

## Analysing Form and Structure

You must be able to:

- Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use form and structure
- Use relevant subject terminology to support your views.

### Form and Structure

- The structure of a text is the way in which it is organized: for example, the order in which information is given or events described.
- The terms 'structure' and 'form' are both used to describe how a text is set out on the page.

### Openings

- The beginning (**opening**) of a text is very important as it has to draw in the readers and encourage them to continue reading.
- Some texts begin by giving an overview of the subject, indicating what the text is going to be about:

There are thousands of varieties of butterfly. In this article I will discuss some of the most common.

- A writer might explain why he or she has decided to write:

Lewis's views about youth unemployment are fundamentally wrong.

- Fiction writers can use their openings to introduce characters or settings:

'I shall never forget Tony's face,' said the carrier.

- Texts can also start with dramatic statements, designed to shock, surprise or intrigue:

It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen.

### Endings

- Fiction writers might give a neat **conclusion**: for example, with the solving of a crime or a marriage:

Reader, I married him.

- They might prefer to leave us with a sense of mystery or suspense:

'Who are they?' asked George [...]  
'Wolves.'

- Writers of essays and articles usually end by drawing together their main points and reaching a conclusion.
- Some texts end with a question or even an instruction:

Get out there now and use your vote!



#### Key Point

You should consider why the writer has decided to arrange things in a particular way and the effect of this on the reader.

## Chronological Order

- **Chronological order** gives events in the order in which they happened. This is the most common way of ordering fiction, and non-fiction texts such as histories, biographies and travel writing.
- Writers might, however, start at the end of the story or somewhere in the middle before going back to recap previous events in 'flashbacks'.
- **Reverse chronological order** means starting with the latest event and working backwards. You will see this in **blogs** and discussion forums.

## Other Ways of Ordering Texts

- Some texts start with general information and move on to more detailed information and explanation.
- A text giving a point of view might build up to what the writer thinks are the most persuasive arguments.
- Information can be arranged in **alphabetical order**, as in dictionaries and encyclopaedias.
- Texts sometimes rank things or people in order of importance or popularity, as in a music chart, either starting with the best and working down or starting with the worst and working up.

## Divisions

- Books are usually divided into **chapters**, sometimes with titles or numbers.
- Most prose is arranged in **paragraphs**, while verse is often divided into **stanzas**. Make sure you use the correct terminology.
- Other devices used to divide up text include **bullet points**, numbering and **text boxes**. Headlines and subheadings help to guide readers through the text.

## Analysing Structure

- When analysing a short text, or an extract from a longer text, think about how and why the writer changes focus from one paragraph or section to another, perhaps moving from a general description to something more detailed, from a group of people to a particular character, or from description to action or speech.

### Quick Test

Put the following in:

1. chronological order
2. reverse chronological order
3. alphabetical order
  - a) December 2014
  - b) January 2002
  - c) April 2011
  - d) November 2011



### Key Point

Texts, especially longer texts, are often divided into sections. These give order to their contents and help readers find their way through the text.

### Key Words

opening  
 conclusion  
 chronological order  
 reverse chronological order  
 blog  
 alphabetical order  
 chapter  
 paragraph  
 stanza  
 bullet point  
 text box