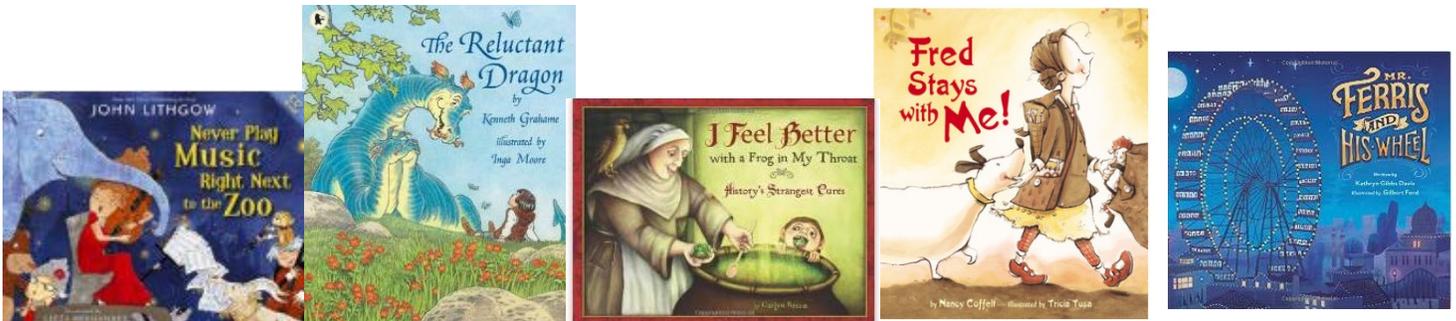




Sample Mentor Texts to Teach Writing Grades 3-5



Ralph Fletcher explains that mentor texts are, "...any texts that you can learn from, and every writer, no matter how skilled you are or how beginning you are, encounters and reads something that can lift and inform and infuse their own writing."

"By using mentor texts, the reader can virtually position him-or herself to sit beside the author and study how the text is constructed and how it communicates. It is a powerful teaching and learning strategy...."

The Writing Thief, Ruth Culham

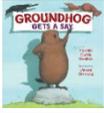
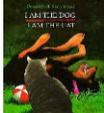
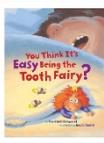
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Sample 3rd-5th Writing Opinion Mentor Texts

Writing Standard #1

The mentor texts listed below are samples of picture books that could be used in the classroom when teaching students how to write an opinion.

Using a specific set of questions to analyze the craft within a mentor text can open students to new ideas to consider in their own writing. The questions/prompts listed on the following page assists students with comprehension, analyzing and evaluating opinion pieces as well as developing opinion writing skills.

