

USING MENTOR TEXTS TO ENHANCE WRITING



A mentor text is any text that can be used as a model to teach students 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, you can show children how to think about the author's craft for a work of fiction in terms of the use of narrative elements (things like setting, foreshadowing, characterization, theme, plot, conflict, and point of view) and literary devices (such as alliteration, personification, simile, metaphor, parallel structure). For a non-fiction text, you can focus on informational text structures, such as cause and effect, comparisons, and chronology.

See It

Choose a mentor text carefully that establishes a model of quality writing that is appropriate for guiding students. Selecting a book that can be used to illustrate multiple characteristics of an author's craft is ideal. Important criteria for choosing a mentor text are:

- Matches objective: Is the text a good match for addressing the objective? Are you focusing on a single aspect of an author's craft, or multiple ones?
- Relatable: Depending on what type of writing you want the children to do, select a text that relates to a gifted individual or that features a gifted protagonist.
- Quality model: Think about how the author uses language. Is it an exemplary model for the aspect of writing you are trying to teach?
- Multiple examples: The author uses the component that you wish to address multiple times.
- Sufficiently engaging: This ensures students are eager to read it multiple times.

Do It

Consider some of the texts you have used with your gifted students. How do they address the criteria listed above? Take the following steps to confirm that the text is suitable for use as a mentor text:

- Read the text. Read the text again, reading it as a writer and consider how the author uses the narrative elements and literary elements. If you are selecting a non-fiction text, look for informational text structures.
- Read it a third time, making notes about the specific aspects of the author's craft that can be addressed by using the text.
- Plan your lessons!

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).
- *Craft Moves: Lesson Sets for Teaching Writing with Mentor Texts*. Author: S. Shubitz (2016).

PRACTICES.

AT SCHOOL

