Extreme weather

6 Exploring text structure

Learning objectives

- To understand text structure
- To consider the different ways that a text can be structured

Tip Always track through a text chronologically (from beginning to end), so you can fully appreciate how the writer's argument develops.

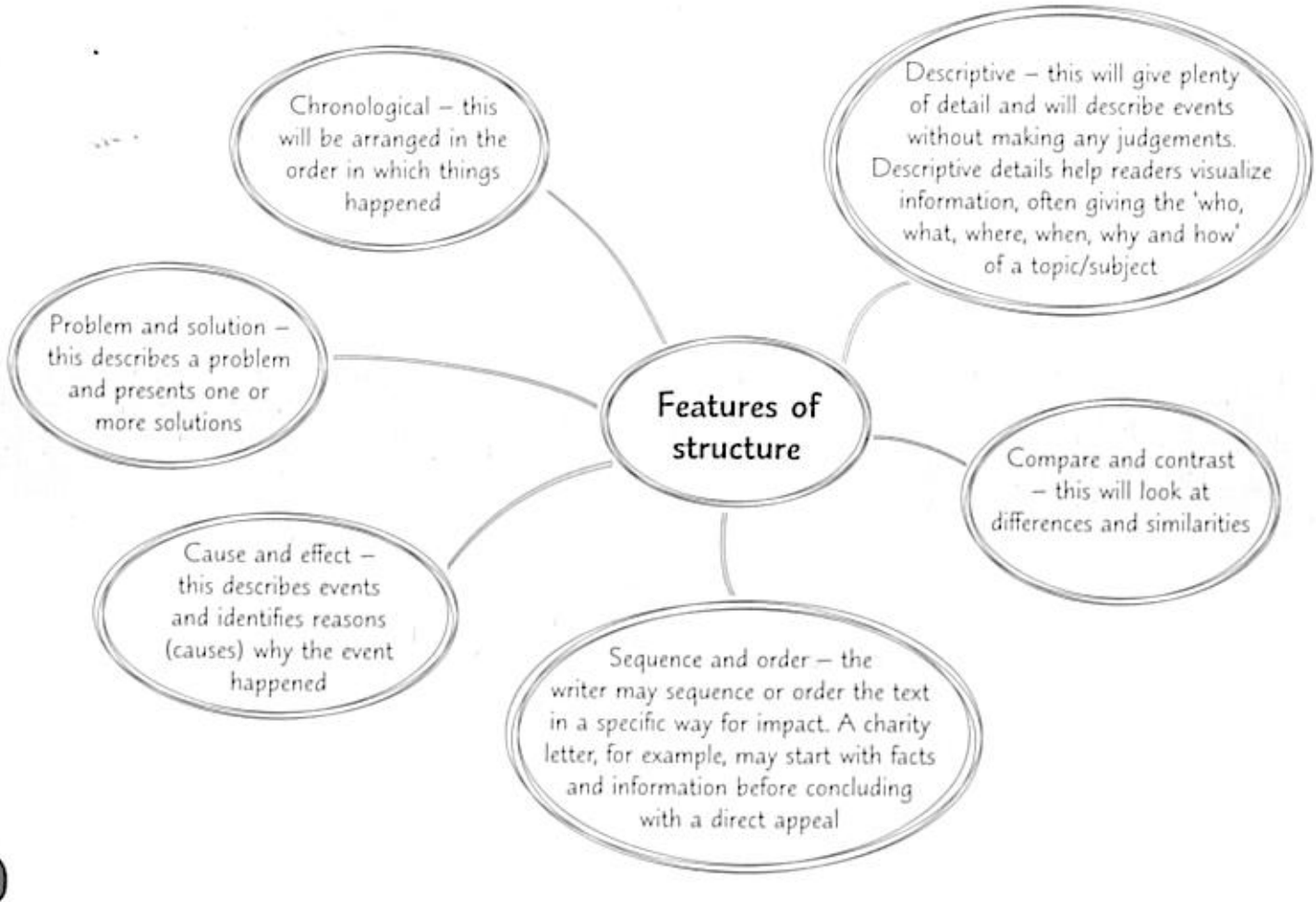
Introduction

Extreme weather is often difficult to predict and can cause havoc both to people and environments. In this unit you will develop your descriptive writing skills as you analyse and respond to how weather is presented in non-fiction writing.

Understanding text structure is important. When reading, think about how the writer has put together their ideas. When writing, think carefully about how to bring together information to maximize the effect of your writing on a reader, teacher or examiner. Planning the structure and content of your writing is essential. It will help you to avoid running out of ideas and losing track of your argument.

Features of structure

Within a text, a writer may use one or more of these structural features:



Read the following extract closely. Think about the different structural features discussed on page 28.

UK must adapt for weather extremes says Environment Agency

We cannot escape the fact that we have witnessed and experienced some extreme weather in the UK over the past decade. From Hurricane Hercules which attacked much of Cornwall and Wales over the Christmas period in 2013 to the subsequent severe floods which were catastrophic for areas like Sheffield, Salisbury and Dorset, to name but a few. Often the UK seems ill equipped to deal with these weather extremes, but given their frequency and the untold damage they cause, the Environment Agency suggests that urgent action is required.

Almost half the days in 2012 were during either periods of drought or flooding during one of the most extreme years of weather on record, according to Government figures. [...]

The flipside of climate change was also in evidence as dry weather in the later months of 2011 led to widespread drought in the summer of 2012. The Government ordered a hosepipe ban affecting 20 million people and the Environment Agency said 95 days had been in drought, more than a quarter of the year.

More extreme weather is inevitable and will exacerbate many of the problems that we already deal with, including flooding and water scarcity. Taking action today to prepare and adapt homes, businesses, agricultural practices and infrastructure for the future is vital.

Activity 1

Look at the four sections which have been highlighted in the extract above. Match the structural features to the correct section of the text.

A Cause and effect

B Compare and contrast

C Problem and solution

D Descriptive

Stretch

The argument in this text has been carefully structured. Look at each of the examples above and think about what they add to the text and the writer's argument and how they are effective.

Activity 2

1. Look at the question below and write a list of points that you think would help you to answer the question.

   How does the writer of the article above try to persuade us that the UK needs to adapt for extreme weather?

2. Look at the following section of a sample answer. Consider how you could improve it, and then write it out with your amendments.

> The writer persuades us that we need to adapt to extreme weather because we have seen for ourselves the damage caused, 'we have witnessed and experienced some extreme weather in the UK over the past decade'. The lengthy timescale (ten years) suggests that the problem has been continual and that we need to find a solution.

Tip Work through the extract from the title to the end and think about both the content and structure of the writer's argument. Remember that content includes what the writer has to say and any techniques they use to help them convey their message.