



**Book Title:** *The Relatives Came*

**Author:** Cynthia Rylant

**Genre:** narrative

**Reading Strategies:**

Activate, Understand, Analyze, Create

**Summary:** In a rainbow-colored station wagon that smelled like a real car, the relatives came. When they arrived, they hugged from the kitchen to the front room. All summer they tended the garden and ate up all the melons. They plucked banjos and strummer guitars. When they had to leave. Though sad, they all knew they would be together next summer.

**Tools:** journals, Narrative Structures Chart

**Minilessons:**

1. Read aloud the book.
2. **Activate:** Draw a circle on the board and explain that this story is a circle story: it starts and comes full circle at the end. *Let's make a text-to-text connection here. Do you know any other stories or texts that we've read that circle?* Mention that they might like to use this structure in their writing.
3. **Understand:** Use the question cubes and have students make up questions to ask regarding this text. Figure out what kind of question each is and put on Fat/Skinny chart.
4. **Interpret:** Play *Circle of Voices* (Katie Wood Ray's idea in *Wondrous Words*). Use the script included. Give a copy to each student along with a highlighter. Have kids mark with their highlighter phrases (5-9 words) that really speak to them, that are "ear candy" to their ears. Then have students pick their very favorite phrase, get into a circle and whisper read their lines a few times to practice fluency. Say, "Time!" and beginning with you, say your line. The next person in the circle says his, and so on. Tell students ahead of time that if someone else uses their line, that's ok. Lines can be repeated over and over.
5. **Create:** Ask students to think about their favorite relative(s) or a favorite time when the relatives all got together. Ask them to record

as many details of the visit as they can remember. Be specific. Then write a piece. Often, the state test or other high-stakes tests ask students to write such a piece—about two and a half pages, multi-paragraphed, plenty of voice. These pieces are narratives—telling about a favorite person, place or object within a story line, maybe using the organization of the circle story.

6. Analyze: Once students have heard a variety of picture books, it's time for them to visually represent the structures they analyze. Hand out a picture book, one to each pair. Have them illustrate on a large piece of white construction paper the structure of the text they have in hand. When everyone is finished (or 15 minutes is up) have kids share with the class the picture book, a brief summary of the text, and the drawing, explaining why they analyzed it this way. Attached see sample illustrations of many kinds of structures.

# The Relatives Came

By Cynthia Rylant

It was late in the summer of the year when the relatives came. They came up from Virginia. They left when their grapes were nearly purple enough to pick, but not quite.

They had an old station wagon that smelled like a real car, and in it they put an ice chest full of soda pop and some boxes of crackers and some bologna sandwiches, and up they came—from Virginia.

They left at four in the morning when it was still dark, even before the birds were awake.

They drove all day long and into the night, and while they traveled along they looked at the strange houses and different mountains and they thought about their almost purple grapes back home. They thought about Virginia—but they thought about us too. Waiting for them.

So they drank up all their pop and ate up all their crackers and traveled up all those miles until finally they pulled into our yard.

Then it was hugging time. Talk about hugging! Those relatives just passed us all around their car, pulling us against their wrinkled Virginia clothes, crying sometimes. They hugged us for hours.

Then it was into the house and so much laughing and shining faces and hugging in the doorways. You'd have to go through at least four different hugs to get from the kitchen to the front room. Those relatives!

And finally after a big supper two or three times around until we all got a turn at the table, there was quiet talk and we were in twos and threes through the house.

The relatives weren't particular about beds, which was good since there weren't any extras, so a few squeezed in with us and the rest slept on the floor, some with their arms thrown over the closest person, or some with an arm across one person and a leg across another. It was different, going to sleep with all that new breathing in the house.

The relatives stayed for weeks and weeks. They helped us tend the garden and they fixed any broken things they could find. They ate up all our strawberries and melons, then promised we could eat up all their grapes and peaches when we came to Virginia.

