Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from Text Structures from Poetry, Grades 4-12, by Gretchen Bernabei and Laura Van Prooyen. In this lesson, students read and dissect the poem "The Raven" and write their own poetry based on their text structure analysis.

LEARN MORE about this title, including Features, Table of Contents, and Reviews.
Freewrite for 3 minutes (then set aside).

Read the poem.
Aloud. Slowly.
Read it again, and this time everyone should underline parts they find striking. Discuss the parts they notice. Name the craft. Notice the parts.

Reveal the chunked poem. (Students copy the chunks.) Re-read the poem, watching the movement of the structure.

Invite students to write a poem.
Right now you have:
- A page of thoughts
- Examples of craft you like
- A text structure

See what you come up with!
Use any of those, change any, and see what you write in the next minutes.
The Raven
by Edgar Allan Poe

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.

"'Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door—
Only this and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore—
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart,
I stood repeating

"'Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door—
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;—
This it is and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;"
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door—
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,"
I said, "art sure no craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore—
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door—
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,
With such name as "Nevermore."

But the Raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.
Nothing farther then he uttered—not a feather then he fluttered—
Till I scarcely more than muttered "Other friends have flown before—
On the morrow he will leave me, as my Hopes have flown before."
Then the bird said "Nevermore."

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
"Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only stock and store

Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore—
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore
Of 'Never—nevermore'."

But the Raven still beguiling all my fancy into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door;
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore—
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o'er,
But whose velvet-violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er,
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
Swung by Seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.
"Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee—by these angels he hath sent thee
Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore;
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."
“Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil—prophet still, if bird or devil—
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest
tossed thee here ashore,
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert
land enchanted—
On this home by Horror haunted—tell me
truly, I implore—
Is there—is there balm in Gilead?—tell me—
tell me, I implore!”
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

“Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil—prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us—by that
God we both adore—
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the
distant Aïdenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the
angels name Lenore—
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the
angels name Lenore.”
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

“Be that word our sign of parting, bird or
fiend!” I shrieked, upstarting—
“Get thee back into the tempest and the
Night’s Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie
thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the
bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy
form from off my door!”
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting,
still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my
chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a
demon’s that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o’er him streaming
throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies
floating on the floor
Shall be lifted—nevermore!

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This it is and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating
then no longer,
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness
I implore;"

But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you"—here I opened wide the door;—
Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore?"
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!"—
Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.
"Surely," said I, "surely that is something at
my window lattice;
Let me see, then, what there is, and this mystery explore—
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;—
"Tis the wind and nothing more!"

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with
many a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly
days of yore;
Not the least obeisance made he; not a
minute stopped or stayed he;
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door—
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door—
   Perched, and sat, and nothing more.
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By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
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By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore—
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“Get thee back into the tempest and the Night’s Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!”
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The Skull in the Gap

On one very dark and stormy night
I was in my room without a light
trying in vain to rest from the trials of day.
Being tired, I pulled my covers over my head
waiting for my wakefulness to go away,
ignoring my thoughts of tomorrow with dread.

Quite suddenly, I was startled by a wretched noise
a gasp-inducing sound of creaking metal alloys
from my white closet door that cannot close,
leaving a wide slanted gap between itself and wall.
The black gap juxtaposed with the white wall and door
transfixed me by some unknown power to watch it more.
I stared at that gap whose darkness had me in its throes
for how long I don’t even know.

I grew irritated that this noise upset my mood so much.
I rose from bed to close the door to end this caliginous gap.
Then, I slunkered to bed to rest for the morrow.
When all of a sudden the noise again my ears did clutch
as I turned to see the gap was back to ruin my nap.
At this point, all I felt was a mixture of annoyance and sorrow.

Not wanting to get up again, I turned over to sleep.
I hoped that in my dreams, over this reality I could leap.
I dreamt of workless days and tireless nights
and soared from lows to unlimited heights.

After a while, I woke into a half-sleep, half-awake trance,
my perception of reality still stuck in a chaotic dance.
Uncomfortable, I attempted to turn over onto my other side
and caught a glimpse of a thing in the gap that made my blood run cold.
There, there was a sinister skull whose surface had long been ossified
in which long crooked teeth pointed in every direction, bold.
I screamed and leapt from my bed, out of my room, and into the hall.

(Continued)
I felt that wretched skull follow me deeper into my dark voided house.
I ran into the front door and having nowhere to go I faced it at last.
Its cranium was white as marble, its sockets each as big as a mouse,
its braincase was a cave, and its open mouth was vast.

I sat on the floor against the front door staring at this floating skull
then mustered the courage I needed to speak to this foul thing.
I sneered: “What are you?”
It boomed to me: “What I am I am, you cannot construe.”
Confused by this answer I slowly stood upright
to let this monster know that I was not afraid.
I asked of it: “Why are you here?”
It answered: “Why are YOU here?”

I realized at once what must be going on.
That this was all a dream that, at sunrise, would soon be gone.
I mocked the skull: “Do you want some paste to make your teeth gleam!”?
It replied in a monotone voice “This is no dream.”
I realized it was right and that this was a vision,
a foreboding, ominous vision where reality and fiction have a collision.
“What DO YOU WANT FROM ME?” I screamed in the night.
“To give you a fright that is my certain right!”

This horrid creature from across the rivers Lethe, Acheron, and Styx
raced toward my arm and with its teeth bit and gripped.
“You abomination of nature, you falsehood of sense,
for this injury I shall recompense!”
I threw it off but it hovered up again
right in front of me as far as I could ascertain.
“Do not think that you have the upper score!
I shall haunt you forevermore!”

“Back to the Phlegethon or Cocytus where you belong
You foul perversion of nature’s sweet song!”
“I will never leave you that is for sure
for the opportunity to torture you I will never abjure!”
“Soon you’ll be gone for the daylight will destroy you
and then I will rejoice in the morning sky of blue.”
“You forget that this is MY domain, this IS the night
where darkness smothers all remaining light!”
STUDENT POEM
From “The Raven”

“You shall not win for the die is cast!
Stick around and you’ll be in for a blast”
At the fanged skull I threw my lantern,
the dancing fires lit the hallway with their pattern.
The skull was on fire and fell with an intense glare
its every crevice consumed by the now dying flare.

The skull arose still on fire and burnt black in some places
though, it remained mostly white the fire made it visible in small traces.
“Can’t anything destroy you?” I said in exasperation.

“Nothing less than a bright burning explosion.”
The skull lurched at me again with its mouth wide open
I readied myself and stabbed it with a pen.
“Now your evil has met its end.”
“I will be back faster than you can comprehend.”

The skull rushed through the hallway into my room
I followed close behind to ensure its doom.
I tried to grab it, but it disappeared through the gap.
I opened the closet to look for this calcium foe.
The closet was empty except for my favorite cap.
The sun came up and my room filled with light and warmth.
The night was dead and the day had come forth.
The skull was now gone and in its place came tomorrow.

Steven Spill
Grade 10