

Table 5. Elements of structure in a narrative text^a

Element	Description	Example
Characters	Who the story was about	A girl named Little Red Riding Hood, her grandmother, and the wolf
Setting	Where and when the story happened	The forest and Grandmother’s cabin, during the day
Goal	What the main character was trying to do	Little Red Riding Hood set out to deliver a basket of food to her sick grandmother.
Problem	Why the main character took certain actions	Little Red Riding Hood was not aware that the wolf had eaten Grandmother.
Plot or Action	What happened to the main character or what she or he did to try to solve a problem	She met the wolf on her way to Grandmother’s, and the wolf pretended to be Grandmother.
Resolution	How the problem was solved and how the story ended	A nearby hunter rescued Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother from the wolf.
Theme(s)	General lessons or ideas	You shouldn’t talk to strangers.

Source: The list of elements is drawn from **Baumann and Bergeron (1993), Morrow (1996)**, and Pressley et al. (1990).

^a Not all stories contain examples of conflict. The panel provides the *Little Red Riding Hood* example to illustrate one option for describing these elements to students. Some students from various cultural backgrounds may not be familiar with certain folktales like this one. Teachers should construct lessons around texts that are best suited to their students.

As students develop, teachers should encourage them to use a wider variety of structural elements, such as multiple conflicts and subplots, as they extract and construct meaning from a story. Students can also practice identifying structural elements by making up their own stories, developing stories from story maps,⁵⁷ illustrating each episode in the story, or participating in a dramatic retelling. Teachers can also tailor activities that practice using other reading comprehension strategies (see Recommendation 1) to highlight structural elements such as plot development.⁵⁸

Key reminders

- Teachers should gradually introduce new structural elements in narrative texts while reinforcing elements that already have been taught.⁵⁹
- In some stories, there are multiple events, so students must identify the same structural element more than once. For example, *Little Red Riding Hood* is set in both the woods and Grandmother’s house.

2. Provide instruction on common structures of informational texts.

The panel believes that teachers should introduce students not only to the structural elements in narrative text, but also to the common structures of informational, or expository, text (Table 6). Informational text structures typically apply to paragraphs or passages, and the entire text may contain multiple structures.⁶⁰

The panel suggests that teachers use familiar ideas or topics when teaching students about the structure of informational text, and initially use texts that provide clear, easy-to-recognize examples of the structure.⁶¹ Compare and contrast is a good example. A teacher could share a compare and contrast text on different types of pets or on two or three modes