

Grade 6 Playlist: Analyze How the Parts of a Story Relate to Its Structure and Meaning

Aligns with CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.5:

- Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

Welcome

Fictional texts are made up of many different parts that all work together to communicate a theme and tell a story. Each part of the text—a scene, a chapter, or even a sentence—contributes to the overall structure and meaning of the story. Understanding how each portion of a text fits within the overall structure can help a reader better understand the story.

Objectives

In this playlist, students will learn how to:

- analyze how portions of a text fit within the overall structure of the text.
- think critically about how the structure of a text contributes to the development of theme, plot, or setting.

Review

Key Term

- The **structure** of a text is the way it is put together.

Exploring the Standard

Most fictional stories have the same overall structure. They typically begin by introducing characters and presenting the main conflict. During the middle portion of the story, the conflict develops until it reaches a climax. Once the climax is reached, the story moves toward a resolution and a conclusion. Although this structure acts as a general framework, individual writers make different choices about what events to describe, when to reveal certain information, and how to communicate the main theme of the story.

Watch!

For more information on the structure of fictional texts, watch this video:

- <https://youtu.be/H0WsD1DJCnw>

Practice!

Use this worksheet to practice analyzing the structure of a story:

- <http://www.ereadingworksheets.com/reading-worksheets/the-breakaway.htm>



Example 1

In the book *Pollyanna* by Eleanor H. Porter, a young girl named Pollyanna goes to live with her aunt, Miss Polly. Much of the conflict in the story centers on a clash between Pollyanna's cheerful outlook on life and Miss Polly's stern, no-nonsense approach. Read the following excerpt from Chapter 28 of *Pollyanna*, in which Miss Polly talks to her maid, Nancy. Think about the structure of the passage. How does it help to develop the characters?

¹“And after that she said he made a regular game of it—findin’ somethin’ in everythin’ ter be glad about. An’ she said ye could do it, too, and that ye didn’t seem ter mind not havin’ the doll so much, ’cause ye was so glad ye DIDN’T need the crutches. An’ they called it the ‘jest bein’ glad’ game. That’s the game, ma’am. She’s played it ever since.”

²“But, how—how—” Miss Polly came to a helpless pause.

³“An’ you’d be surprised ter find how cute it works, ma’am, too,” maintained Nancy, with almost the eagerness of Pollyanna herself...

⁴“But why hasn’t—she told me—the game?” faltered Miss Polly. “Why has she made such a mystery of it, when I asked her?”

⁵Nancy hesitated.

⁶“Beggin’ yer pardon, ma’am, you told her not ter speak of—her father; so she couldn’t tell ye. ’Twas her father’s game, ye see.”

⁷Miss Polly bit her lip.

⁸“She wanted ter tell ye, first off,” continued Nancy, a little unsteadily. “She wanted somebody ter play it with, ye know. That’s why I begun it, so she could have some one.”

Listen!

To listen to *Pollyanna*, visit this website:

- <https://librivox.org/pollyanna-by-eleanor-h-porter/>

In the excerpt above, larger portions of text are interrupted by very short sentences that stand alone: “Nancy hesitated” and “Miss Polly bit her lip.” These short sentences slow the reader down and draw his or her attention to important pieces of information. The first sentence, “Nancy hesitated,” shows that Nancy feels awkward and does not want to offend Miss Polly with her response. She most likely hesitates because she is thinking carefully about what to say. The second sentence, “Miss Polly bit her lip,” shows that now Miss Polly feels awkward. She most likely feels guilty about her treatment of Pollyanna.



Teaching Notes: Analyze How the Parts of a Story Relate to Its Structure and Meaning

The goal of RL.6.5 is for students to analyze how portions of a text fit within the overall structure of the text and think critically about how the story's structure contributes to the development of theme, plot, and setting. The following information contains ideas that teachers can incorporate into their classroom as well as additional resources to peruse and integrate into instruction as appropriate.

Activities

1. Choose a short poem and have students analyze its structure. Divide students into groups and assign each group a few lines or a stanza. Ask students to discuss how those lines fit into the overall poem and contribute to its theme. Then regroup as a class and have each group share their ideas. This activity would work well with the poem "Harlem" by Langston Hughes. Watch the following video for a possible analysis of the structure of "Harlem":
 - <https://www.opened.com/video/espark-learning-analyzing-text-structure-instructional-video/427320>
2. Choose a grade-appropriate short story and have students work in pairs to make a plot diagram showing the story's structure. Students can use the interactive diagram at the link below. Ask students to decide which paragraphs or events belong in each part of the diagram. Then discuss the story's structure together as a class.
 - <http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/plot-diagram/>
3. For extra support, complete the Applying the Standard activity together as a class. Choose key sentences or paragraphs from "The Emperor's New Clothes" to analyze. Ask volunteers to explain how each portion of the text develops the theme, plot, or setting of the story. (For example, paragraph 2 helps develop the setting by describing the town. It also develops the plot by introducing the two dishonest weavers, who play a major role in the story.) Have students use symbols or color coding to indicate which story element(s) are developed in each paragraph.

Additional Resources

Consider using these resources related to standard RL.6.5:

- **Graphical Representation:** In this lesson plan, students create comic strips to analyze the structure of Eudora Welty's short story "A Worn Path":
<http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/eudora-weltys-worn-path-graphical-representation#sect-thelesson>
- **A Christmas Carol Chronology:** In this lesson plan, students analyze the author's manipulation of time in *A Christmas Carol*:
<http://www.oercommons.org/courses/christmas-carol-chronology/view>
- **Story Pyramid:** This graphic organizer is a print version of the plot diagram used in Activity 2:
<http://www.ereadingworksheets.com/reading-worksheets/story-pyramid-graphic-organizer-2.pdf>

