

There's an Owl in the Shower

by Jean Craighead George. Illustrated by Christine Herman Merrill

This book is a mentor text for writing and for the use of the Critical Thinking Triangle® for perspective taking and development of the causal relationships within a story. Information, in the form of expository text structures, is included within this story by the author in order to provide background/ world connections and to assist students in the integration of narrative and expository text. Such integration allows for opinion making and persuasive thought.

Expository text is becoming more and more important in the early grades. Children who have problems with coherence, often get lost in a myriad of details when dealing with expository text.

Narratives are structured by a “story grammar.” Expository texts are individual text structures. There are seven basic expository text structures shown below:

DESCRIPTIVE		LIST	SEQUENCE													
<p>in addition to, besides, for example, such as, for instance, also</p> <p>AUTHOR'S PLAN Describe a topic. Focus on the Character or the Setting.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> for example <input type="checkbox"/> also <input type="checkbox"/> furthermore <input type="checkbox"/> finally <p>AUTHOR'S PLAN List things related to topic.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 first 2 then 3 next 4 finally <p>AUTHOR'S PLAN State the order or steps.</p>													
CAUSE/EFFECT	PROBLEM/SOLUTION		PERSUADE													
<p>cause/reason, because, so, therefore, in order to, thus, since, consequently, as a result, effect, if-then</p> <p>AUTHOR'S PLAN Explain the reason why something happened.</p>	<p>therefore, as a result, consequently, solve</p> <p>AUTHOR'S PLAN Identify a problem and offer a Plan to solve it.</p>		<p>decide, want, response, reason/facts</p> <p>AUTHOR'S PLAN Persuade or negotiate with others.</p>													
COMPARE and CONTRAST																
<p>POSSIBLE CRITERIA: Color, Size, Shape, Function, Category, Location, User, Composition, Parts</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>DIFFERENT</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> </table>				<p>Criteria</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> </table>				<p>DIFFERENT</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> </table> <p>SAME</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> </table>							<p>different, unlike, but, however, rather than</p> <p>same, alike, similar, both, all</p> <p>AUTHOR'S PLAN Show how two or more criteria are different or similar, as related to chosen topic.</p>

Authors and contributors to content areas of science, social studies, economics and “current events” use these text structures as a road map to organize details within the content area curricula. Mindwing’s *Talk to Write, Write to Learn*® and *ThemeMaker*® manuals provide in-depth discussion/activities for expository text comprehension and expression.

We have seen an increasing number of chapter books incorporating expository text (information) into the narrative. In the above novel, the narrative structure, involving complex episodes and multiple character perspectives, interfaces with details provided by the expository information which are artfully woven into both text and pictures. Jean Craighead George is a master of such writing. In such novels, narrative and expository text structures go beyond action and event sequences to the causal structure allowing for comprehension strategies such as Reciprocal Teaching to be modeled and developed.

In reciprocal teaching children learn to summarize, predict, clarify, and ask questions.

At the simplest level, such interventions could be used with young children after listening to or viewing a story. Our research implies that such interventions might be strengthened by tying them to the causal structure of the text (*Stage 3 and above*). For example, rather than just teaching children to predict or question, teachers might structure the prediction and questioning activities to focus on the events that are important for establishing the causal structure of the text

(The Critical Thinking Triangle®, Attempts and Consequences/Resolution).

The goal of these more directed interventions would be to develop and internalize in children the skills: to identify meaningful connections (causal, and temporal), between various parts of a story, to be able to recognize when such connections are needed for comprehension, and to be able to infer these connections.

Trabasso, T., van den Broek, P., & Liu, L. (1988).

A model for generating questions that assess and promote comprehension.

Questioning Exchange, 2, 25-38.

Kendeou, P, Lynch, J, van den Broek, P., Espin, C., White, M. and Kremer, K. (2005).

Developing successful readers: Building early comprehension skills through television viewing and listening.

Early Childhood Education Journal, 33, 91-98.

In our experience with students, using narrative and expository text structures to foster coherence and comprehension, we continue to find that the “directed interventions” discussed in the above quote pertaining to narrative structure, are applicable to expository text structures as well. You will see the relationship in the analysis of Chapter 1 of *There’s an Owl in the Shower* by Jean Craighead George. Illustrated by Christine Herman Merrill

Chapter 1

We are including a detailed analysis of the first chapter of this novel to show the many applications of the Story Grammar Marker® and our iconic representations of expository text.

1. The beginning of the chapter is an *attempt/action* (👁️) from an episode. Included are the *character's* (👤) name, broad *setting* (★) components (logging road and dark forest). We infer that he is doing something purposeful. (Since there seems to be a series of purposeful actions, we might infer that there is a *plan* (👋), although we do not know what it is. Understanding of a complete episode allows us to infer. Why was Borden doing the *action* (👁️)?)



