

STANDING ON THE SHOULDER OF OTHERS: USING MENTOR

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EARCOS

WHAT IS MENTOR TEXT?

Mentor texts are pieces of literature that you—both teacher and student—can return to and reread for many different purposes. They are texts to be studied and imitated...Mentor texts help students to take risks and be different writers tomorrow than they are today. It helps them to try out new strategies and formats. They should be basically books that students can relate to and can even read independently or with some support. And of course, a mentor text doesn't have to be in the form of a book—a mentor text might be a poem, a newspaper article, song lyrics, comic strips, manuals, essays, almost anything.

---Lynne Dorfman

IDEAS FOR FINDING MENTOR TEXT

Kee in mind that as the most expert reader in your class, you read text that could be mentors for your students almost every day. Start keeping a folder --electronic or paper or both -- with chunks of writing to serve as mentor text. Whatever you put in that folder should meet the following characteristics:

1. Text with craft that novice writers might imitate
2. Short text that can quickly be read over and over
3. Text from the genre that students will study
4. Highly engrossing text



For more ideas, go to
<https://sites.google.com/site/mentorsforwriting/home>

Focal Points

WRITING FOCUS	QUESTIONS TO POSE	AN EXAMPLE OF MENTOR TEXT TO STUDY
<p>HOCs: HIGHER ORDER CONCERNS</p> <p>The global concerns of ideas, focus, organization, purpose, audience, and clarity.</p>	<p>What’s my purpose? Who’s my audience? What am I going to write about? How might I angle my writing? What should I focus on? How will I organize it? Have I developed my ideas well enough? Why would someone want to read this piece?</p> <p><i>How did this writer do all of that?</i></p>	<p>Ricky Reilly’s “Gamers to the End” http://www.si.com/vault/2007/02/05/8399843/gamers-to-the-end</p>
<p>MOCs: MIDDLE ORDER CONCERNS</p> <p>The stylistic concerns that include sentence fluency, figurative language, transitions, and voice.</p>	<p>How can I shape my language in a way that grabs the reader? How can I craft my sentences so that they are elegant and carry a punch? What figurative language would best convey meaning? What’s the best word? What’s the best voice for my audience?</p> <p><i>How did this writer do all of that?</i></p>	<p>Gary Provost on sentences: http://www.garyprovost.com/_i_100_ways_to_improve_your_writing_proven_professional_techniques_for_writing_109049.htm</p>
<p>LOCs: LOWER ORDER CONCERNS</p> <p>The concerns for the conventions of language, including spelling, usage, and punctuation.</p>	<p>How can the conventions of language be used in a way that conveys the meaning that I’m after? Have I crafted the language so that the reader understands? Have I used the conventions of language in a powerful way?</p> <p><i>How did this writer do all of that?</i></p>	<p>Excerpts from Pico Iyer’s essay “In Praise of the Humble Comma” http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,149453,00.html</p>

NOTICINGS: AUTHOR'S CRAFT

NOTICINGS: WHAT DO I NOTICE THAT THE AUTHOR IS DOING?	INFERENCES: WHY DID THE AUTHOR DO THIS? WHAT DO I INFER?	APPLICATIONS: HOW MIGHT I POSSIBLY DO THE SAME THING? WHERE IN MY WORK? WHY?

MENTORS....

WHY I TEACH

<http://whyiteach.learningmatters.tv/>

Ryan Steuer, Decatur Middle School

BY LMTV ON 16. MAY, 2013 IN [INDIANA TEACHERS](#), [MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS](#), [TEACHER REFLECTIONS](#)

Ryan Steuer is currently a part of Apex, a New Tech project-based learning community in Decatur Middle School in Indianapolis. Ryan has been teaching 8th grade for eight years and has developed a passion for service learning because he feels it puts learners in real world situations.

I teach because the news is depressing. When you turn on the news or read the paper, you see crime, murder, and poverty running unchecked. For every triple homicide, suicide or theft in the news, some young person you don't hear about is directly affected by it.

The young man who was gunned down on the east side? That was Jimmy's cousin.

That veteran with PTSD who went a little nuts last week? He's Alice's older brother.

Oh, and that crazy woman who went to jail for stabbing her husband? Well, that means that Tricia now lives with her grandmother, the one who drinks heavily.

But the world doesn't really care about what is going on, and so we expect Jimmy, Alice and Tricia, all of them just 14, to pay attention to their teachers, do well on standardized tests, graduate, get jobs and raise families. Not likely, not unless we offer help.

Jimmy, Alice and Tricia are why I teach. If I don't help them to see that there is more to life than what they are experiencing right now, then who will? Are they expected to make it on their own with little or no guidance? Would an adult recover well from these experiences? Instead of wondering why they act out in class, we should be marvelling that they make it through the day. Kids are strong and passionate, but they sometimes need to be reminded (or convinced) that they have strength, and they need to know where to direct their passion. That is why I teach.

So how do you teach kids like Jimmy, Alice and Tricia while you also have another 100 kids with their own varying baggage? I saw a T-shirt once that said "Helping kids isn't rocket science. It is much more difficult and much more important." The t-shirt has it right: teaching is more difficult, but, while good

teaching is not easy, it is **simple** in one important way. You must treat all children the same! Not "all the same" as a cog in a machine, sit in a row and do this worksheet "all the same." To me, "all the same" means seeing the uniqueness and infinite potential of each learner, whether they are a hot mess or appear to have it all together. Because ultimately, everyone needs to know they have strength, and everyone wants to work in their passion.

