

USING MENTOR TEXTS TO ENHANCE WRITING



A mentor text is any text that could be used as a model to teach children about some aspect of an author's craft and thereby inform their writing. Highly able readers can use the author's craft to understand his/her message and then make text-to-self and text-to-world connections.

NOTE: See the At School Practices Brief for more information about what mentor texts are and how to select them.

See It

A mentor text must be chosen carefully to ensure that it can establish a model of quality writing that is appropriate for guiding gifted students. For schools, it is important to consult the grade level standards to ensure that texts are being chosen with a consideration of the English language arts standards being addressed. In selecting texts, it is essential to find materials that are sufficiently challenging for gifted students, including complex and exciting language, role models, open-endedness, and opportunities for problem-solving (Baskin & Harris, 1980).

Do It

An example of an excellent mentor text for use with elementary gifted students is *Weslandia* by Paul Fleischman. It features beautiful illustrations and the main character is a highly gifted boy. For its use as a mentor text, it includes the following components that can be used as the basis for writing lessons or as an example of well-written text:

- Descriptive language
- Word choice
- Effective use of dialogue
- Use of context clues
- Use of strong verbs
- Use of parallel structures

School library media specialists often have access to journals or databases that can assist in finding books that are suitable for use as mentor texts. As you search for materials, it is important to find both fiction and non-fiction texts to be emulated.

More

- *The Writing Thief: Using Mentor Texts to Teach the Craft of Writing.* Author: R. Culham (2014).
- *Nonfiction Mentor Texts: Teaching Informational Writing Through Children's Literature, K-8.* Authors: L. Dorfman & R. Cappelli (2009).
- *Some of My Best Friends Are Books: Guiding Gifted Readers.* Author: J.W. Halsted (2009).
- *Craft Moves: Lesson Sets for Teaching Writing with Mentor Texts.* Author: S. Shubitz (2016).

PRACTICES.

IN COMMUNITIES

