

Plot Structures

These fill-in-the-blank activities provide an opportunity to discuss a story and look at the relationships of ideas. They cover several common structures of text: problem - solution, comparison – contrast, cause and effect, and chronological order. These are deceptively simple, but require a great deal of discussion and rereading of the text.

Benefits of Using Plot Structures

- Provides a method to retell the story
- Examines relationships of events (cause/effect, problem/solution, compare/contrast)
- Encourages analysis of the text
- Checks for understand of a story's elements (plot, character, conclusion, etc.)

Types of Stories for the Plot Structures

- Look for short stories that fit each structure but explain that they might have to adjust the fill-in-the-blank activity to fit a particular story. New transitions (the words / phrases in bold on the activity sheet) can be added or changed. Some transitions can be skipped. Another solution is to fill out two forms for the same story.
- **Problem – Solution:** Often even short stories have more than one problem to be solved. For example, Story #9, *The God Who Sees Me*. Sarai has not been able to conceive. Another problem occurs when Saria banishes Hagar. Other possible stories: #13 *Two Daughters*, #36 *Zipporah*, 103 *Ammonites*, #128 *Naboth's Vineyard*.
- **Comparison – Contrast:** Look for stories that have two strong characters or two locations that have similarities and differences. Some possible stories: #19 *Selling the Birthright*; #177 *Gabriel's Announcements*, #191 *Forgiven and Grateful*,
- **Cause and Effect:** Look for stories where one event leads to another and another. Some stories that would work: #34 *Finding a Wife*, #48 *Spitting in Her Face*, #136 *Naaman*, #149 *Uzziah*, #231 *Healing of Dorcas*.
- **Chronological Order:** Look for stories that follow a clear first, then, finally pattern: Possible stories: #41 *What is It?*, #44 *The Golden Calf*, #54 *The Death of Moses*, #101 *Moving the Ark*.

Directions for Plot Structures

- Before telling the story, analyze it to decide which structure best fit.
- Provide the fill-in-the-blank activity.
- If participants are working in small groups, encourage them to return to use the Scripture as they discuss the story.
- If you are working as one large group, project the fill in the blank on a large screen. Discuss the structure with the group and fill in the blanks as answers are provided.
- Have the group retell the story at the end of the activity.

Problem Solution Structure

A problem begins in this story when _____

After that we learn that _____

Next, _____

Then _____

The problem is solved when _____

At the end of the story _____

Alternate transition words if needed:

Later – instead of – second – third – so – therefore – at the same time – in order to

Completed Problem-Solution Structure based upon Story #: 87 / Text: 1 Samuel: 17:1-55

A problem begins in this story when Goliath challenges the Israelite army every day and the soldiers go into hiding from fear and dismay.

After that we learn that Jesse asks his son David to bring food to the army. Three of David's older brothers have followed Saul into the battle and Jesse wants David to bring back news of his sons. We also learn that Saul has offered rewards to anyone who can defeat Goliath.

Next, David arrives at the camp with the food his father prepared. David and Eliab argue because David is yelling at the army and asking why they won't fight the Philistine.

Then Saul asks to see David and David says he will fight Goliath. Saul finally agrees to let David fight and gives him his own armor. David rejects Saul's armor and fights as a shepherd.

The problem is solved when David kills Goliath, and the army of Israel kills many of the Philistines.

At the end of the story David comes to Saul's tent carrying Goliath's head. Saul asks David who he is and David says he is the son of Jesse of Bethlehem. Saul makes David a commander in the army.

Comparison-Contrast Structure

_____ and _____ have
some similarities.

One similarity is _____ .

Another way they resemble one another is _____ .

I find this similarity interesting because _____ .

But _____ and _____

also have interesting differences.

If one looks closely at _____

the first difference is revealed.

_____ is _____ while

_____ is _____ .

A second difference can be found _____ .

This difference is important point because _____

I think that _____ is the more admirable character because _____ .

Alternate transition words if needed:

Both – neither – although – in common – on the other hand – even though

Completed Comparison-Contrast Structure based upon Story #: 87 / Text: 1 Samuel: 17:1-55

David **and** Goliath **have some similarities.**

One similarity is that neither of them were controlled by fear.

Another way they resemble one another is that both of them had fought in battles.

I find this similarity interesting because Goliath had battled other soldiers but David had battled lions and bears and other beasts.

But David and Goliath also have interesting differences.

If one looks closely at the descriptions of them **the first difference is revealed.**

Goliath **is** a giant who has been trained to fight in battles **while** David **is** younger and smaller and has worked all his life as a shepherd.

A second difference can be found in where they find their courage. **This difference is important point because** Goliath's courage is based upon his size and many victories but David's courage comes from his faith in God.

I think that David is the more admirable character because he gives all credit to God.

Cause and Effect Structure

Many events led to _____

First, _____

which caused _____

When this happened, _____

The result of this _____

Next, _____

Consequently, _____

Because of this _____

All of these events led to _____

Additional transition words if needed:

When / then - For this reason - Therefore – In order to – For this reason

Completed Cause and Effect Structure based upon Stories 175 & 176: Esther 1 - 10

Many events led to the saving of the Jewish people in the Book of Esther.

First, Haman asked to have all of the Jews destroyed **which caused** Esther to approach the king to ask for a favor even though it meant she might be executed.

When this happened, Haman thought he had found special favor with Queen Esther.

The result of this was that Haman became bolder and more conceited and had gallows built to hang Mordecai.

Next, Esther asked the king to save her people from the evil Haman.

Consequently, the king became angry and left the queen's quarters. Haman threw himself upon Esther's couch to beg for mercy.

Because of this the king thought Haman was trying to rape the queen, so he ordered the execution of Haman and 10 of his sons.

All of these events led to Esther's people being saved.

Chronological Structure

Several interesting things happened in this story. First, _____

Next, _____

After that _____

Then _____

When _____

Next, _____

Finally, _____

Additional Transition Words if needed:

Later – Afterward – Before – Soon – Immediately – Now – During – As soon as - Until

Completed Chronological Structure based on story #221 / Luke 24:13-45

Several interesting things happened in this story. First, we meet two people walking to Emmaus from Jerusalem on the day that Jesus rose from the dead.

Next, Jesus appears to them and asks what they are talking about, but they don't recognize Jesus.

After that, they say they heard that Jesus of Nazareth had risen from the dead.

Then Jesus tells them to explain all of the Scriptures to them.

When they reach Emmaus, they ask Jesus to stay because it is dark.

Next, Jesus blesses bread and breaks it.

Finally, they recognize him but then he disappears. So they return to Jerusalem to tell everyone what has happened.
