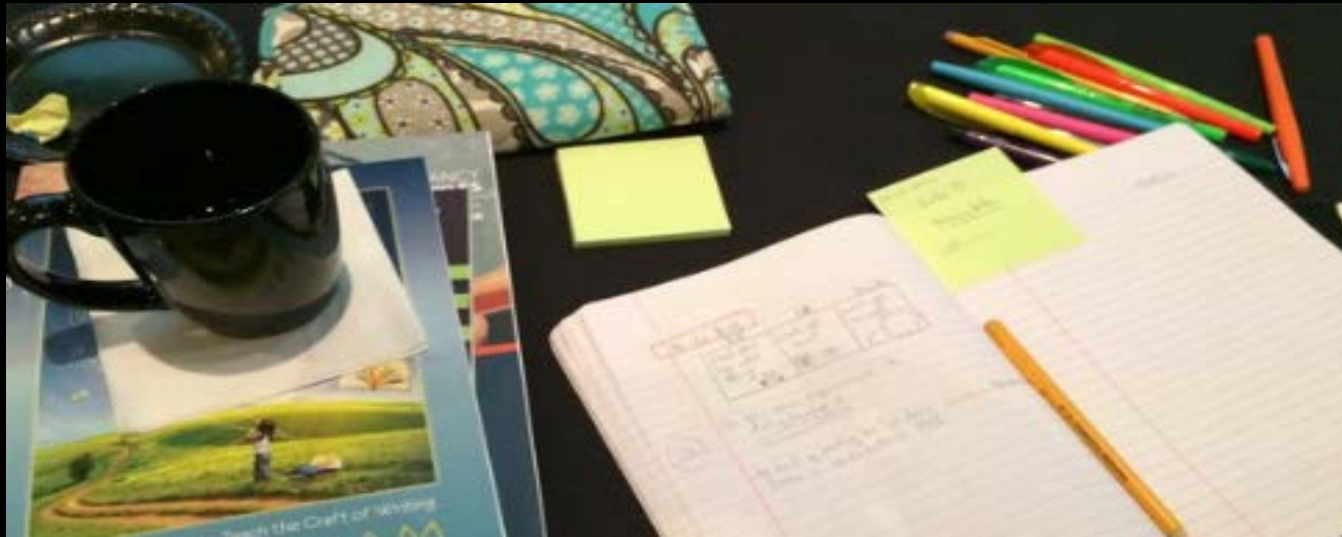


Really Reclaiming the Essay



My (Mostly Mental) Conversations with
Thomas Newkirk
by Gretchen Bernabei

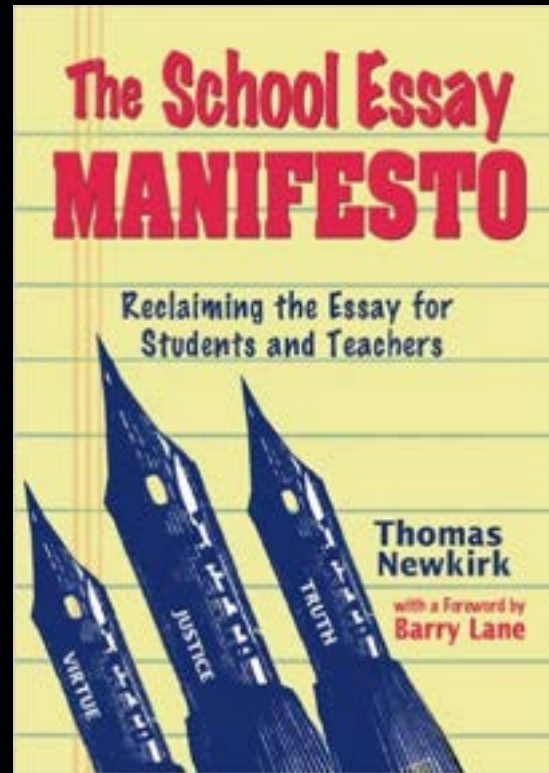
Choose one moment from the past year, one moment that you remember clearly.

In **one sentence**, tell what happened.

Question:

Why do we
keep teaching
the
5-paragraph
essay?

