent practice level for all these skills using text structures.

Reading codes

* means the text is in the Kids Discover Magazine-Mesopotamia, from the Bibliography section
All other text selections are contained in the Ancient Mesopotamia book listed in the Bibliography section

Students may determine that a certain text is a different text structure than labeled in the instructional procedures. That is not a problem. The most important idea you want students to learn is how to justify their claim with evidence. So, if students in their groups pick a different text structure than planned, but they can justify it with features or signal words from the text structure, then let them go for it! As teachers our goal is to create independent thinkers that act strategically.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Language Arts Objectives: By the end of the unit-

Each student will be able to identify, justify and determine important information in different informational text structure readings by selecting and completing appropriate note taking graphic organizers.

Each student will be able to determine why and when to use different text structures by reading a selection, creating a graphic organizer to represent important information and writing an informational paragraph utilizing the same text structure to summarize and synthesize the information.

Each student will write an informational book on Ancient Mesopotamia addressing each one of the Mesopotamia Essential Questions.

Social Studies Objective: By the end of the unit-

Each student will be able to represent how Ancient Mesopotamia developed and contributed to the current world by creating an individual book that summarizes and synthesizes information about Ancient Mesopotamian development due to physical geography, religion, government,

and technology.

Instructional Procedures

Text Structure-Informational Writing (Language Arts) Essential Questions:

- What are the different text structures?
- How do I determine what the text structure of a text selection is?
- Why would I use text structures?
- When would I use text structures?
- How do I write an informational paragraph?
- How do I use appropriate signal words to clarify my writing?

Mesopotamia (Social Studies) Essential Questions:

- What is a civilization?
- How did physical geography affect the development of Ancient Mesopotamia?
- How did religion affect Ancient Mesopotamia?
- What role did government play in Ancient Mesopotamia?
- How did Ancient Mesopotamia use technology to meet community and personal needs?
- How did Ancient Mesopotamia contribute to the current world?

Day One: (Language Arts Essential Question [LA EQ] 2,3,4,5,6), (Social Studies Essential Question [SS EQ] 2)

Text Structure Introduction-

Activity- hand each group of 5-6 students a set of the text structure passage examples and text structure names to match up. Students, also, need to justify why they matched each pair together (See [p. 3:4, 3:10-13 from 2004 USOE CORE Academy Handbook](#))

Journaling- Correct the matching game by asking student how they determined what text structure name belongs to each passage. As you go along introduce the text structure definitions with supporting text features and have students record them in their journals.

Mesopotamia Introduction-

- What do living organisms need to survive?
- What would lots of people living in one place need to survive?
- Read-Westlandia by Paul Fleischman
- What does Wesley use to create a civilization? What was absolutely needed? What made life better?
- Assign- each group of 5-6 students a different terrain to build a civilization in: desert, tropical rainforest, pine forest, tundra, glacial, grassland, etc. See any world atlas for where these terrains are located.
- Students work in groups fill out a Civilizations Lab Sheet where they can draw pictures of how their civilization will address the needs listed on the Lab Sheet for their terrain. (see attachments)
- Groups share how they met the civilization's needs for each terrain
- What terrains were helpful in building a civilization? Why?
- What terrains were hindrances in building a civilization? Why?

Day Two: (LA EQ 2,3,4,5,6), (SS EQ 2)

Shared Reading- Cradle of Civilization p. 2 first paragraph* (see Background For Teachers section-Reading Codes), (high scaffolding)

Think aloud- with students to determine what text structure it is written in using journal notes of features. (description)

How do we know? What clues tipped us off to the text structure? (signal words)

What words will help us locate a description text structure?

Journal write- signal words for description text structure. ([p. 3:6 of the 2004 USOE CORE](#)

[Academy Handbook](#) - Key words found in the text structure)

Think aloud- how do I determine what the text structure of a text selection is? (think about the features in the text and the signal words)

Show- poster of Description Text Structure highlighting definition, features, signal words and a graphic organizer

Think aloud- why would I use knowledge of the description text structure? (to know what information a writer is giving me and to gather this information about a subject)

Use- the graphic organizer to gather information out of the Cradle of Civilization reading

Think aloud- When would I use the description text structure? (to write a selection where I wanted to give the readers descriptive information about a subject)

Explain- we are going to write a descriptive paragraph using the information from our graphic organizer to create a page in our individual books on Mesopotamia

Think aloud- how to write a topic sentence and add in three or more supporting details with a closing sentence. Model writing the paragraph using signal words and the information gathered in the graphic organizer (high-scaffolding)

Create- a blank student Mesopotamia book by taking seven pages of white copy paper, folding it "hamburger" style and stapling all the pages together down the center fold. The book now has fourteen pages and opens right to left

