

# Comparing and Contrasting Structure

**CCSS**

**RL.8.5:** Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.

Theme: *The Many Forms of Poetry*

Think about the structure of an art museum versus that of a skyscraper. Why do they differ? When architects design a building, they consider how its structure can best serve its purpose.

Authors also think about the **structure**, or organization, of their texts. Poets, for example, consider what the ordering of words brings to a poem's meaning and style. A lighthearted poem will likely have a different style and structure than a serious one. Poets may arrange words in **stanzas**, or groups of lines, with a pattern of rhyming words and a strong **rhythm**, which is the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

**Read the poem below, lightly tapping on your desk to mirror the rhythm.**

## The Pasture *by Robert Frost*

I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;  
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away  
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):  
I sha'n't be gone long.—You come too.

I'm going out to fetch the little calf  
That's standing by the mother. It's so young,  
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.  
I sha'n't be gone long.—You come too.

**Now reread the poem. Mark any rhyming lines with letters. Underline repeated phrases.**

So, how does the poem's structure contribute to its tone and meaning? Is the poem's style lighthearted or serious? The poem's sing-song rhythm contributes to its carefree tone, as do the rhymes at the ends of the second and third lines in each stanza. And, the speaker's desire to share these simple pleasures with someone is captured by the repeated phrase "I sha'n't be gone long.—You come too." All of these elements contribute to the poem's lighthearted style.

When reading poetry, take note of how poets use structural elements to "build" a poem in different ways. Reading a poem out loud a few times can help you identify its rhythm, understand its overall style, and gain a better understanding of its meaning.



The poem below is a lyric poem, a form of poem that expresses the speaker’s feelings.

Genre: Lyric Poem

# Hope is the thing with feathers *by Emily Dickinson*

Hope is the thing with feathers  
 That perches in the soul,  
 And sings the tune without the words,  
 And never stops at all,  
 5 And sweetest in the gale is heard;  
 And sore must be the storm  
 That could abash the little bird  
 That kept so many warm.  
 I've heard it in the chillest land,  
 10 And on the strangest sea;  
 Yet, never, in extremity,  
 It asked a crumb of me.

**Explore how to respond to this prompt:** "Describe the poem's structure. Use details from the poem to develop your description of the structure."

This is a challenging task. As with most challenging tasks, it helps to break it up into small pieces.

**Does the poem have stanzas?** Yes. This poem has three stanzas, each with its own main idea.

**Does the poem have figurative language?** Yes. The speaker compares hope to a bird that constantly sings without words. You'll see that the poem's use of rhyme mimics the song of a bird.

**Does the poem rhyme?** The poet doesn't use exact rhymes, but instead uses words with similar sounds that create a pleasing feeling, just as the song of the "bird" would. Note that the first stanza follows an ABCB rhyme scheme, but *words* in line 3 loosely rhymes with *heard* and *bird* in stanza 2.

**Describe how the structural elements of "Hope is the thing with feathers" impact its meaning and style.**

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**Look at the chart on the next page. Complete the column labeled "Hope is the thing . . ." by briefly describing the poem's structure and meaning.**



### Close Reading

How does the structure of this poem differ from the one on the previous page?

### Hint

Reread each poem aloud, noting the rhythm and rhyme. Does either poem have a set pattern of sound and rhyme?

Read the lyric poem below, which discusses a dream that has been put on hold. Use the Close Reading and Hint to fill in the chart.

Genre: Lyric Poem

## Dream Deferred by Langston Hughes

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up  
Like a raisin in the sun?  
Or fester like a sore—

5 And then run?  
Does it stink like rotten meat?  
Or crust and sugar over—  
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags  
10 like a heavy load.

*Or does it explode?*

Compare and contrast the structure and meaning of “Hope is the thing with feathers” and “Dream Deferred” by completing the chart below.

	“Hope is the thing . . .”	“Dream Deferred”
Structure		
Meaning		



### Show Your Thinking

Using the chart, compare and contrast how each poem’s structure contributes to its meaning.

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With a partner, compare and contrast how each poem’s structure contributes to its style.





