

Lesson Plan: Decoding the News - How Structure Shapes Meaning

Materials Needed:

- Access to the internet or pre-printed newspaper/magazine articles
 - **Article Set 1 (Sports):** One news article, one feature article, and one opinion/editorial article about the same sport, team, or event.
 - **Article Set 2 (Science/Tech):** One news article, one feature article, and one opinion/editorial article about the same discovery, invention, or topic.
 - Notebook or digital document (e.g., Google Docs)
 - Pen or pencil
 - Highlighters in at least three different colors
 - Text Structure Analysis Graphic Organizer (can be drawn by hand, see template in Body section)
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Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

1. Identify the three main structures of journalistic texts: news, feature, and editorial.
 2. Explain the purpose of each text structure (to inform, to entertain/explore, or to persuade).
 3. Analyze how an author's choice of structure affects the meaning and impact of an article.
 4. Create your own short journalistic paragraphs using each of the three text structures.
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Lesson Activities

1. Introduction: The Same Story, Three Ways (10 minutes)

Hook:

Imagine your favorite video game just released a massive new update. You go online to learn about it and find three different articles:

- **Article #1** is a short, bulleted list of all the patch notes: every change, every new item, every bug fix. It's straight to the point.
- **Article #2** tells the story of one of the game developers, describing her creative process and the challenges her team faced over the last year to bring this update to life. It includes emotional quotes and cool behind-the-scenes details.
- **Article #3** argues that the update completely ruined the game for new players and that the company "must" reverse some of the changes immediately.

Discussion Question: Are all these articles doing the same job? Why would an author choose to write about the same topic in such different ways? What is each article trying to make you *think* or *feel*?

Stating the Objectives:

"Today, we're going to become text detectives. Our mission is to investigate how journalists build their articles. We'll learn to spot the difference between a straight news report, an in-depth feature story, and a powerful opinion piece. By the end, you'll be able to see how the *structure* of an article is a secret tool authors use to either inform you, entertain you, or persuade you."

2. Body: Deconstructing the Text (35 minutes)

Part 1: The Three Blueprints - I Do (10 mins)

Let's break down the three main "blueprints" or structures journalists use. You can draw this chart in your notebook to take notes.

Text Structure Analysis Graphic Organizer

Text Type	Main Purpose	Key Structural Clues
News Article	To INFORM quickly and objectively.	Inverted Pyramid: Most important facts (Who, What, When, Where, Why) are in the very first paragraph. Less important details follow. Short sentences, neutral language.
Feature Article	To ENTERTAIN & EXPLORE in-depth.	Narrative/Storytelling: Often starts with a hook (anecdote, vivid description). Includes quotes, emotional details, and expert interviews. It builds up to a point, rather than starting with it.
Editorial / Opinion	To PERSUADE .	Argument Structure: States a clear opinion (claim). Backs it up with reasons and evidence. May address counter-arguments. Often ends with a "call to action" telling the reader what to do or think. Uses persuasive words.

Part 2: Text Detectives (Sports Edition) - We Do (15 mins)

Let's analyze our first set of articles—the sports articles—together.

1. **Read the News Article:** Take the first highlighter color. Let's read the first paragraph and highlight the "5 Ws" - Who, What, When, Where, Why. Notice how quickly you get all the key facts. That's the inverted pyramid in action!
2. **Read the Feature Article:** Use a second highlighter color. As we read, let's highlight descriptive words, personal quotes, and anything that feels like part of a story. Where is the "hook"? How is it different from the news article's beginning?
3. **Read the Editorial Article:** Use the third highlighter color. First, let's find the main opinion or claim. What does the author want us to believe? Now, let's find the reasons or evidence they use to support that claim. Look for words like "should," "best," "worst," or "must."
4. **Discuss:** How did the structure change your experience as a reader? Which article was fastest to read? Which one made you feel an emotion? Which one made you want to agree or disagree with the author?

Part 3: Science & Tech Correspondent - You Do (10 mins)

Now it's your turn to be the lead investigator. Take your second set of articles on the science or technology topic.

Your Mission:

1. Read each of the three articles (news, feature, editorial).
2. Using your highlighters and the graphic organizer, analyze each one on your own.
3. For each article, write one sentence explaining how you know what type it is, based on its

structure. For example: *"I know this is a feature article because it starts with a personal story about the scientist instead of just stating the discovery."*

Success Criteria: You'll know you've succeeded when you have correctly identified all three text types and can point to specific structural evidence (like an inverted pyramid, a storytelling hook, or a clear claim) for each one.

3. Conclusion: The Power of Structure (10 minutes)

Recap & Reflection:

Let's review what we discovered. In your own words, explain the following:

- What is the main goal of a **news** article's structure?
- What is the main goal of a **feature** article's structure?
- What is the main goal of an **editorial** article's structure?

Reinforce Takeaway:

"Structure isn't just about organization; it's about purpose. The next time you read anything—a sports report, an article about space, or even a product review—pay attention to how it's built. By recognizing the structure, you can better understand what the author wants from you: to simply know something, to feel something, or to believe something. This makes you a much smarter and more critical reader."

Assessment & Application

Formative Assessment (During Lesson):

- Participation in the "We Do" discussion and highlighting activity.
- Accuracy of the student's independent analysis in the "You Do" activity.

Summative Assessment: You're the Editor!

To show you've mastered this skill, choose a topic you know well (a recent movie you saw, a trip you took, a favorite hobby). Your task is to write three short, separate paragraphs about that single topic, one in each style:

1. **News Paragraph:** Get straight to the point. Give the "who, what, when, where" immediately. Keep it factual and objective.
2. **Feature Paragraph:** Start with a descriptive or storytelling hook. Use vivid language to draw the reader in and make them feel something.
3. **Editorial Paragraph:** State a strong opinion about your topic. Give one clear reason to support your opinion and try to persuade your reader to agree with you.

This will prove you can not only identify these structures but also use them yourself to create a specific effect on a reader.

Differentiation

For Extra Support:

- Provide pre-highlighted articles that show examples of key structural elements.
- Offer sentence starters for the analysis and writing tasks, such as: "The purpose of this article is to..." or "My opinion on this topic is that..."
- Complete the "You Do" activity together, talking through the reasoning for each article.

For an Extra Challenge:

- Find an article that blends structures (e.g., a "news feature") and write a paragraph analyzing why the author might have chosen to combine elements.
- Take one of the news articles you read and rewrite it as a persuasive editorial. Write a short reflection on how you had to change the language, tone, and structure to shift its purpose.
- Analyze the editorials for specific persuasive techniques (e.g., use of emotional language, appeals to authority, strong evidence).