Writers structure stories in different ways, depending on their reasons for writing them. The following are the four most common ways to structure a story. A **milieu** structure focuses on the world in which the story takes place. The milieu can be a planet or a universe, a society, a family, a country, etc. Every story has a milieu, but a writer structures a story around the milieu when it is the thing the storyteller cares about most. In an **idea** story, a character is the vehicle through which an idea is discovered or revealed. The idea story begins with a question and ends when the question is answered. In a **character** story the focus is on a character's growth, transformation, or, sometimes, downfall. It usually begins at a time when the character is unhappy, impatient or angry enough to be spurred into some action, which is also the beginning of the process of change. It ends when the character has changed, or has given up and returned to where he or she began. The **event** story seeks to fix some external problem; something is wrong, and the characters need to set it right. The story begins with the main character's awareness of this problem, and ends when a new order is established. Sometimes, but rarely, the story ends when the old order is restored when all forces of order are destroyed.

DIRECTIONS: Consider the openings of the two novels below. Based on their beginnings, how would you expect each one to be structured? Answer the questions below.

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times; it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness; it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity; it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness; it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair; we had everything before us, we had nothing before us; we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way— in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

There were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a plain face, on the throne of England; there were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a fair face, on the throne of France. In both countries it was clearer than crystal to the lords of the State preserves of loaves and fishes, that things in general were settled for ever.

From *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife. However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighborhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

From *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen

Name _____

1. Which structure do you expect each novel to use?

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2. Explain your reasoning for your answer to #1.

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ANSWERS WILL VARY

1. A Tale of Two Cities will most likely use the milieu structure.
2. Pride and Prejudice will most likely use the idea structure.