Read the poem “Annabel Lee,” which is an elegy. Then read the poem “Remember,” which is a sonnet. For both poems, use the Study Buddies and Close Readings to guide your reading.



“Annabel Lee” is an elegy, a poem that mourns the loss of something or someone important to the poet. This elegy is about a woman the poet loved when he was young. I will keep in mind the theme of love and loss when I compare the poems.

## Close Reading

**Circle** the repeated words and phrases. How does the use of repetition affect the poem’s rhythm and meaning?

**Underline** phrases that create a fairy-tale feel in the poem. How do the structural elements of “Annabel Lee” help to emphasize this feeling?

Genre: Elegy

## Annabel Lee *by Edgar Allan Poe*

It was many and many a year ago,  
In a kingdom by the sea,  
That a maiden there lived whom you may know  
By the name of Annabel Lee;  
5 And this maiden she lived with no other thought  
Than to love and be loved by me.

I was a child and she was a child,  
In this kingdom by the sea,  
But we loved with a love that was more than love,  
10 I and my Annabel Lee;  
With a love that the winged seraphs of heaven  
Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,  
In this kingdom by the sea,  
15 A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling  
My beautiful Annabel Lee;  
So that her highborn kinsmen came  
And bore her away from me,  
To shut her up in a sepulchre  
20 In this kingdom by the sea.

The angels, not half so happy in heaven,  
Went envying her and me;  
Yes! that was the reason (as all men know,  
In this kingdom by the sea)  
25 That the wind came out of the cloud by night,  
Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love  
Of those who were older than we,  
Of many far wiser than we;



30 And neither the angels in heaven above,  
 Nor the demons down under the sea,  
 Can ever dissever my soul from the soul  
 Of the beautiful Annabel Lee:  
 For the moon never beams, without bringing me dreams  
 35 Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;  
 And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes  
 Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;  
 And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side  
 Of my darling—my darling—my life and my bride,  
 40 In her sepulchre there by the sea,  
 In her tomb by the sounding sea.



Genre: Sonnet

“Remember” is a sonnet, a poem with a set pattern of 14 lines. As I read, I will note how the different forms of these two poems contribute to their styles.

### Close Reading

**Mark** the rhyme scheme of “Remember,” using a different letter for each sound.

**Underline** the words and phrases repeated in “Remember.” How does the poet’s use of repetition provide a clue about what’s most important?

## Remember by Christina Rossetti

Remember me when I am gone away,  
 Gone far away into the silent land;  
 When you can no more hold me by the hand,  
 Nor I half turn to go, yet turning stay.  
 5 Remember me when no more day by day  
 You tell me of our future that you plann’d:  
 Only remember me; you understand  
 It will be late to counsel then or pray.  
 Yet if you should forget me for a while  
 10 And afterwards remember, do not grieve:  
 For if the darkness and corruption leave  
 A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,  
 Better by far you should forget and smile,  
 Than that you should remember and be sad.





### Hints

How would you describe the rhythm of “Annabel Lee”? Is it soothing? Is it rigid?

Review the repetition in each poem. What does repetition add to the meaning of each poem?

How do the poets' use of rhyme scheme and other structural elements add to the meaning of each poem?

Use the Hints on this page to help you answer the questions.

- 1 Which statement best describes how the structure of “Annabel Lee” contributes to its meaning?
  - A By describing the speaker’s love of the sea, the poet gives readers a clue about the setting.
  - B Through the use of rhythm, repetition, and rhyme, the speaker creates the feel of a sad fairy tale.
  - C The poem does not have a set rhyme scheme or pattern of sound, which adds to the feeling of loss.
  - D The poem has a strong pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables, which create an angry overall tone.
  
- 2 Which of these best compares the use of repetition in “Annabel Lee” and “Remember”?
  - A Both poems use repetition to emphasize the speaker’s longing for loved ones who have died.
  - B Both poems use repetition to show the deep regret of people who did not express their love for people who are now dead.
  - C In “Annabel Lee,” repetition is used to emphasize loss and sorrow. In “Remember,” it’s used to emphasize a hope or wish.
  - D In “Annabel Lee,” the speaker repeats the name of a woman he once knew but no longer loves. In “Remember,” the word *remember* emphasizes the speaker’s grief for her loved ones.
  