Students leave the front cover blank, the next page blank as it will be the Title Page, and the next page blank as it will be the Table of Contents. Students copy the informational paragraph you just wrote on the fourth page of their Mesopotamia book. Model how to add a Heading to the top of the page before starting to write. (could be something like- Geography of Ancient Mesopotamia)

Discuss- how using our knowledge of the description text structure helped us determine importance in text and write about the subject

Day Three: (LA EQ 2,3,4,5,6), (SS EQ 2)

Shared reading- Mesopotamians Before History Began on p. 2. (high scaffolding)

Think aloud- with students to determine what text structure it is written in using journal notes. (sequence)

How do we know? What clues tipped us off to the text structure? (signal words)

What words will help us locate a sequence text structure?

Journal write- signal words for sequence text structure. ([p. 3:6 from the 2004 USOE CORE Academy Handbook](#) Key words found in the text structure)

Think aloud- how do I determine what the text structure of a text selection is? (think about the features in the text and the signal words)

Show- poster of Sequence Text Structure highlighting definition, features, signal words and a graphic organizer

Think aloud- why would I use knowledge of the sequence text structure? (to know what information a writer is giving me in a specific order and why)

Use- the graphic organizer to gather information out of the reading

Read- Cradle of Civilization p. 2 second paragraph as teams and find additional information to add to our graphic organizer.* (moderate Scaffolding)

Read- Timeline of Ancient Mesopotamia on p. 1 as teams and add additional information to graphic organizers

Whole group discussion- what information did each team add to their graphic organizers? Why?

Think aloud- when would I use the sequence text structure? (to write a selection where I wanted to give the readers a sense of order)

We are going to write a sequential paragraph using the information from our graphic organizer

to create a page in our individual book on Mesopotamia

Review- how to write a topic sentence and add in three or more supporting details with a closing sentence. Model writing the paragraph for the students. (high scaffolding)

Students copy the paragraph in their own books

Discuss- how using our knowledge of the sequence text structure helped us determine importance in text and write about the subject

Day Four: (LA EQ 2,3,4,5,6), (SS EQ 2,5, 6)

Shared reading- Land Between two Rivers on p. 3. (high scaffolding)

Think aloud- with students to determine what text structure it is written in using journal notes (compare/contrast)

How do we know? What clues tipped us off to the text structure? (signal words)

What words will help us locate a compare/contrast text structure?

Journal write- signal words for compare/contrast text structure. ([p. 3:6 of the 2004 USOE CORE Academy Handbook](#) Key words found in the text structure)

Show- poster of Compare/Contrast Text Structure highlighting definition, features, signal words and a graphic organizer

Think aloud- why would I use knowledge of the compare/contrast text structure? (to identify similarities and differences in ideas)

Use- the graphic organizer to gather information out of the reading

Think aloud- when would I use the compare/contrast text structure? (to write a selection where I wanted to show similarities and differences between ideas)

Review- how to write a topic sentence and add in three or more supporting details with a closing sentence

Model- writing a compare/contrast paragraph using the information from our graphic organizer to create a page in our individual book on Mesopotamia. (high scaffolding)

Students copy the paragraph in their own books

Discuss- how using our knowledge of the compare/contrast text structure helped us determine importance in text and write about the subject

Day Five: (LA EQ 2,3,4,5,6), (SS EQ 2,5,6)

Shared reading- Water Without Rain on p. 4. (high scaffolding)

Think aloud- with students to determine what text structure it is written in using journal notes. (problem/solution)

How do we know? What clues tipped us off to the text structure? (signal words)

What words will help us locate a problem/solution text structure?

Journal write- signal words for problem/solution text structure. ([p. 3:6 of the 2004 USOE CORE Academy Handbook](#) Key words found in the text structure)

Think aloud- how do I determine what the text structure of the text selection is? (think about the features in the text and the signal words)

Show- poster of Problem/Solution Text Structure highlighting definition, features, signal words and a graphic organizer

Think aloud- why would I use knowledge of the problem/solution text structure? (to identify a problem and the possible solutions)

Use- the graphic organizer to gather information out of the reading

Read Cradle of Civilization p. 2 third paragraph as teams and find additional information to add to our graphic organizer.* (moderate scaffolding)

What additional information did teams add? Why?

Think aloud- when would I use the problem/solution text structure? (to write about identifying a problem and to give the possible solutions)

Model-write a problem/solution paragraph using the information from our graphic organizer.

