

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- understand what structure in writing is and how you can write about it.

HINT

Look also at the relative sizes of the paragraphs. If they vary quite noticeably then there is probably a good reason for it (a short paragraph might be an effective opening or conclusion, or used for emphasis elsewhere)

THE STRUCTURE OF A TEXT

What do you understand is meant by the word 'structure'? Try writing down a short definition of 'structure' in relation to a piece of writing. You could use one of the extracts in this book or another text that you know.

Most people respond to a skilfully structured piece of writing without understanding exactly why. When analysing structure, then, you have to understand the purpose of a passage, which can only be done by careful reading. The next task is to see the structure within it that helps put the purpose into effect. You can then write about:

- the writer's intention in the text
- the structure that the writer has used to achieve that intention
- the effects of each part of the structure.

Many students find it difficult to analyse structure in writing, but the following techniques should help you.

- Think in terms of the beginning, middle and end of the text or extract. How are they different from each other?
- Look at the paragraphs and identify the content of each one. Then consider what the writer is doing with that content and why he or she chose to put the content in that order.
- Look at the way in which the writer uses the basic types of writing that you find in non-fiction:
 - description (of the setting or the appearance of people and objects)
 - narrative (what happened or is happening)
 - dialogue or speech (including talking to one self)
 - thoughts and feelings (when not in direct speech)
 - background information, facts, or explanation.

ACTIVITY 1

A01

A02

SKILLS

CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS,
INTERPRETATION, CREATIVITY

▼ IDENTIFYING A PASSAGE'S STRUCTURE

Read the following passage, using the techniques you have just learned to help you think about the structure of the passage.

▼ FROM *CIDER WITH ROSIE* BY LAURIE LEE

I was set down from the carrier's cart at the age of three; and there with a sense of bewilderment and terror my life in the village began.

The June grass, amongst which I stood, was taller than I was, and I wept. I had never been so close to grass before. It towered above me and all around me, each blade tattooed with tiger-skins of sunlight. It was knife-edged, dark, and a wicked green, thick as a forest and alive with grasshoppers that chirped and chattered and leapt through the air like monkeys.