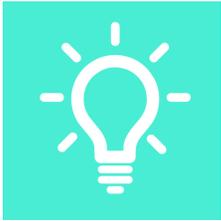


# USING MENTOR TEXTS TO ENHANCE WRITING



A mentor text is any text that can 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.

During instruction at school, a teacher will show children how to think about the author's craft for a work of fiction in terms of the use of narrative elements and literary devices; the selection could be a book, short story, or poem. For a non-fiction text, the teacher will focus on informational text structures, such as cause and effect, comparisons, and chronology; the selection could be something like a magazine article or biography.

When working at home with your child, you may want to have a different focus, such as the use of illustrations to complement the text or the author's use of vivid language.



A mentor text must be chosen carefully to ensure that it establishes a model of quality writing that is appropriate for guiding students. Important criteria for choosing a mentor text are:

- Consider your goal. Is the text a good match for what you want to accomplish with your child?
- When appropriate, try to select a text that relates to a gifted individual or that features a gifted protagonist. You may find that a reading a text like this together will inspire a conversation about some of your child's concerns.
- Read like a writer. Think about how the author uses language. Think about the illustrations or diagrams that are included. How do these elements enhance the text?
- The text should be so interesting that your child is willing to read it multiple times.



Consider some of the books or articles that you have read. How can you determine if they address the criteria listed above?

- Read the text. Read the text again as a writer and consider how the author uses the elements you want to address with your child.
- Read it once more, making informal notes about the specific components you want to use.
- Read the text with your child and start the discussion! Serve as a mentor yourself by pointing out various features of the text and trying to emulate them through including them in a short piece of writing or in your discussion.
- Have fun with this activity! Your response to the selection is likely to influence your child's reaction and use of the selection as a mentor text.



- *Some of My Best Friends Are Books: Guiding Gifted Readers*. Author: J.W. Halsted (2009).
- *Helping Your Gifted Child Succeed* (in English and Spanish), NAGC (<http://bit.ly/NAGCparent>).

# PRACTICES.

AT HOME

