

Charting the Text

Teacher Reference

What is it?

There are two ways to chart a text. One way to chart a text is to analyze the macro-structure or larger structure of the text. A reader might want to chart the macro-structure of a text, analyzing the text's organizational features, in order to evaluate how a text's structure affects the overall meaning of the text. A second way to chart a text is to analyze the micro-structure. This type of analysis examines what an author is *doing* at the sentence and or paragraph level. When a reader charts what an author is *doing*, the reader focuses on the deliberate choices the author makes when constructing meaningful paragraphs.

How do I use it?

When analyzing the macro-structure of a text, have students scan the text, identify structural features (introductory material, evidence, support, examples, etc.) and draw lines in the text to separate or isolate these sections of the text from the surrounding information. Then in the margin, have the students write a concise statement that explains what the section is about and how the section is constructed. When analyzing the micro-structure, students evaluate what individual paragraphs in the text are *doing*. In order to accurately chart the micro-structure of a text, students will need to reread those sections in the text that they plan to chart until they can clearly see what the author is *doing*. As students learn how to chart, encourage them to use the charting verbs list provided in this guide. Although the list is limited in the amount of verbs provided for students, it remains a useful resource when learning how to select an accurate verb that describes what a paragraph is *doing*. For each of the paragraphs you plan to chart, have students write brief statements that begin with one of the verbs from the list or a verb that is not on the list but describes most accurately what a paragraph is *doing*. In the beginning, I suggest that you use the charting table provided in this guide. The table will help your students see the difference between what an author is *saying* and what an author is *doing* in a paragraph. Eventually, you will want to move away from the table and teach your students how to chart in the margins.

When should I use it?

Students should chart texts when they are asked to read sophisticated material—texts with complex arguments and or elaborate constructions. Since charting takes time, begin charting only a handful of paragraphs at a time. With practice, students will develop competency in this skill and eventually chart longer sections of text with little trouble.

Why should I use it?

When readers study the macro and micro-structures of texts they gain insight into how authors construct meaning. Since charting moves students beyond the simple comprehension of what the author is *saying* in a particular paragraph, students gain a deeper understanding of the texts they read. The insight that your students gain from charting the text will allow them to discuss and write about texts with originality and sophistication.

Charting the Text: Analyzing the Macro-structure

One-page Reference Guide

Analyzing the Text's Macro-structure

After your first reading of the text, go back and scan the text, identify structural features (introductory material, evidence, support, examples, etc.) and draw lines in the text to separate or isolate these sections of the text from the surrounding information. You may also want to identify other organizational features in the text (titles, subsections, visual material, etc) that may affect the meaning of the text. Once you have analyzed and identified elements of the macro-structure, write concise statements in the margins that explain what the section is about, how the section is constructed, and how the author intends to use the section. Use the following questions to help guide your analysis:

- How does the text proceed?
- How does the author construct his or her argument?
- What is the author *doing* in this section?
- What does the author do first, second, and then third?
- How is the author using titles and subtitles?
- Where in the text does the author use visuals?
- Where in the text does the author introduce the topic or argument?
- Where in the text does the author discuss the topic or subject you are studying?
- Where in the text does the author provide examples?
- Where in the text does the author provide evidence or support?
- Where in the text do we learn about the author's purpose?

Charting the macro-structure when you are not permitted to write on the text

Using sticky notes and or sticky flags, place a sticky note at the beginning and end of the section of text you wish to isolate. Using either the top or bottom sticky note, write a concise statement that explains what the section is about, how the section is constructed, and how the author intends to use this section.

Charting the Text: Analyzing the Micro-structure

Although this strategy proves to be a difficult activity for most readers, with practice you will be able to distinguish between what an author is *saying* in a particular paragraph and what an author is *doing* in that same paragraph. When we refer to what an author is *saying*, we are generally concerned with the “What.” And when we refer to what an author is *doing*, we are interested in the author’s actions. That is, when we chart what an author is *saying*, we focus on the actual content of a paragraph; and when we chart what an author is *doing*, we focus on the deliberate choices authors make when constructing meaningful paragraphs. Over time, you will become more adept at distinguishing between what an author is *saying* and what an author is *doing*, and as you become more familiar with this strategy, you will find that your reading comprehension will improve and you will have richer discussions of texts.

Use the table below to practice charting a text. Even though charting is most effective when done in the margins of texts, you should use this table to practice distinguishing between what an author is *saying* and what an author is *doing*. It is also a good idea to use this table to chart texts that cannot be marked.

¶ (s)	<p>What is the author <u>saying</u> in the text? <i>Below are some questions you should ask:</i> <i>What is this section about?</i> <i>What is the content?</i> <i>What did I learn from this paragraph?</i> <i>What information is being presented?</i></p>	<p><i>T</i> <i>E</i> <i>X</i> <i>T</i></p>	<p>What is the author <u>doing</u> in the text? <i>Here are some examples of what authors do:</i> <i>Giving an example...</i> <i>Interpreting data...</i> <i>Sharing an anecdote...</i> <i>Summarizing information...</i> <i>Reflecting on a process...</i></p>
		<p><i>T</i> <i>E</i> <i>X</i> <i>T</i></p>	
		<p><i>T</i> <i>E</i> <i>X</i> <i>T</i></p>	

Charting the Text: Analyzing the Micro-structure

¶ (s)	<p>What is the author <i>saying</i> in the text? <i>Below are some questions you should ask:</i> <i>What is this section about?</i> <i>What is the content?</i> <i>What did I learn from this paragraph?</i> <i>What information is being presented?</i></p>	<p><i>T</i> <i>E</i> <i>X</i> <i>T</i></p>	<p>What is the author <i>doing</i> in the text? <i>Here are some examples of what authors do:</i> <i>Giving an example...</i> <i>Interpreting data...</i> <i>Sharing an anecdote...</i> <i>Summarizing information...</i> <i>Reflecting on a process...</i></p>
		<p><i>T</i> <i>E</i> <i>X</i> <i>T</i></p>	
		<p><i>T</i> <i>E</i> <i>X</i> <i>T</i></p>	
		<p><i>T</i> <i>E</i> <i>X</i> <i>T</i></p>	
		<p><i>T</i> <i>E</i> <i>X</i> <i>T</i></p>	

Charting Verbs List

One-page Reference Guide

While charting, use this list of verbs to help you accurately select a verb that best explains what an author is *doing* in a paragraph. Use the spaces next to the verbs to write brief definitions or synonyms to help you select the most appropriate verb.

High Frequency Charting Verbs

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| Analyzing : _____ | Extending : _____ |
| Arguing : _____ | Explaining : _____ |
| Asserting : _____ | Identifying : _____ |
| Comparing : _____ | Illustrating : _____ |
| Contrasting : _____ | Introducing : _____ |
| Connecting : _____ | Listing : _____ |
| Defining : _____ | Offering : _____ |
| Debating : _____ | Proving : _____ |
| Clarifying : _____ | Stating : _____ |
| Concluding : _____ | Suggesting : _____ |
| Discussing : _____ | Summarizing : _____ |
| Developing : _____ | Questioning : _____ |

Medium Frequency Charting Verbs

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Acknowledging : _____ | Generalizing : _____ |
| Challenging : _____ | Incorporating : _____ |
| Compiling : _____ | Justifying : _____ |
| Differentiating : _____ | Predicting : _____ |
| Distinguishing : _____ | Qualifying : _____ |
| Establishing : _____ | Substantiating : _____ |

Reserve this space for charting verbs that are not listed above.