*Why do we
keep teaching
the
5-paragraph
essay?*



Answer:

Students need concrete, step-by-step help.

**I suspect that many
teachers teach the
form—or variants of
it—because they see
no teachable
alternative.**

-Thomas Newkirk

**The School Essay Manifesto (page
40)**



No teachable alternative.



Me

If writing is to be a unique
mode of thinking, we
should ask how writing
can foster and track
movement of the mind.

--Thomas Newkirk
The School Essay Manifesto



Most really engaging pieces of writing have something from each hand.

The Story of My Thinking

What I used to think

But this happened

So now I
think

Look back at the sentence you wrote.

Imagine that it would go in the middle box.

The Story of My Thinking		
What I used to think	But this happened	So now I think

What would you write for your other two boxes?

The Story of My Thinking

What I used to think

But this happened

So now I
think

Kernel essay:

1. I used to think that I'm a liberal non-racist woman.
2. But then I read Ta-Nehisi Coates.
3. Now I'm examining how much all of us have been part of the oppression of our brothers and sisters of color.

-Gretchen Bernabei

The Story of My Thinking

What I used to think

But this happened

So now I
think

Kernel essay:

1. I used to think that my room would look better purple.
2. Then we painted my room purple.
3. Now I know that some solutions are short-term.

-7th grader

You have already written a sentence for the middle box.

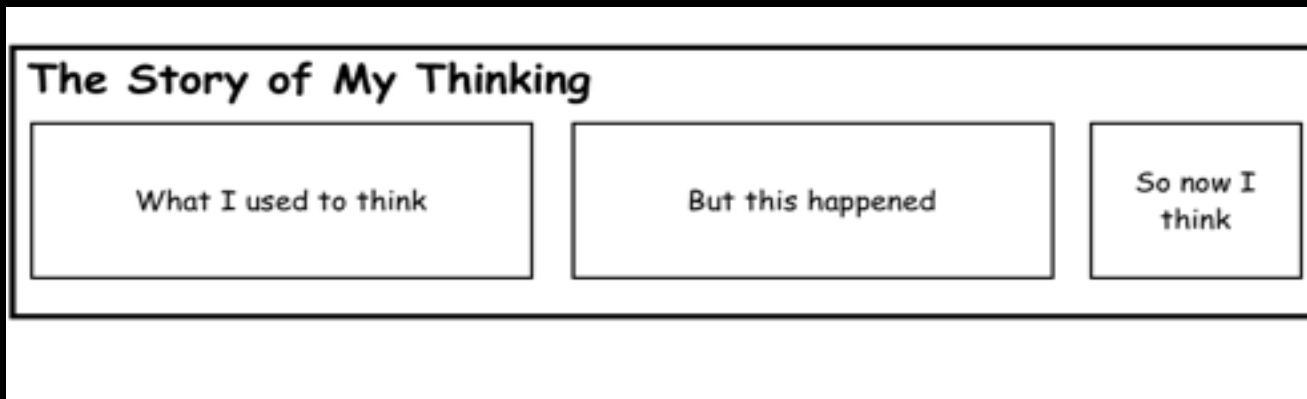
Take a minute and write the other two sentences.

The Story of My Thinking		
What I used to think	But this happened	So now I think

You used the structure we call “The Story of My Thinking.”

What you wrote is called a kernel essay. It’s a seed. All it needs is details to turn each sentence into a part of an essay.

Take a minute share your kernel essay with a couple of people at your table.



