

Lesson Plan: The Journalist's Blueprint

Subject: English Language Arts

Topic: Analyzing Text Structures in Journalistic Writing

Appropriate for: Ages 12-14 (Middle School/Homeschool)

Time Allotment: 60-75 minutes

Learning Objectives

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

- **Identify** the primary purpose of a journalistic text (to inform, persuade, or entertain).
- **Analyze** the text structure of opinion editorials, sports articles, and science/tech articles.
- **Explain** how an article's structure helps the author achieve their purpose and deliver a clear message.
- **Create** a basic outline for a journalistic article.

Materials Needed

- A notebook or journal and a pen/pencil
- Access to the internet to find sample articles
- Highlighters in at least three different colors (or digital annotation tools)
- **Handout:** Text Structure Detective's Toolkit (can be a printed sheet or a digital document you create with the template below)

Text Structure Detective's Toolkit (Template)

Article Title & Source	What is the Author's Main PURPOSE? (Inform, Persuade, Entertain)	What is the TEXT STRUCTURE? (Blueprint)	What are the Key Parts I Found? (Evidence)

Lesson Procedure

I. Introduction (10 minutes)

Hook: The Same Event, Two Different Stories

Educator says: "Imagine your favorite sports team just won a huge championship game. The next day, you see two articles about it. The first one just lists the final score, who scored the key points, and what the coach said. The second one is all about how this team is the greatest of all time and why everyone should agree. Both articles are about the same game, but they feel totally different. Why do you think that is?"

(Guide the discussion towards the idea that writers have different goals or purposes, which changes how they write.)

Stating the Objectives

Educator says: "That's exactly what we're exploring today. Writers, especially journalists, are like architects. They use specific blueprints, called 'text structures,' to build their articles. Their goal is to make their message as clear and powerful as possible. Today, we're going to become text detectives. We'll learn how to spot these secret blueprints in different types of articles—from sports and science to opinion pieces—so we can understand exactly what the writer is trying to do."

II. Body: The Investigation (40-50 minutes)

Part 1: The Educator Explains - "I Do" (10 minutes)

Educator says: "Every journalistic article has a purpose and a structure. Let's break down the main ones."

1. The Three Purposes:

- **To Inform (News):** This is like a recipe. It gives you the facts, straight up. It answers: Who? What? When? Where? Why? Its goal is to be objective and tell you what happened.
- **To Persuade (Opinion/Editorial):** This is like a lawyer's argument in court. The writer takes a side and tries to convince you to agree with them using claims, reasons, and evidence.
- **To Entertain (Feature):** This is like a good story. It often uses a narrative style, focusing on a person, place, or idea in an interesting, emotional, or humorous way. It has a beginning, middle, and end.

2. The Key Blueprints (Text Structures):

- **The Inverted Pyramid (for News):** "Picture a pyramid flipped upside down. The most important information is at the wide top (the beginning of the article), and the details get less and less critical as you go down. This lets readers get the main idea even if they only read the first paragraph."
- **Argument Structure (for Editorials):** "This is built like a case. It starts with a strong **Claim** (the writer's opinion), backs it up with **Reasons and Evidence** (facts, stats, expert quotes), and ends with a **Conclusion** or a **Call to Action** (what the writer wants you to do or believe)."
- **Narrative Structure (for Features):** "This structure tells a story. It often starts with a **Hook** (a cool anecdote or vivid description), develops characters or ideas in the middle, and has a satisfying ending or main takeaway."

Modeling: "Let's look at a short opinion editorial together. I'll read it and 'think aloud' as I find the parts. (*Pulls up a simple, clear editorial*). 'Okay, this first sentence says, 'Schools should switch to a four-day week.' That's a strong opinion—it's the author's **Claim**. Now, in this next paragraph, I see a statistic about student burnout and a quote from a teacher. This is the **Evidence**. Finally, at the end, it says, 'It's time for our district to make the change.' That's the **Call to Action**. See? It follows the blueprint perfectly!"

Part 2: Guided Practice - "We Do" (15 minutes)

Educator says: "Now, let's try it together. We're going to look at two articles about the same topic: a new scientific discovery."

1. Find two articles:
 - **Article 1:** A science **news** article announcing the discovery (e.g., "NASA Rover Finds Evidence of Ancient Lake on Mars").
 - **Article 2:** A science **editorial** arguing about what this discovery means (e.g., "Why the Mars Discovery Means We Must Fund More Space Exploration").
2. Read the news article together. Ask guiding questions:
 - "What is the main purpose here? Is it trying to convince us of an opinion or just tell us what happened?" (Inform)
 - "Where is the most important information located? At the beginning or the end?" (Beginning)
 - "What 'blueprint' does this seem to be using?" (Inverted Pyramid)
3. Fill out the "Text Structure Detective's Toolkit" for this article together.
4. Now, read the editorial together. Ask guiding questions:
 - "What is this author's main goal?" (Persuade)
 - "Can you find the author's main claim? What about the evidence they use to support it?"
 - "How is this structured differently from the news article?" (Argument Structure)
5. Fill out the second row of the Toolkit for the editorial.

Part 3: Independent Application - "You Do" (15-20 minutes)

Educator says: "Your turn to be the lead detective! I want you to investigate the world of sports journalism. Your mission is to find two different articles about the same team, athlete, or sport and analyze their structure."

The Mission:

1. Find a sports **feature** article (one that tells a story, maybe about an athlete's childhood or a team's journey).
2. Find a sports **news** report (one that just reports the facts of a recent game).
3. Using a fresh copy of the "Text Structure Detective's Toolkit," analyze both articles. Use your highlighters to mark the different parts of the structure directly on the articles (e.g., yellow for the hook, blue for key details, pink for the conclusion).

Success Criteria: "You'll know you've cracked the case when your toolkit accurately identifies each article's purpose, structure, and you have highlighted at least three key structural elements in each article."

Differentiation Options:

- **Scaffolding for Support:** Provide a pre-selected list of articles to choose from, or use articles that are shorter and have very clear structures. You could also provide a sentence-starter for the analysis: "The purpose of this article is to _____. The author uses a _____ structure. I can see the [structural part] in the sentence '...'. "
- **Extension for a Challenge:** After completing the toolkit, write a new headline for each article that better reflects its purpose and structure. Or, write a short paragraph comparing how the two different structures affect you as a reader. Which one was more engaging and why?

III. Conclusion (5-10 minutes)

Share and Reflect

Educator asks: "Okay, detective, present your findings! Tell me about the articles you analyzed."

- What was the purpose and structure of each?
- Was it easy to spot the different parts?
- How did the feature article's structure make you feel compared to the news report's structure?

Recap of Key Concepts

Educator says: "Great work today. We've pulled back the curtain on how journalism works. We learned that every article is built with a purpose—to inform, persuade, or entertain—and uses a specific blueprint to achieve that goal. By recognizing these structures, you've gained a superpower. You can now read with a more critical eye and understand not just **what** you're being told, but **how** and **why**."

Assessment

- **Formative Assessment:** The discussion during the "We Do" activity and the accuracy of the jointly-filled-out Toolkit will show understanding in real-time.
- **Summative Assessment:** The completed "You Do" Toolkit and the highlighted articles serve as the final assessment. It demonstrates the student's ability to independently apply the concepts to new texts, meeting the lesson's objectives. The extension activity can be used for a deeper evaluation of their analytical skills.