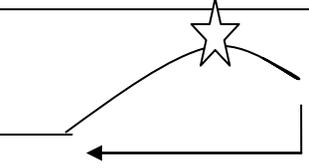
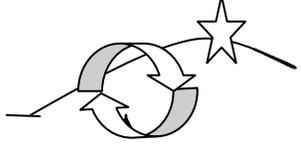
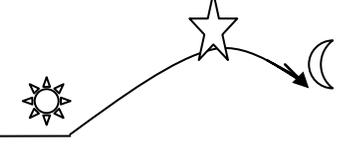
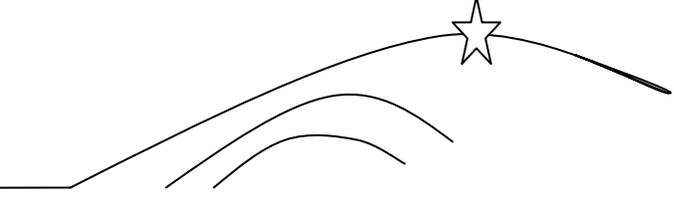
But none of us thought about Virginia much. We were so busy hugging and eating and breathing together.

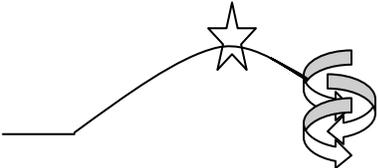
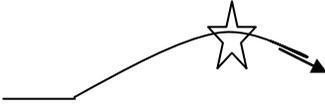
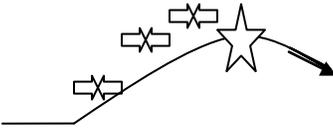
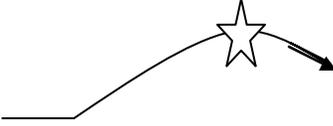
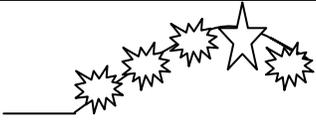
Finally, after a long time, the relatives loaded up their ice chest and headed back to Virginia at four in the morning. We stood there in our pajamas and waved them off in the dark. We watched the relatives disappear down the road, then we crawled back into our beds that felt too big and too quiet. We fell asleep.

And the relatives drove on, all day long and into the night, and while they traveled along they looked at the strange houses and different mountains and they thought about their dark purple grapes waiting at home in Virginia. But they thought about us, too. Missing them. And they missed us.

And when they were finally home in Virginia, they crawled into their silent, soft beds and dreamed about the next summer.

# Narrative Structures Chart

Story Structure	What it will look like
exposition- rising action- climax-falling action- resolution	
<b>Surprise ending</b> you weren't expecting what happens <i>The Wednesday Surprise</i>	
<b>Zig-Zag</b> goes back and forth between setting or ideas <i>Meanwhile Back at the            Ranch</i>	
<b>Circle</b> the story ends up back where it began <i>The Relatives Came</i>	
<b>Flashback/Flashforward</b> starts in the action, flashes back before action, and then flashes forward from the action <i>Worry Stone</i>	
<b>Biography</b> a story that follows a person's life <i>Miss Rumphius</i>	
<b>Story in a Story</b> a character within the story tells a story (memory) <i>The Worry Stone</i>	

<p><b>Ironic Twist</b>  has an ending with an unexpected twist  <i>See the Ocean</i></p>	
<p><b>Expository</b>  a story that teaches or tells about something  <i>Everybody Needs a Rock</i></p>	
<p><b>Two Points of View</b>  goes back and forth between two character's point of view  <i>I Am The Dog</i>  <i>I Am The Cat</i></p>	
<p><b>Letters</b>  story is told through a series of letters  <i>The Gardener</i></p>	
<p><b>Episodes</b>  brief little thoughtshots or snapshots, little pictures  <i>If You're Not From the Prairie</i></p>	
<p><b>Building Blocks</b>  the original lines are kept and a line is added each round  <i>There was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly</i></p>	