Gretchen Bernabei • Dorothy Hall

Foreword by Thomas Newkirk



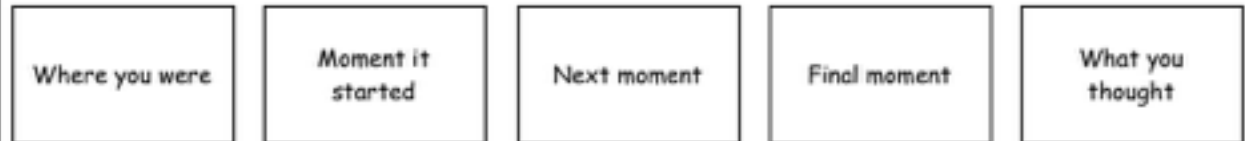
The **S**tory of My Thinking

Expository Writing Activities
for **13** Teaching Situations

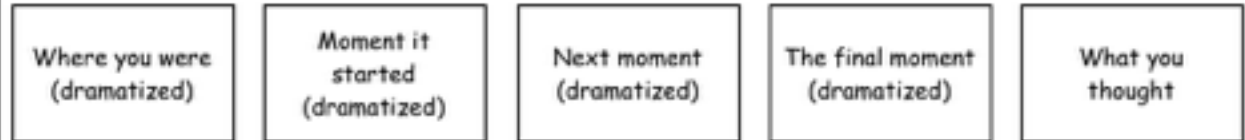
Heinemann
INDICATORS TO TEACHERS™

So we began to stockpile structures, starting with the most obvious.

A Memory



A Colorized Memory



A Completely Made up Story



A Fable



Comparing Notes (Mine and Others)

Some people think

And other people think

But I think

What that tells me

Tevye's Debate

On one hand

On the other
hand

But on the other
hand

But on the other
hand

How I can be
guided when the
choice is so tough

Evolution of a Term (word or phrase in the prompt)

What the word meant
to me when I was 4

What I was a little
older

What the word means
to me now

What the word will
probably mean when I
am ____ (pick an age)

Tribute to the Person Who Taught me Something

What the
lesson is

Flashback to
the lesson

Description of
the person

Lyrics or words
you can
remember that
person saying
(on the subject)

What I wish I
could find out
now from that
person

Students began to create their own structures.

Who Reacted When

Why this happened

How this happened

When this happened

What people
thought about it

Alex Blue

Metamorphosis

How you
felt before
it happened

How you felt
while it was
happening

How you felt
after it happened

How you feel now

What you believe
now

Kelsey Mahan

What the Heck

My friends
did this

I thought
about it

I believe
_____ so

I did this

They reacted
like this

So now, we ...

Casey Lewis

Discovering A Lie

Someone told me

So I believed

Then I found out

So now I think/kno

Alyssa Flores

Changing Your Mind

I believe this

But society
proved me
wrong by
doing this

So then I
believe this

But then this
happened

So now I
believe this

Greg Herbst

I Wish

I wish that

But I know

And knowing this

Makes me believe .

Steven Young

Who Reacted When

Why this happened

How this happened

When this happened

What people
thought about it

Alex Blue

Metamorphosis

How you
felt before
it happened

How you felt
while it was
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How you felt
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How you feel now

What you believe
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Kelsey Mahan

What the Heck

My friends
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I thought
about it

I believe
_____ so

I did this

They reacted
like this

So now, we ...

Casey Lewis

We captured structures that we saw around us.

Ethos

You know (of) this person	You trust this person	This person says _____	It must be true
---------------------------	-----------------------	------------------------	-----------------

