

ELA UNIT · GRADE 3	
Understanding Text Structure 5 days 4 books 172 min full 94 min short	Grade 3

THE QUESTION THIS UNIT FOLLOWS

How is this text put together, and what rule explains its structure?

THE IDEA

Texts have structures, and a structure can often be stated as a rule. These five days move from a cumulative structure a class can state in one line, through two parallel story lines organised by one repeated phrase, to an expository text whose page layout is part of its meaning.

This is the unit that treats layout as text. Faces of the Moon uses four recurring page types, and the differences among them tell the reader what kind of information to expect. Students then use that familiar organisation to reconstruct the order of the Moon's phases from the text's names and presentation rather than relying on recall.

The last day returns to narrative. Clever Beatrice repeats the same plot pattern three times while changing the target each round. It comes last because by then the class has spent four days stating structural rules and can apply the same habit to plot.

THE ARC

1	A structure can be stated as a rule
2	One repeated phrase can organise two parallel story lines
3	The layout of a page is part of the text
4	A text's organisation can help a reader reconstruct sequence
5	A plot can repeat the same structural move while changing its target

WHERE THIS FITS

When to run it. Grade 3, any time after the narration unit. It works especially well after the main-idea/theme unit because both ask students to make a claim about a whole text.

What it assumes. The Kindergarten pattern unit's habit of separating a repeated frame from what changes inside it, if the class had it; otherwise nothing beyond fluent listening and basic page navigation.

What it builds. Stating a text's structure as a usable rule; reading layout as meaning; using organisation to reconstruct sequence; recognising repeated narrative pattern.

What it leads to. Later work on text features, comparing structures across texts, and explaining how organisation affects meaning.

THE 5 DAYS

DAY 1

One Line At A Time Work out the rule the verses follow, and explain what the last one does with it.

Why here. First because the structure is the most explicit in the set: cumulative, one line added at a time, and statable as a rule in one sentence.

From: The House That George Built by Suzanne Slade

Focus:	A cumulative structure that can be stated as a usable rule 35 min full · 20 min short Makes: The rule written as a sentence, and a prediction
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DAY 2

Two Stories At The Same Time Work out how one repeated phrase organises two parallel story lines, and what the last page does with them.

Why here. Second: the repeated frame is still visible, but now it carries two character/story lines rather than one cumulative chain. The rule is harder to state and yesterday's success gives the class a way in.

From: When Pigasso Met Mootisse by Nina Laden

Focus:	Two parallel story lines organised by one repeated phrase 34 min full · 18 min short Makes: A two-column chart, and what the last picture needs
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DAY 3

Four Kinds Of Page Work out the different kinds of page in this book and what job each one does.

Why here. Third, and the turn: structure is now read from layout as well as words. The class stops looking only at sentence patterns.

From: Faces of the Moon by Bob Crelin

Focus:	Text structure read from layout as well as words 34 min full · 18 min short Makes: A table of page kinds, their parts and their jobs
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DAY 4

The Order Of The Phases Use the names and organisation of the text to reconstruct the Moon's phases in order, then explain what clues helped.

Why here. Fourth: the target is not remembering Moon facts. It is using the way the text names and organises the phases to rebuild a sequence. Because the layout is already familiar from Day 3, the reasoning can take centre stage.

From: Faces of the Moon by Bob Crelin

Focus:	Using text organisation to derive sequence rather than recall it 34 min full · 18 min short Makes: The phases arranged around a circle, with the organising clues named
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DAY 5

The Same Trick Three Times Work out the plot pattern that repeats three times and state what changes in each round.

Why here. Last. The repeated move is now inside a narrative plot rather than on the page. The same structural pattern recurs three times while the target changes, so the class has to state the pattern rather than merely retell events.

From: Clever Beatrice by Margaret Willey

Focus:	A repeated narrative pattern with a changing target 35 min full · 20 min short Makes: A three-row table of repeated moves and changing targets
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WORDS TO USE

Word

How it is used

structure	Used from Day 1 for how a text is organised.
rule	A usable statement that can help explain or predict the structure.
cumulative	Day 1, where the class can see the text accumulate.

heading, caption, diagram

Day 3, named as they are encountered on the page.

sequence	Day 4, derived from the text's organisation rather than treated as a memory test.
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WHAT TO PREPARE

- Checkpoint 1 page, one per child
- Checkpoint 2 page, one per child
- A blank rule card per pair for the performance task

CHECKPOINTS

After Day 2 · State the rule Three pages from a cumulative text. The pair writes the structural rule in one sentence and uses it to predict what a fourth page would contain.

Look for. The rule is usable. A statement that only describes the three pages but cannot generate a plausible next move is not yet a structural rule.

Say to the child. Write the rule in one sentence. Now use it to tell me what should happen next.

After Day 4 · Which kind of page Four unlabelled page types from an expository text. The child names each type and explains the job it does.

Without the full book. Four photocopied pages only.

Look for. The job, not just the label. 'A diagram' is half an answer; 'a diagram that shows the order all at once' is complete.

Say to the child. What kind of page is each one? What does each one help the reader do?

THE TASK AT THE END

The rule card

Each pair chooses one of the four books in the unit and writes its structure as a rule on a card. The receiving pair gets the card with the book closed and uses the rule to predict the next structural move: a page, a repeated line, a page type, or a plot move, depending on the text. They then open the book and check.

Collect. The rule card, the receiving pair's prediction, and a short check explaining whether the rule held.

Time. One session of about 40 minutes.

TEACHER KEY

- Checkpoint 1: for The House That George Built, a secure rule says that each new verse repeats the earlier material and adds one new element in the same accumulating pattern.
- Checkpoint 2: the four page types are the verse page, factual page, diagram and glossary-style page. Naming three of four with their jobs is secure.
- Task: if a prediction fails, students should decide whether the rule was incomplete or whether the text deliberately breaks the pattern. The explanation matters more than being right on the first try.

WHAT A STRONG ANSWER LOOKS LIKE

Strand	What to see
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Rule	States the structure in one usable sentence.
Prediction	Uses the rule to predict a plausible next structural move.
Layout	Names a page type and the job it does.
Derivation	Uses textual organisation to reconstruct sequence rather than relying only on recall.
Pattern	Recognises the repeated move in a narrative and what changes each time.

KEEPING THE DAILY EVIDENCE

Keep each pair's structural rule from Day 1 and Day 5. The unit is working when the later rule is precise enough that another pair can use it to anticipate the next move in the text rather than simply summarise what already happened.

WHAT TO PASS ON

- Pairs whose rule only describes what they saw, rather than helping another reader anticipate the structure, should meet a second cumulative text before later text-features work.
- Days 3 and 4 use the same book and should stay together. Familiarity with the layout is what allows Day 4 to focus on reasoning rather than navigation.

THE BOOKS THIS UNIT USES

- Clever Beatrice by Margaret Willey · 1 lesson
- When Pigasso Met Mootisse by Nina Laden · 1 lesson
- The House That George Built by Suzanne Slade · 1 lesson
- Faces of the Moon by Bob Crelin · 2 lessons