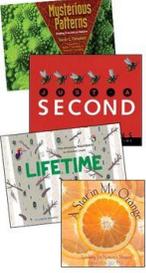




Understanding Nonfiction Text Structures

Concept Book

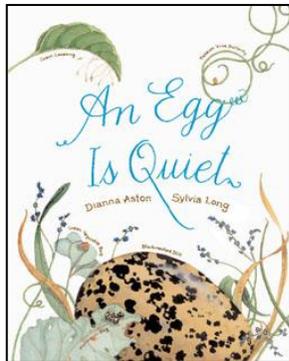


- Explores an abstract idea or process
- Offers unique perspectives or new ways of seeing things
- Works well for picture books about life cycles, seasons, animal behavior patterns, math concepts

Getting Started

Most of the nonfiction books being published today fall into two broad categories—picture book biographies and concept picture books. Concept picture books explore an abstract idea or process, and in many cases, offer a unique perspective or new way of seeing things. They are ideal for focusing on patterns and cycles in the natural world, animal behavior and adaptations, and math concepts. In short, they work well for elucidating STEM topics.

Why do concept books work better than picture book biographies as mentor texts for teaching nonfiction text structures? Because almost all picture book biographies have the same structure (chronological sequence), but concept books can feature any of the six major text structures now being taught in most schools (description, sequence, compare and contrast, question and answer, cause and effect, problem and solution). Here are some examples.



Description: *An Egg Is Quiet* by Dianna Hutts Aston (Chronicle, 2006), *The Beetle Book* by Steve Jenkins (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012)

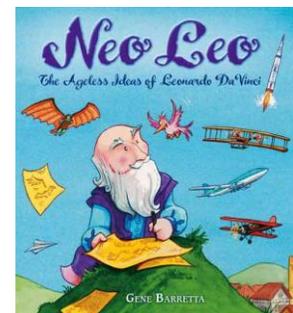
Sequence: *No Monkeys, No Chocolate* by Melissa Stewart (Charlesbridge, 2013), *How to Swallow a Pig* by Steve Jenkins and Robin Page (Houghton Mifflin, 2015)

Cause & Effect: *Feeling the Heat* by Brenda Z. Guiberson (Holt, 2010), *Frog in a Bog* by John Himmelman (Charlesbridge, 2004).

Compare & Contrast: *Neo Leo: The Ageless Ideas of Leonardo da Vinci* by Gene Barretta (Holt, 2009), *Born in the Wild: Baby Mammals and Their Parents* by Lita Judge (Roaring Brook, 2014)

Problem-Solution: *A Place for Butterflies* by Melissa Stewart (Peachtree, 2014), *The Great Monkey Rescue: Saving the Golden Lion Tamarins* by Sandra Markle (Millbrook Press, 2015)

Question and Answer: *Can an Aardvark Bark?* by Melissa Stewart (Simon & Schuster, 2017), *What Do You Do with a Tail Like This?* (Houghton Mifflin, 2008) by Steve Jenkins and Robin Page



Activity Ideas

How can STEM picture books help students learn to (1) identify nonfiction text structures as they read and (2) experiment with nonfiction text structures as they write? Here's a series of scaffolded activity ideas.

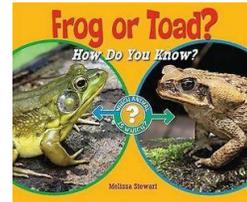
1. Read aloud portions of one book from each category listed above and work with students to identify the text structure of each one.

2. After organizing the class into six groups, give each team a packet of sticky notes and one of the books listed above that you didn't share with the class. Invite student to classify the book by text structure and label it with a sticky note.

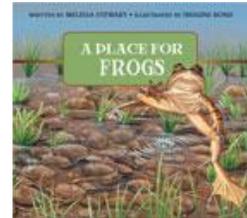


3. Ask each group to rotate to a different table, leaving their book behind. Students should review the book at their new table and discuss how the previous group classified it. If they disagree with the previous group, they should add a second sticky note explaining their rationale. Repeat this process until each group has reviewed all the books. Then have a brief class discussion about books with multiple sticky notes.

4. Give three groups a copy of *Frog or Toad? How Do You Know?* by Melissa Stewart. Invite them to read the book, identify its text structure. (compare and contrast), and make a list of the kinds of information the author would have had to research to write the book.



Give the other three groups a copy of *A Place for Frogs* by Melissa Stewart. Invite them to read the book, identify its text structure. (Some students will probably classify it as cause and effect, while others may classify it as problem and solution.), and make a list of the kinds of information the author would have had to research to write the book.



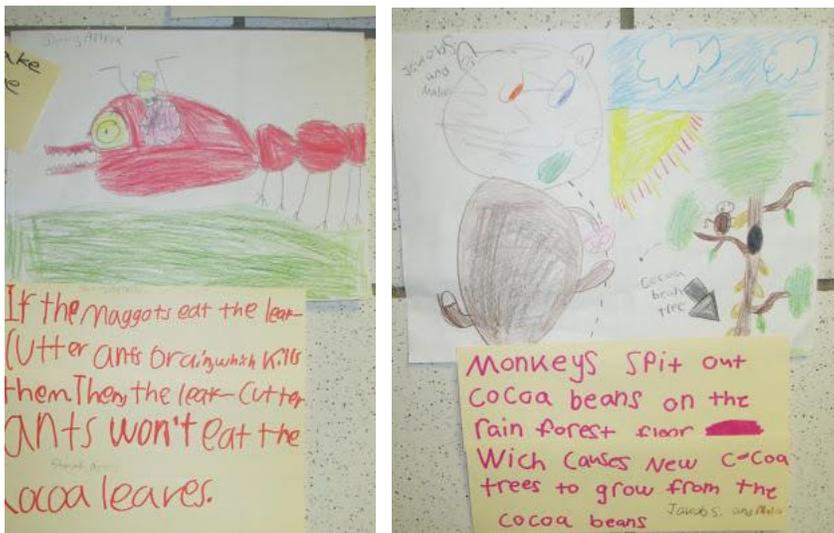
5. Ask the class to identify the text structure of each book. During the discussion, guide students in realizing that a book can have more than one text structure. Then encourage the groups to share and compare their lists. They will discover that even though both books are about frogs, there is very little overlapping information. This is a great opportunity to point out that text structure often dictates the kinds of information an author needs to collect as he/she does research. When a writer chooses a text structure early in the process, it can make the research process more focused and efficient.

- After reading *No Monkeys, No Chocolate* by Melissa Stewart aloud with your class, divide students into pairs and invite them to make a book map, so that they can get a stronger sense of the book's cumulative sequence structure.



Book maps (top) and revised text with cause and effect structure

Then encourage each child choose a two-page spread and rewrite the text with a cause and effect text structure. The children may wish to illustrate their writing.



Close-up views of revised text with cause and effect structure