Pathos

We value these things	Look what happened	Isn't that sad	We must do this _____
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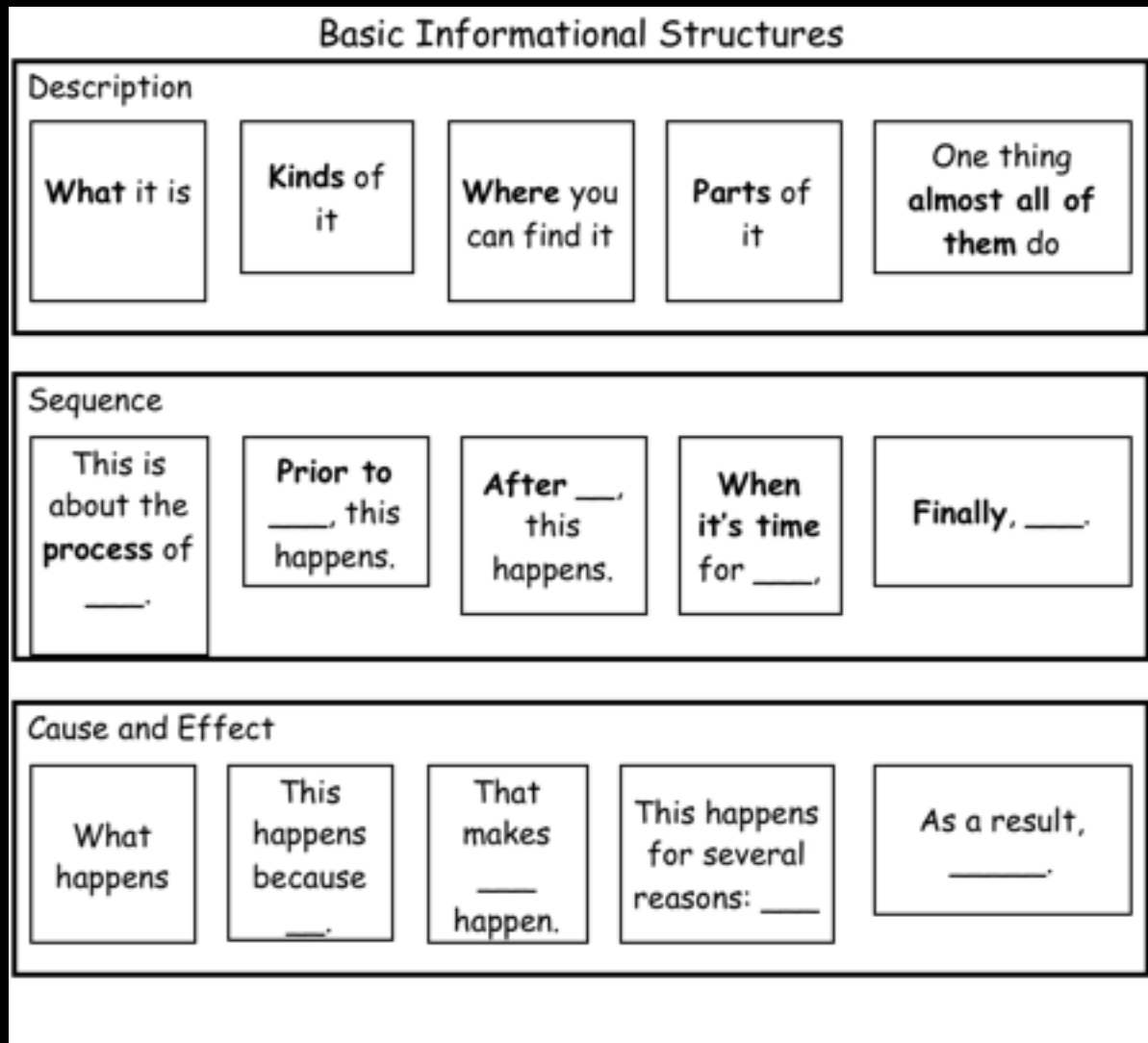
Logos

Here is a point	Reason/Evidence	Proven theories	So
-----------------	-----------------	-----------------	----

Syllogism

If this is true	And this is true	Then this must be true
-----------------	------------------	------------------------

We captured some traditional structures.



Compare and Contrast

___ and ___ are very much alike.

They both ___ and ___.

However, there are some differences between the two.

For one thing, ___.

Another way they are different is ___.

Problem and Solution

___ is happening.

This is a **problem** because _____.

This is happening **because** _____.

Another thing contributing to the problem is _____.

We must stop this so that _____.

We created some structures for responding to literature.

How I Figured It Out/Cracking the Code

I was totally confused
when I read "_____"

So I tried _____

And then _____

And now I understand

Did I Miss Something?

"_____"
confused me

I thought
maybe it
means

Or, I
thought
maybe it
means

Then I read
"_____" and
knew

I knew it
made sense
when I read
"_____"

The Path of Wondering

I wondered

When I read
"_____"

So I asked
myself

And I read
"_____"

Finally I
figured out

If I Were Making a Movie of This, I Would Have to Have

A movie version should be _____

I'd include _____

And include _____

And include _____

All of these would create _____

One Way I Could Change This Story While Keeping It Basically The Same

One thing I could change and it would still be the same piece

Not this

_____ because

Not this

_____ because

Maybe this

What's essential

In any language.

