



Use Text Structure Clues

Duration: 50-60 minutes | **Objective:** Students will learn to preview and analyze text structure elements before reading to improve comprehension

Materials:

- 3 different nonfiction articles (age-appropriate, content-connected, with clear structure elements)
- Colored pencils/highlighters
- **Note:** The student activity for this strategy uses an [Encyclopedia Virginia entry on Pocahontas](#). We thought it might be helpful to see how you would lay out this strategy with a real text that students might use in class. If you'd like to use an alternative text(s), simply make a copy of the Google doc and substitute the headings, pull quotes, and images from the *EV* article with an article(s) that better fits your class.

Steps:

Before the Activity

1. Choose three different age-appropriate, content-connected articles with clear structural elements for your students to read.
2. Tell students that writers often leave clues in a piece of writing that act like a map to show readers what a text is about. Today, you will be learning to find those clues, but first you will be observing what it's like to read without those clues.
3. Ask students to quickly read and understand the main idea of a complex text.
 - a. Project the text for everyone to read or provide physical copies.
 - b. Set a timer for three minutes.
 - c. When the timer goes off, ask students if they understood the main idea of the text. Solicit a few answers.
 - d. Ask students: How did that feel? (You can expect them to say it's stressful, confusing, and/or hard to understand.)

During the Activity





1. Teacher models using a short article projected on screen: "Watch me find some clues in this text. I'm going to scan this text looking for clues BEFORE I read a single full sentence."
 - a. Live demonstration:
 - Scan and Mark: Use colored markers to box headings, circle visuals, highlight pull quotes
 - Read Structure Elements Only: Read aloud just the headings/subheadings
 - Study Visuals: Point out what you notice in charts, images, captions
 - Think Aloud: "Based on just these clues, I predict this article will be about..."
2. Post the strategy steps visibly:
 - Scan and mark structure elements
 - Read headings, subheadings, pull quotes
 - Study visuals and their text
 - Reflect and predict
 - Then read the full text
3. Students work in pairs with a new article:
 - Round 1: Scan and Mark (3 minutes)
 - Give each pair colored pencils/highlighters
 - "Find and mark all the text structure clues in your article."
 - Teacher circulates, ensures students are finding the right elements
 - Round 2: Read Structure Only (4 minutes)
 - "Now read ONLY the elements you marked. Don't read the paragraphs yet!"
 - Partners take turns reading headings and describing visuals to each other
 - Round 3: Predict Together (4 minutes)
 - Ask pairs to jot down their reflections:
 - What seems important in this text?
 - What do you predict the main ideas will be?
 - What questions do you have?
 - Partners discuss and jot down predictions
 - Round 4: Check Predictions (4 minutes)





- "Now quickly read the first and last paragraphs only"
 - "Were your predictions close? What surprised you?"
4. Students work individually with a third article:
 - Set timer for 8 minutes
 - Use the strategy steps (posted visually)
 - Complete the reflection questions
 - Be ready to share one prediction you made
 5. Teacher circulates to provide individual support.

After the Activity:

1. Quickly, share out: "Turn to someone near you and share one prediction you made during independent practice" (2 minutes)
2. Reflect on the strategy: (5 minutes)
 - "How was this different from our opening activity?"
 - "What was most helpful about previewing the structure?"
 - "When might you use this strategy in other classes?"
3. Teacher records responses on board under "Benefits of Text Structure Detective Work".
4. After the class has discussed, ask student to complete an exit ticket on an index card, sticky note, or in their notebook:
 - List the 4 main steps of the Text Structure Clues strategy
 - Name one way this strategy helped you today
 - What's one text structure element you want to get better at noticing?

