Part D - poetry.

Structure is a key technique employed by the critically acclaimed poet Seamus Heaney, in his poem "Death of a Naturalist." His use of structure enhances the reader's understanding of the central themes present in the poem, and these include childhood and nature, allowing these themes to be more easily identified.

"Death of a Naturalist" is split into two consecutive stanzas which present the poem in a before and after format. The use of the divided format helps the theme to be understood and helps the reader to identify its meaning. The first stanza is filled with positive and pleasant imagery. At this point in the poem, the narrator is a young boy...
playing around in the "play-dun." His enjoyment is illustrated through positive imagery and language.

"Best of all was the warm thick slobbe."

This shows the boy adores nature and all it's often slimy offerings. He is not afraid to get stuck in and get his hands dirty. During this time in his life the boy is very fond of the wildlife especially the frogs. He refers to them as "mammy" and "daddy," deeply implying he is anything but disgusted by the slimy reptile creatures. However, this admiration doesn't last forever and Meaney uses structure to illustrate the transition from the boy's love of nature to his complete disgust.

The transition between the boys love of...
nature though to hatred is displayed not
only with the imagery used but the structure
in which it is presented. Heaney uses
a linking sentence to bridge together
contrasting
two love contrasting attitudes held by the
boy. "You could tell the weakness by
frogs, for they were yellow in the sun
and brown in the rain". The first part
of this sentence displays words with
positive connotations, these links back to
the first stanza when the young boy
was happy around nature, and the use
of positive imagery much much alike
"sun" and "yellow" conveyed lives. However
these "brown and rain" are words which
oppose
generate contrasting emotions, and this
therefore acts as a link forward to the
second stanza, where a similar tone
prevails. He use of this link is effective.
as it aids the transition between before and after and prevents confusion for the reader in that the sudden change in language and imagery is understandable and can be linked in with the main concerns of the poem.

Stanza two of Seamus Heaney’s “Death of a Naturalist” shows the boy’s new found disgust for what he was once so proud of. He now describes the frogs in a negative and sinister way.

“Poised like mud grenades” is an example of military imagery which is used in stanza two to convey the narrator’s change of heart towards the frogs. Just as grenades explode and cause a great deal of distress, the boy now sees the frogs a potential threat and his love
is replaced by fear. Heaney's use of structure to separate these two contrasting attitudes helps highlight a key theme of childhood, and what it means to be a child. Before and after format can be seen as a child presenting childhood and adulthood and what change Per Unum brings.

"...to Seamus Heaney's 'Death of a Naturalist.' Effectively, it's structure to convey a transition. It allows the reader to easily identify the change clearly and take from it a deeper understanding of the theme."