Historia de Algo (Persona)

La razón por
cual elegí la
persona

Una cualidad
cual el/ella
tiene

Un momento
cuando yo vi
esa cualidad

Como eso
afecto a
la gente

Mi opinión
sobre esa
persona

Historia de Algo (Evento)

Evento

Porque esto
ocurrió

Cuando
ocurrió

Lo que
pensaba la
gente en ese
momento

Lo que yo
pienso
ahora

And then we started to notice structures in other places...

David Brooks Editorials

This happened

An obvious way to think
about it is ...

The problem with that
view is ...

A better way to look
at it would be ...

contributed by Thomas Newkirk

In Shakespearean soliloquies

To Be, Or Not To Be (Spoken by Hamlet, Act 3 Scene 1)

Choice:
Staying
the same
or
changing

What
change
means

biggest
disadvantage
of
change

biggest
disadvantage
of
staying
the same

To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the pangs of despised

Dilemma

Choice:
Staying the
same or
changing

What change
would mean

Biggest
disadvantage
of change

Biggest
disadvantage
of staying the
same

How change
might make it
worse

What happens
if you just
don't decide

Hamlet - Act 3, Scene 1

how
indecision
makes
the chance
go by

... whose bourn
... puzzles the will
... than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776
The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of
America

Why
people
need to
deliver
messages
like this

When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

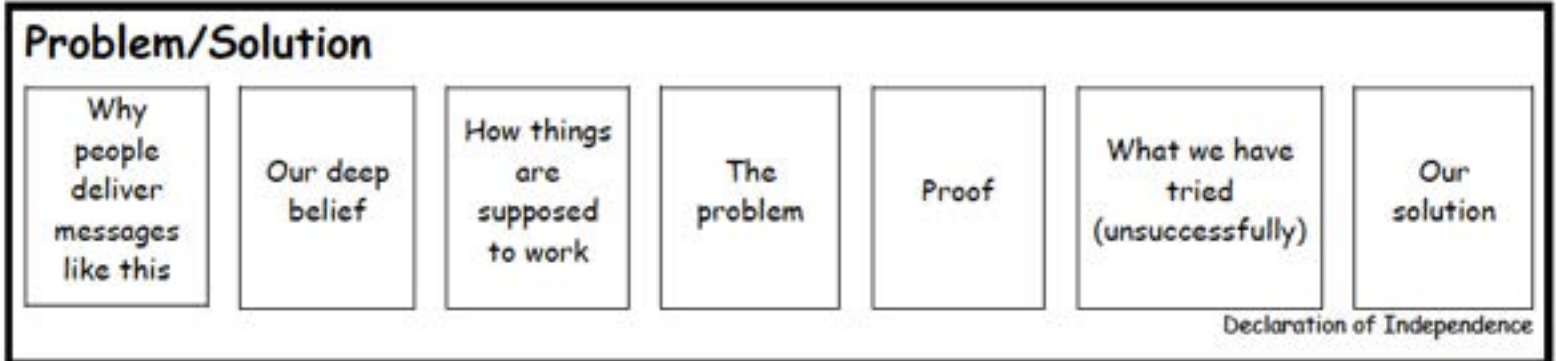
deep
belief

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new

how
things
should
work

Prudence, indeed, will be changed

When
things
don't
work
the
way
they
should
happen

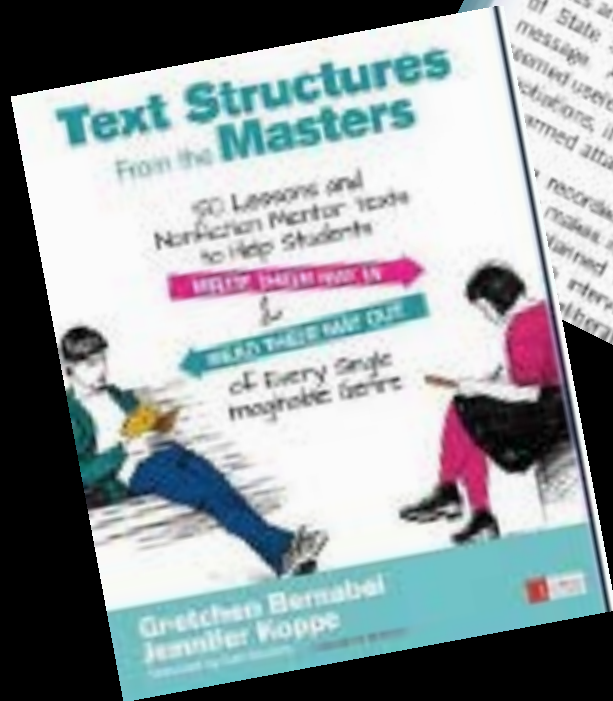


Declaration of Independence

it is their duty to guard for their future...
sufferance of these Colonies; and such...
constrains them to alter their former Systems of...
The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of...
injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the...
an absolute Tyranny over these States To prove...
candid world.

In historical documents

We captured even more.



SOURCE DOCUMENT

Pearl Harbor Address to the Nation

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1941