How do you change the depressing news? You go to the generation that is coming up and is unwillingly subjected to the negativity, and you lift them up. How do you find out what Jimmy, Alice, Tricia and every other youngster has going on that they don't talk to anybody about? You show them you care and then you listen. Pretty simple.

After all, it's not rocket science.



From "In Praise of the Humble Comma" by Pico Iyer

<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,149453,00.html>

Punctuation, one is taught, has a point: to keep up law and order. Punctuation marks are the road signs placed along the highway of our communication -- to control speeds, provide directions and prevent head-on collisions. A period has the unblinking finality of a red light; the comma is a flashing yellow light that asks us only to slow down; and the semicolon is a stop sign that tells us to ease gradually to a halt, before gradually starting up again. By establishing the relations between words, punctuation establishes the relations between the people using words. That may be one reason why schoolteachers exalt it and lovers defy it ("We love each other and belong to each other let's don't ever hurt each other Nicole let's don't ever hurt each other," wrote Gary Gilmore to his girlfriend). A comma, he must have known, "separates inseparables," in the clinching words of H.W. Fowler, King of English Usage.

The Miami Herald (2003-11-17)

READY-MADE SANDWICH JUST TOO CONVENIENT

How long do you figure it would take you to make a peanut butter and jelly **sandwich**?

Not trying to set a land speed record, mind you. Just working at a normal pace, slapping jelly on one slice of bread, peanut butter on the other. How long do you figure it would take, start to finish? Thirty seconds? Forty-five? Do you really have that kind of time to waste?

PJ Squares is betting that you don't. So the company, born - it swears! - in **Sandwich**, Ill., is offering a solution for time-pressed Americans. A PJ Square, you see, is a two-sided slice of "peanut butter flavor layer" and a second, jelly-like layer **made** of fruit juice. It comes individually packaged like that shiny fake orange cheese in the dairy case. You slap one down between bread or crackers and presto! Not a PB&J, but an incredible simulation.

PJ Squares are said to be available in "select" supermarkets and Target stores nationwide, but I didn't have to go that far to find one. A co-worker - let's call him "Bob," since that's his name - brought some in the other day, whereupon some of us spent a few minutes not putting out the newspaper. Instead, we had an impromptu taste test.

The consensus? They are not disgusting. If you were trapped on a desert island and had to choose between one of these or shoe leather, you would pick the Square in a heartbeat. And yet by their very existence, PJ Squares raise a question of pressing concern:

How lazy do you have to be to need a shortcut to a peanut butter and jelly **sandwich**?

I'm sorry. Did I say lazy? I meant, "time-pressed." Granted, some of us are too effort-challenged to fan away the flies, and I'm sure PJ Squares will find a nice market among those folks, assuming they can make it to the store. But for most of us, the issue is simply time and the lack thereof. We stagger through sleep-deprived days trying to figure out how to do the same things in fewer minutes.

As the PJ Squares website puts it, "[If you only have a few minutes to give the kids a snack, find the missing soccer shorts and get to a game, you can grab a box of PJ Squares and get on the road." In other words, they're convenient.

Heaven help us.

I mean, when "convenience" became a Madison Avenue mantra 50 years ago, the idea was that it would give us more leisure time. Instant coffee, instant oatmeal, hands-free mops and wrinkle-free slacks, self-propelled lawn mowers, frozen foods and microwave ovens . . . the promise, sometimes implicit, sometimes stated, was that they would make life's mundane chores a breeze, that they would free us to read and chat, to paint or play the piano or just pause and sniff those darned roses. Life would be better.

So here we are, a half century later. What are you doing with all your extra time?

Yeah, that's a good one, isn't it? We get the same 24 hours previous generations did and yet ours seem to have been shortchanged. You want to

demand a recount. While their days seemed merely busy, ours feel . . . crammed. Stuffed to the breaking point with deadlines, demands, presentations, Net surfing, business trips, soccer practices, things that all have to be done right now.

And there is never enough ``now" to go around.

I blame convenience. Because with more time has come an implicit expectation of more accomplishment. What excuse is there for lingering over the morning meal when breakfast is a bar you can munch in the car? How can you justify relaxing with a book in the airport lounge when the big report can be downloaded to your PDA?

Woe unto the unstructured moment, the moment not spent planning, racing, rushing, doing. The moment you spend just being.

The paradoxical thing is, we had more of them when life was less convenient.

Yeah, maybe I exaggerate, but this much I know: If you're too busy to make a peanut butter and jelly **sandwich**, you're too busy.



From Gary Provost

http://www.garyprovost.com/_i_100_ways_to_improve_your_writing_proven_professional_techniques_for_writing_109049.htm

This sentence has five words. Here are five more words. Five-word sentences are fine. But several together become monotonous. Listen to what is happening. The writing is getting boring. The sound of it drones. It's like a stuck record. The ear demands some variety. Now listen. I vary the sentence length, and I create music. Music. The writing sings. It has a pleasant rhythm, a lilt, a harmony. I use short sentences. And I use sentences of medium length. And sometimes when I am certain the reader is rested, I will engage him with a sentence of considerable length, a sentence that burns with energy and builds with all the impetus of a crescendo, the roll of the drums, the crash of the cymbals--sounds that say listen to this, it is important.

So write with a combination of short, medium, and long sentences. Create a sound that pleases the reader's ear. Don't just write words. Write music.

--Gary Provost