Creating Successful Writers with Mentor Texts

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Sharing Our Thinking: What are Mentor Texts?

Mentor texts are pieces of literature that you can return to and reread for many different purposes.

Mentor texts are to be studied and then imitated.

Mentor texts help students make powerful connections to their own lives.

Mentor texts help students take risks and try out new strategies.

Mentor texts should be books that students can relate to and can read independently or with some support.
Why Use Picture Books as Mentor Texts?

Picture books provide the models that will help students grow as writers.

They stimulate creativity and create interest.

They are rich in beautiful illustrations that add another layer to the text.

They can be used to connect reading strategies to author’s craft.

They contain multiple life lessons.

They are culturally diverse.

They demonstrate the importance of choosing words wisely.

They are short enough to be shared entirely in one reading.
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Adjective Placement to Emphasize Meaning

- “I can’t concentrate,” she said, her voice flat and unhappy.
  
  *(Baby by Patricia MacLachlan)*

- There will be Sarah’s sea, blue and gray and green, hanging on the wall.
  
  *(Sarah, Plain and Tall by Patricia MacLachlan)*

- He is wearing a strange cowboy hat, too small, that sits high on his head.
  
  *(Journey by Patricia MacLachlan)*

- Somewhere behind us a train whistle blew, long and low, like a sad, sad song.
  
  *(Owl Moon by Jane Yolen)*
Adjective Placement to Emphasize Meaning

- We reached the line of pines, black and pointy against the sky, and Pa held up his hands.  
  *(Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen)*

- Our trees poke their branches, black and spiky, against the sky.  
  *(Peepers* by Eve Bunting)*

- I held the jar, dark and empty, in my hands.  
  *(Fireflies* by Julie Brinckloe)*

- I have a pomegranate, hard and dry.  
  *(Anna’s Table* by Eve Bunting)*

- I have a caterpillar, curled and mummy black,  
  A lizard, thin and wide, run over by a car.  
  *(Anna’s Table* by Eve Bunting)
Gazing upon the slippers, ruby-red and sparkling like fiery stars, she clicked them together three times and wished to return to Kansas.

The morning mist, silver and silent, crept in among the meadow’s wildflowers, grasses and oaks like a mysterious stranger.

The summer day, long and hot, had finally ended in a torrent of angry rain.

The August rain, angry and merciless, pelted the young cornstalks into the soggy earth.
Building Vocabulary with Synonyms

The crows arrived, hungry and boisterous, at the backyard feeder.

The crows arrived, ravenous and animated, at the backyard feeder.

The crows arrived, famished and unruly, at the backyard feeder.
“I HEAR A TRAIN!”
Everybody stopped.
Everybody listened.
We all heard the train whistle.
Should we run ahead to the path home or back to the cut-off?
“I HEAR A WOLF!”
Everybody gasped.
Everybody cringed.
We all heard the long, low howl.
Should we run ahead through the thicket or back to the campsite?
“I SEE THE OCEAN!”
Everybody clapped.
Everybody smiled.
We all saw the waves rolling toward the shore.
Should we dash across the sand to the water’s edge or stand here to delight in the sunrise?
Good authors are the ones to teach students how to write well. And as we’ve said before, this takes so much pressure off of us as teachers of writing. We let professional authors carry the weight of writing well. We simply have to carry their weight – or the weight of their books, actually – into our classrooms and then write alongside them with our students.