- 3 Compare and contrast how the structures of “Annabel Lee” and “Remember” support the meaning of each poem. Include one detail from each poem to support your answer.

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Read the two poems. Then answer the questions that follow.

## A Nation's Strength

*by Ralph Waldo Emerson*

What makes a nation's pillars high  
And its foundations strong?  
What makes it mighty to defy  
The foes that round it throng?

5 It is not gold. Its kingdoms grand  
Go down in battle shock;  
Its shafts are laid on sinking sand,  
Not on abiding rock.

Is it the sword? Ask the red dust  
10 Of empires passed away;  
The blood has turned their stones to rust,  
Their glory to decay.

And is it pride? Ah, that bright crown  
Has seemed to nations sweet;  
15 But God has struck its luster down  
In ashes at his feet.

Not gold but only men can make  
A people great and strong;  
Men who for truth and honor's sake  
20 Stand fast and suffer long.

Brave men who work while others sleep,  
Who dare while others fly . . .  
They build a nation's pillars deep  
And lift them to the sky.



# I Hear America Singing

by Walt Whitman

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,  
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be, blithe  
and strong,  
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,  
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves  
off work,  
5 The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the  
deckhand singing on the steamboat deck,  
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing  
as he stands,  
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's, on his way in the  
morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,  
10 The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at  
work, or of the girl sewing or washing,  
Each singing what belongs to her and to none else,  
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young  
fellows, robust, friendly,  
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.





Answer the questions. Mark your answers to questions 1–4 on the Answer Form to the right.

**Answer Form**

1 (A) (B) (C) (D)

2 (A) (B) (C) (D)

3 (A) (B) (C) (D)

4 (A) (B) (C) (D)

**Number  
Correct**

4

**1** How does the structure of the two poems differ?

- A** Emerson’s poem has an ABAB rhyme scheme, while Whitman’s poem has no regular rhyme scheme.
- B** Emerson’s poem has multiple stanzas, while Whitman’s poem is a sonnet.
- C** Emerson’s poem has no set rhyme scheme, while Whitman’s poem uses repetition.
- D** The rhythm of Emerson’s poem varies in each stanza, while Whitman’s poem has a set rhythm.

**2** How is the structure of both poems similar?

- A** Both use stanzas to develop meaning.
- B** Both use questions to emphasize certain points.
- C** Both use repetition to enhance meaning.
- D** Both use rhyme to draw attention to sounds.

**3** Compare the structures of the two poems. How do these different structures affect the style of each poem?

- A** Emerson’s poem has a fixed number of lines, and it is light and carefree. Whitman’s poem uses rhyme, and it is humorous.
- B** Emerson’s poem is an elegy, and it is complex and serious. Whitman’s poem is a lyric poem, and it is imaginative.
- C** Emerson’s poem has unanswered questions, making it like a speech. Whitman’s poem repeats ideas for emphasis, making it monotonous.
- D** Emerson’s poem has regular stanzas, making it formal and controlled. Whitman’s poem is unstructured free verse, giving it a musical quality.



**4** Emerson’s poem is made of four-line stanzas. Whitman’s poem is one long stanza. Which **best** explains why the poets likely made the structural choices they did?

- A** Emerson intended to give his serious ideas a lighter look. Whitman wanted his light subject matter, singing, to look more serious.
- B** Emerson wanted to emphasize his fixed rhyme scheme. Whitman wanted to emphasize the forward flow of his rhythmic language.
- C** Emerson chose to display the variety of his language. Whitman chose to highlight the repetition of the word “singing.”
- D** Emerson wanted his rhythms to sound like soldiers marching. Whitman wanted his rhythms to sound like workmen singing.

**5** Read the sentences below. Then complete the activity that follows.

In poetry, a stanza sometimes develops a single idea related to the main topic of a larger poem. Emerson and Whitman both follow this practice in structuring their poems.

Write a paragraph supporting this statement. Cite at least **two** pieces of evidence from Emerson’s multi-stanza poem and Whitman’s single-stanza poem.

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**Self Check** Go back and see what you can check off on the Self Check on page 143.