December 8, 1941, Washington, D.C.

Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, Members of the Senate, and of the House of Representatives:

Yesterday, December 7th, 1941—a date which will live in infamy—the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

The United States was at peace with that nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its government and its emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific.

Indeed, one hour after Japan had commenced bombing of Hawaii, the Japanese ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered a formal reply to a message. And while this reply seemed useless to continue the relations, it contained no threat of armed attack.

It is recorded that the distance between Hawaii and the mainland is obvious that the attack was planned many days or even weeks in advance. In intervening time, the Japanese deliberately sought to destroy the

Last night, Japanese forces attacked Guam. Last night, Japanese forces attacked the Philippines. Last night, the Japanese attacked Midway Island. And this morning, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Picking up the Pieces

what happened	why I didn't see it coming	the damage it has caused	what we will do about it
---------------	----------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Army and Navy, I assure you that our whole nation remembers the onslaught against us. How long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory.

I believe that I interpret the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost, but will

The hunt continues.

More Than One

Question: Do you have ____?

Answer: Yes, I have _____.

List them

Baa Baa Black Sheep

And for children too young for words,
we can make text structures in pictures.

Baa Baa Black Sheep

Baa baa black sheep, have you any wool?

Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full!

One for the master, one for the dame,
And one for the little boy
Who lives down the lane.

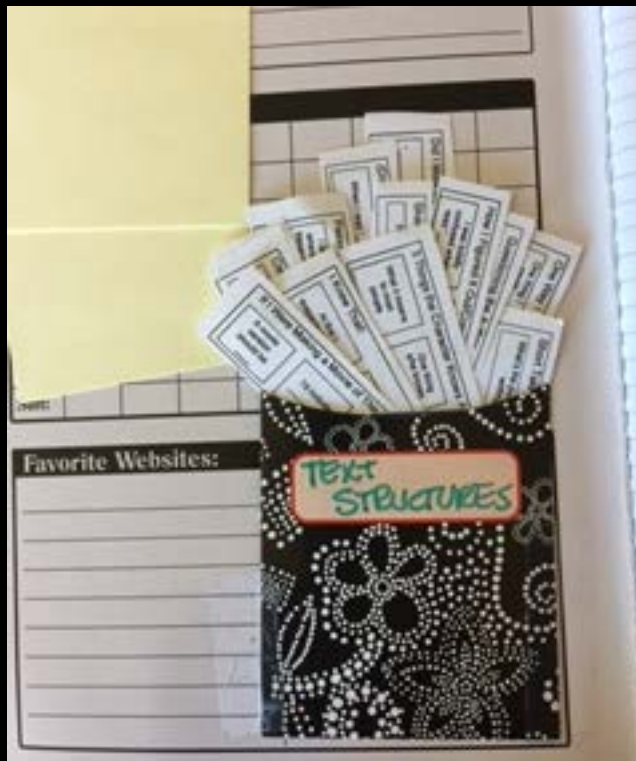


The Story of My Thinking

What I used to think

But this happened

So now I
think



Students become supercharged with structure choices.