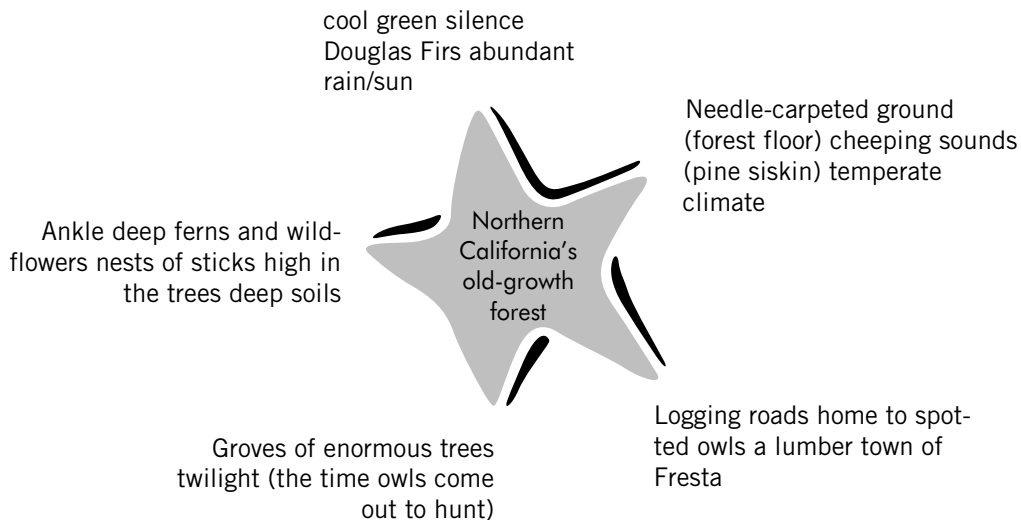
Character: Borden Watson, riding a bike



Setting: a narrow logging road in a dark forest



Action: riding and parking his bike; taking a rifle from its carrier and loading the rifle



3. The kick-off is presented by incorporation of several components of authors' craft:

Component #1:

Statement of the plan/purpose: If one knows the plan must relate to a kick-off, then the statement of a plan is an indirect way of inferring an entire kick-off or an initiating event (or part of one) which causes stated or inferred feelings.



Plan: "He was in the old-growth forest for one purpose: to shoot owls – spotted owls."



Feeling is stated: hate

The Critical Thinking Triangle® below is partially filled in. If one knows a plan, one knows that the kick-off is the cause of the plan, since they are related by the causal connector: because.



If one knows the feeling, he/she may infer thoughts of the character, if there is enough background knowledge.

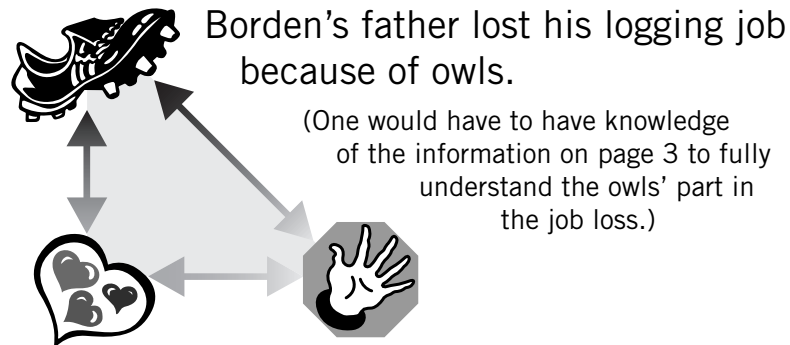
Dialogue makes the feeling come alive, it adds voice.

Direct quotes are used to personalize the stated feelings.

