

Getting Started with Mentor Texts

Here are some of our favorites and how we use them to help us teach writing:

An Angel for Solomon Singer. Cynthia Rylant.

connections to special places, people, wishes, dreams; snapshots of setting and character; rich descriptions; thought shots; combines final action with a decision made for ending; use of parentheses; effective repetition

Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later). Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard.

memories built around objects; appeal to the senses; text organized around objects; anecdotes; snapshot of setting; strong verbs; writing dialogue

Barn Savers. Linda Oatman High.

connections to special times, people, and objects; use of similes and words that fit the topic; use of colon to list

Baseball, Snakes, and Summer Squash. Donald Graves.

use of a writing territory ("growing up" stories); rich, sensory details; sprinkling of dialogue; transition words; thoughtshots; alliteration; writing in the present tense; parentheses; dashed; hyphenated words, proper nouns

Crab Moon. Ruth Horowitz.

connections to special places and events; show, not tell; exploding a moment; quick transitions to get to the main event; snapshot of setting; final action and dialogue in ending; figurative language; strong verbs; alliteration; word pairs

Langston's Train Ride. Robert Burleigh.

Focus narrowed to one particular moment or event; sensory details; includes Author's Note and an Afterword; flashbacks; written in present tense; effective repetition; effective use of fragments; hyphenated words; dashes; ellipses; proper nouns; use of italics

Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse. Kevin Henkes

asking questions to add details; details clustered in threes; show not tell; definite ending – combines action with a wish for the future; word choice – strong verbs and adjectives; alliteration; captions; dialogue

One Tiny Turtle. Nicola Davies.

narrative as well as informational text; narrowing a territory to a specific topic; snapshots of setting and character; precise and vivid descriptions; circular ending; use of comparisons to provide clear images; similes; precise nouns and adjectives; vivid verbs; written in present tense

Painting the Wind. Patricia and Emily MacLaughlin.

narrowing the topic and establishing a point; snapshots of character and setting; effective use of dialogue; effective repetition; matching the end with the beginning; use of exact nouns and names; strong verbs; hyphenated adjectives; adjective placement; variations in listing

Prairie Train. Marsha Wilson Chall.

written in present tense; snapshot of setting; ending reflects the beginning; similes that match topic; hyphenated adjectives; proper nouns; use of listing; dashes; ellipses; onomatopoeia; use of comma; sprinkling of dialogue

Shortcut. Donald Crews.

emotional connections – scary times; one small moment in time; effective repetition; ending is an example of a decision made, reflecting the problem revealed in the beginning; variety of sentence types and length; examples of simple noun-verb sentence structures; dialogue

Teammates. Peter Golenbock.

use of title to state the point; snapshots of character and setting; use of photographs to build content; anecdotes; dialogue; proper nouns; strong verbs; use of comma

Widget. Lynn Rossiter McFarland.

simple character sketch; details clustered in threes; ending reflects the beginning; seesaw structure; strong verbs; different types of sentences; dialogue; ellipses