(high scaffolding)

Students copy the paragraph in their own Mesopotamia books

Discuss- how using our knowledge of the problem/solution text structure helped us determine importance in text and write about the subject

Day Six: (LA EQ 2,3,4,5,6), (SS EQ 4)

Shared reading- My City is Better Than Your City on p. 7. (high scaffolding)

Think aloud- with students to determine what text structure it is written in using journal notes. (cause/effect)

How do we know? What clues tipped us off to the text structure? (signal words)

What words will help us locate a cause/effect text structure?

Journal write- signal words for cause/effect text structure. ([p. 3:6 of the 2004 USOE CORE Academy Handbook](#) Key words found in the text structure)

Think aloud- how do I determine what the text structure of a text selection is? (think about the features in the text and the signal words)

Show- poster of Cause/Effect Text Structure highlighting definition, features, signal words and a graphic organizer

Think aloud- why would I use knowledge of the cause/effect text structure? (to discover reasons and the ensuing consequences of an action)

Think aloud- When would I use the cause/effect text structure? (to write a selection where I wanted to show consequences)

Use the graphic organizer to gather information out of the reading

Model- writing with the class a cause/effect paragraph using the information from our graphic organizer to create a page in our individual book on Mesopotamia. (high scaffolding)

Students copy the paragraph in their own books

Discuss- how using our knowledge of the cause/effect text structure helped us determine importance in text and write about the subject

Day Seven: (LA EQ 2,3,4,5,6), (SS EQ 3)

Read in groups- You Are the Architect: Design a Ziggurat on p. 14. (moderate scaffolding)

Students in groups determine what text structure it is written in using journal notes and posters. (description)

How do we know? What clues tipped us off to the text structure? (justify with signal words and structure features-organization)

Small groups use- the graphic organizer to gather information out of the reading

Read in groups- Gods and Demons on p. 8-9 and find additional information to add to individual graphic organizers.*

Small group write- description paragraph using the information from their graphic organizer to create a page for their individual book on Mesopotamia. (moderate scaffolding)

Day Eight: (LA EQ 2,3,4,5,6), (SS EQ 5)

Individuals read- Sumerian Gourmet on p. 5. (independent practice)

Students determine what text structure it is written in using journal notes and posters. (description)

How do we know? What clues tipped us off to the text structure? (justify with signal words and structure features-organization)

Individuals use- the graphic organizer to gather information out of the reading

Individuals write- each student writes a description paragraph using the information from his graphic organizer to create a page for his individual book on Mesopotamia. (independent practice)

Share paragraphs in groups and compare/contrast them to each other

Individuals- revise paragraph as needed

Day Nine: (LA EQ 2,3,4,5,6), (SS EQ 5)

Read in groups- Medicine in Ancient Mesopotamia on p. 19. (moderate scaffolding)

Students in groups determine what text structure it is written in using journal notes and posters. (compare/contrast)

How do we know? What clues tipped us off to the text structure? (justify with signal words and structure features-organization)

Small groups use- the graphic organizer to gather information out of the reading

Small group write- compare/contrast paragraph using the information from their graphic organizers to create a page for their individual book on Mesopotamia. (moderate scaffolding)

Day Ten: (LA EQ 2,3,4,5,6), (SS EQ 5,6)

Read in groups- I'll Trade You Copper for a Necklace on p. 8. (moderate scaffolding)

Students in groups determine what text structure it is written in using journal notes and posters. (problem/solution)

How do we know? What clues tipped us off to the text structure? (justify with signal words and structure features-organization)

Small groups use- the graphic organizer to gather information out of the reading

Read in groups- Putting the Bargain in Writing on p. 10

Students in groups determine what text structure it is written in using journal notes and posters. (problem/solution)

How do we know? What clues tipped us off to the text structure? (justify with signal words and structure features-organization)

Small groups use- add the information into the first graphic organizer

Small group write- problem/solution paragraph using the information from their graphic organizers to create a page for their individual book on Mesopotamia. (moderate scaffolding)

Day Eleven: (LA EQ 2,3,4,5,6), (SS EQ 5,6)

Individuals read- What's the Big Deal About the Wheel? on p. 9. (independent practice)

Students determine what text structure it is written in using journal notes and posters. (problem/solution)

How do we know? What clues tipped us off to the text structure? (justify with signal words and structure features-organization)

Individuals use- the graphic organizer to gather information out of the reading

Individuals write- each student writes a problem/solution paragraph using the information from his graphic organizer to create a page for his individual book on Mesopotamia. (independent practice)

Share paragraphs in groups and compare/contrast them to each other

Individuals- revise paragraph as needed

Day Twelve: (LA EQ 2,3,4,5,6), (SS EQ 5,6)

Individuals read- Clay Tablet on p. 11. (independent practice)