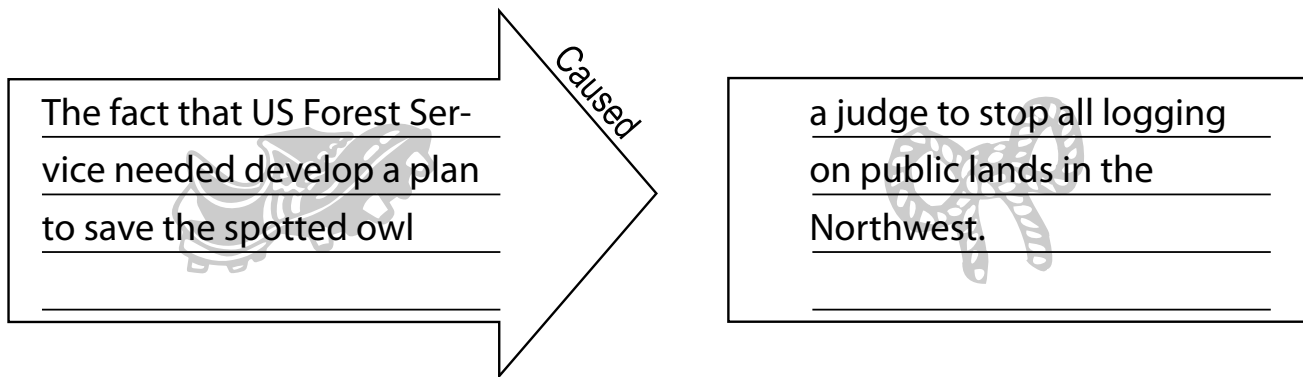
“You,” he said aloud: You owl, in that nest. You’re dead, the minute you stick your head up.”

“He thought about his father and cried out, “My dad doesn’t have a job because of you. He can’t cut any more big trees because of you.”

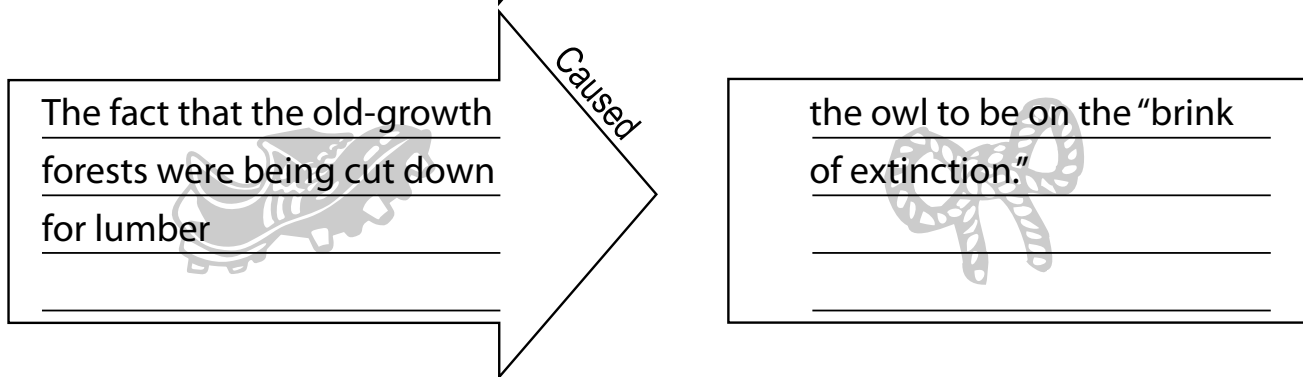
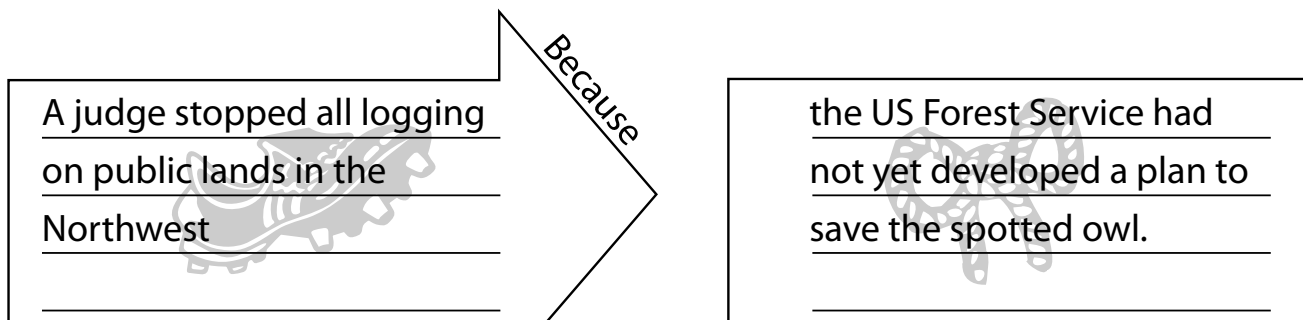
Students could practice the tone of voice and body language that Borden might have used when saying these quotes.



Background Knowledge Necessary



Or



Or

Because

The spotted owl was on the "brink of extinction"

the old-growth forests were being cut down for lumber.

Caused

Logging

the habitat of the spotted owls to be destroyed.

