



WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

Video: Star Gazers

Problem-Solution Nonfiction Text Structure (problem-evidence-solution-results)



The Problem

Problem-solution nonfiction text structure is often found in social studies textbooks. Unfortunately, it is found to be one of the more challenging text structures for readers. This may be due to its similarity with cause-effect nonfiction text structure from which it is derived. Not only must students determine the problem and solution of a situation, they must also think about what causes the problem (the evidence) and what the results (effects) are of the proposed solution. This complex pattern requires students to read carefully so they fully comprehend the author's message.

The Solution

Providing instruction in conventional text structures, such as problem-solution, makes a difference. A number of studies have found that students who received instruction in text structure were able to remember significantly more information than students who had not received instruction in text structure. Researchers also found that if students were made aware of a passage's text structure before reading it, they were able to remember significantly more information contained in the passage than if they learned about the text structure after they read or received no instruction in text structure at all.

Improving Understanding of Problem-Solution Text Structure

One study found that fifth-graders who received training in problem-solution text structure remembered about 50% more, as measured on an essay test, than students receiving traditional instruction. This same group was also able to include more important information in their written summaries than students who had not received instruction in problem-solution text structure. They were able to tell:

- Who had a problem and what the problem was,
- What action was taken to try to solve the problem, and
- What happened as a result of the action taken.

A Helpful Pattern for Writing a Summary of a Problem-Evidence-Solution-Results Passage

_____ had a problem because _____.
Therefore, _____.
As a result, _____.

References:

Armbruster, B. B., Anderson, T. H., Ostertag, J. (1987). Does text structure/summarization instruction facilitate learning from expository text? *Reading Research Quarterly* (22)3. 331-346.

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