Students determine what text structure it is written in using journal notes and posters. (description)

How do we know? What clues tipped us off to the text structure? (justify with signal words and structure features-organization)

Individuals use- the graphic organizer to gather information out of the reading

Individuals read- ...and the Origins of Writing on p. 15. Add information to existing graphic organizer

Individuals write- each student writes a description paragraph using the information from his graphic organizer to create a page for his individual book on Mesopotamia. (independent practice)

Share paragraphs in groups and compare/contrast them to each other

Individuals- revise paragraph as needed

Day Thirteen: (LA EQ 2,3,4,5,6), (SS EQ 2,3,4,5,6)

Individuals read- Who Was Who in Ancient Mesopotamia? on p. 21. (independent practice)

Students determine what text structure it is written in using journal notes and posters.

(description)

How do we know? What clues tipped us off to the text structure? (justify with signal words and structure features-organization)

Individuals use- the graphic organizer to gather information out of the reading

Individuals write- each student writes a description paragraph using the information from his graphic organizer to create a page for his individual book on Mesopotamia. (independent practice)

Share paragraphs in groups and compare/contrast them to each other

Individuals- revise paragraph as needed

Day Fourteen: (LA EQ 2,3,4,5,6), (SS EQ 2,3,4,5,6)

Individuals read- Then and Now on p. 25. (independent practice)

Students determine what text structure it is written in using journal notes and posters.

(compare/contrast)

How do we know? What clues tipped us off to the text structure? (justify with signal words and structure features-organization)

Individuals use- the graphic organizer to gather information out of the reading

Individuals write- each student writes a compare/contrast paragraph using the information from his graphic organizer to create a page for his individual book on Mesopotamia. (independent practice)

Share paragraphs in groups and compare/contrast them to each other

Individuals- revise paragraph as needed

Day Fifteen: (LA EQ 2,3,4,5,6), (SS EQ 4)

Read in groups- Babylonia vs. Assyria on p. 13. (moderate scaffolding)

Students in groups determine what text structure it is written in using journal notes and posters.

(compare/contrast & sequence)

Whole class discussion- what is the text structure and why? Problem? How do we know? What clues tipped us off to the text structure? (justify with signal words and structure features-organization)

Problem- sometimes writers use more than one text structure in a selection

What should we use for a graphic organizer? (what would make the most sense and be the most useful to us)

Small groups- use the graphic organizer to gather information out of the reading

Read in groups- Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians and More on p. 4-5.* (moderate scaffolding)

Students in groups determine what text structure it is written in using journal notes and posters.

(compare/contrast & sequence)

Whole class discussion- What is the text structure and why? Problem? How do we know? What clues tipped us off to the text structure? (justify with signal words and structure features-organization)

Problem- sometimes writers use more than one text structure in a selection

What should we use for a graphic organizer? (what would make the most sense and be the most useful to us)

Small groups use- the graphic organizer to gather information out of the reading

Whole group write- model compare/contrast paragraph including sequence for the first reading using the information from their first graphic organizer to create a page for their individual book

on Mesopotamia. (high scaffolding)

Students copy the paragraph into their book

Small group write- compare/contrast paragraph for the second reading including sequence using the information from their second graphic organizers to create a page for their individual book on Mesopotamia. (moderate scaffolding)

Day Sixteen:

Read in groups- Iron Power: Assyria on p. 17 (moderate scaffolding)

Students in groups determine what text structure it is written in using journal notes and posters. (description & sequence)

Small groups use- the graphic organizer to gather information out of the reading

Small group write- a descriptive-sequential paragraph using the information from their graphic organizer to create a page for their individual book on Mesopotamia. (moderate scaffolding)

Day Seventeen:

Add- illustrations or graphs to each page of your book to aid in reader understanding

Students create a Front Cover, Title Page, Table of Contents and a Back Cover

Day Eighteen:

Celebration! Share with each other your finished books!

Students fill out a rubric assessment for their own book and a rubric assessment for one other student's book. (see attachments for Text Structure-Mesopotamia Summary Rubric)

Strategies for Diverse Learners

Students could write a glossary and an index for their book.

Students are placed into small groups to help scaffold struggling students during the instruction.

Extensions

Students could write a glossary and an index for their Mesopotamia book

Assessment Plan

Assessment Rubric is built into the Instructional Procedures section

Bibliography

Ancient Mesopotamia by L. Armstrong (2002), Milliken Publishing Company

Mesopotamia, Kids Discover Magazine by L. Markham (2004)

- [Introducing text structures in science writing. Utah State Office of Education. Elementary CORE Academy 2004 Fifth Grade Handbook p. 3:3-26](#)

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