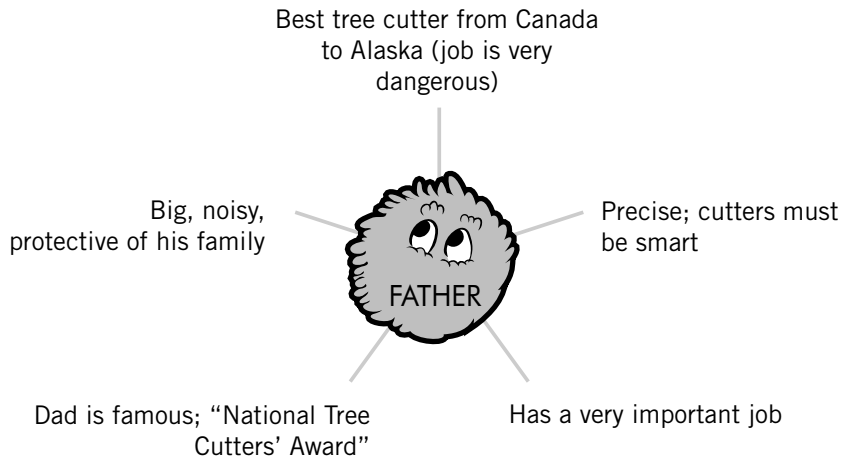
Or

Because

The spotted owls' habitat was being destroyed

of logging.

4. On page 3 the author uses elements of Borden's father's character to add to the one sided dialogue that Borden is having with the owl...including the personality traits of bravery and competence, intelligence. These traits were shown by Borden's description of his father's actions.



5. Pages four and five, there is mention and description, again of feelings on the part of characters other than Borden: his sister and mother. These characters all are reacting to the kick-off of his father's loss of work due to the spotted owl. He is angry, his sister is embarrassed (maybe angry, too), mom was "forced" to go to work (infer her feelings)...

 BORDEN  Angry	 SISTER  Embarrassed/Angry	 MOTHER  <hr/>
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Background Information regarding actions done as a result of the layoff could be expressed as cause/effect and list:

Because

The spotted owls' habitat
was being destroyed

➔

of logging.

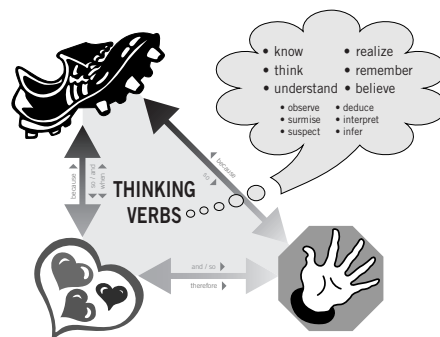
- Mom took a job in the school cafeteria
- Borden mowed lawns to help out
- Sally, stopped playing soccer and spent much time in her room

6. On page 6, Borden talks with Judge Kramer who explained several things:

<p>If people destroy threatened and endangered creatures or the habitats they live in</p>	Then	<p>they will be fined, put in jail or both.</p>
<p>If spotted owls have no habitat (old growth forest/big tall trees)</p>	Then	<p>they will die.</p>

PROBLEM/SOLUTION

7. Pages six, seven and eight contain expository facts, gleaned from research on the topic of extinction of owls... These facts are delineation of the problem, and supporting details as well as details to support letting the loggers continue... These are the elements of persuasion... the most complex part of expository text. We have already mapped the problem from each of the perspectives. The perspective taking map helps students organize their opinions. Much modeling is necessary. Our ThemeMaker® provides perspective taking maps. The author's craft shown here is that these "facts" are put into a dialogue between two people having opposing views and reasons for those views.



PERSUASION



Issue: A plan is needed to save the spotted owl from extinction.



Feeling #1: Family: do not need to do it (cites family pressures)



Feeling #2: Judge/Environmentalists want to allow the ban (facts to support this opinion are on page 6&7).

These "feeling" icons are placed here because to perspective taking requires an understanding of the problem from the point of view/perspective of the opposition. This chapter, so far, provides facts/opinions related to each perspective.

On page 8, notice the number of references to mental states:

Borden “put his mind once more to solving the problem of owls, trees and cutters.”

To **think** more clearly... 

He **decided**... 

Then he **remembered**... 

He **thought** again... 

8. Page nine contains another kick-off, something Borden saw, which actually added to the initial kick-off and is the reason for the chapter title: “A Good Owl.”
9. The chapter ends with a decision. A decision is one way to “end” a chapter. Endings are taught gradually over the years for successful writing.

Other endings would be memories, opinions, wishes, lessons learned and morals of the story/experience.

Chapter 2 begins with a memory, figurative language as well as lists and sequences from exposition are included. This chapter is entitled “Enrique.” Enrique is an owl. The author, through description and thoughts allows us to “see” Enrique’s perspective.