Opinion Texts	Additional Information
<p><i>Should There Be Zoos?</i> by Tony Stead</p> 	<p>This book examines the opposing viewpoints of a fourth-grade class on whether zoos are helpful or harmful to animals, written in persuasive language and designed to help readers come to their own conclusions.</p>
<p><i>Groundhog Gets a Say</i> by Pamela Curtis Swallow</p> 	<p>There's so much more to being a groundhog than just putting on a show once a year, and Groundhog has decided it's time to tell the world the Hog truth. With the help of a few of his fans, Groundhog is ready to tell everything about himself, from how loud he can whistle (loud), to how fast he can run (not fast), to the many uses he has for teeth!</p>
<p><i>I am the Dog, I am the Cat</i> by Donald Hall</p> 	<p>Distinguished poet Donald Hall and award-winning artist Barry Moser have teamed up to create a hilarious, affectionate portrait in contrasts of our companions, and often best friends, a cat and a dog. With evocative words and masterful paintings, they delineate the doginess and catlike qualities that everyone will recognize.</p>
<p><i>You Think It's Easy Being the Tooth Fairy?</i> by Sheri Bell-Rehbold</p> 	<p>All over America, kids are losing their teeth. And who is there to gather them up, leaving coins in their places? The Tooth Fairy, of course! A self-described "action kind of gal" with plenty of attitude, she reveals her secrets at last. Learn about her amazing Tooth-o-Finder. Marvel at her ingenious flying machine. Watch her in action, dodging dogs and cats and gerbils.</p>
<p><i>Sophie Hartley, On Strike</i> by Stephanie Greene</p> 	<p>Sophie is supposed to help out around the house, and that's bad enough. But then her mother comes up with a job chart, and all of a sudden Sophie has a whole list of new chores to do. Some of them, like cleaning the downstairs toilet, are gross! "Menial," says big brother Thad, who somehow manages to avoid doing any of his own new jobs. "No fair!" says Sophie.</p>
<p><i>The Reluctant Dragon</i> by Kenneth Grahame</p> 	<p>In this beloved classic story, a young boy befriends a poetry-loving dragon living in the Downs above his home. When the town-folk send for St. George to slay the dragon, the boy needs to come up with a clever plan to save his friend and convince the townsfolk to accept him.</p>
<p><i>Earrings</i> by Judith Viorst</p> 	<p>A young girl uses various arguments to convince her parents to let her have her ears pierced.</p>
<p><i>The Great Kapok Tree</i> by Lynne Cherry</p> 	<p>One day, a man exhausts himself trying to chop down a giant kapok tree. While he sleeps, the forest's residents, including a child from the Yanomamo tribe, whisper in his ear about the importance of trees and how "all living things depend on one another" and it works.</p>
<p><i>Hey Little Ant</i> by Phillip Hoose & Debbie Tilley</p> 	<p>What would you do if the ant you were about to step on looked up and started talking? Would you stop and listen? What if your friends saw you hesitate? That's what happens in this funny, thought-provoking book.</p>
<p><i>The Perfect Pet</i> by Margie Palatini</p> 	<p>When Elizabeth campaigns to find the right pet, her family imagines some hair-raising possibilities, until Doug comes along—who is, without a doubt, the most unusual, perfect pet of all.</p>
<p><i>All The Places to Love</i> by Patricia MacLachlan</p> 	<p>Within the sanctuary of a loving family, baby Eli is born and, as he grows, "learns to cherish the people and places around him, eventually passing on what he has discovered to his new baby sister, Sylvie: 'All the places to love are here . . . no matter where you may live.'</p>
<p><i>Detective LaRue: Letters from the Investigation</i> by Mark Teague</p> 	<p>As if obedience school wasn't bad enough, Ike now finds himself in jail--wrongly accused (of course!) of terrorizing the Hibbins' cats & stealing their cat treats. Once again, he pleads his case to Mrs LaRue, who's vacationing in France, but to no avail. (2nd in Teague's series)</p>
<p>Websites with Reviews</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.kidsfirst.org • www.amazon.com • www.bestcatbreeds.com • http://www.toyportfolio.com/ 	<p>The links to the left provide teachers with other resources that can be mentors for opinion writing.</p>

Sample 3rd-5th Opinion Mentor Text Questions/Prompts

Check grade level reading/writing standards when choosing which questions/prompts to address. Create additional prompts/questions based on the standards for your grade level.

To answer the questions or address the prompts, students should use evidence from the text to support their answers.

Sample Questions:

- Can you tell how the author feels about the topic? How?
- How is the opinion stated or shown?
- What reasons are given or shown for the opinion? Are there other reasons or details the author could include?
- What key words and phrases are used to express the opinion?
- How does the author introduce the piece? Does the introduction begin to draw the reader toward the opinion? How? If not, what other ideas could the author try?
- What reasons does the author use to help convince? Who would be drawn toward these reasons?
- How did the author close the piece? If the closing doesn't move you, what other ideas could the author try?
- How is this piece organized?
- What linking words are used?
- I agree/disagree with the writer about...

Sample Prompts:

- The most important thing about this book is...
- I think the main thing the writer was trying to say was...
- In my opinion, the most important (word, sentence, paragraph) in the book would be...
- I would/wouldn't recommend this book to a friend because...
- What happened in this book was very realistic/unrealistic because...

Resource questions were adapted from:

Boyles, N. (2004). *Constructing meaning: Through kid friendly comprehension strategy instruction*. Gainsville, FL: Maupin House.

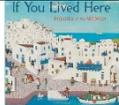
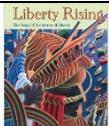
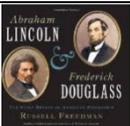
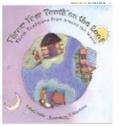
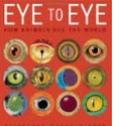
Owocki, G. (2013). *The Common Core writing book, K-5: Lessons for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Sample 3rd -5th Writing Informative/Explanatory Mentor Texts

Writing Standard #2

The mentor texts listed below are samples of picture books that could be used in the classroom when teaching students how to write an informative/explanatory piece.

Using a specific set of questions to analyze the craft within a mentor text can open students to new ideas to consider in their own writing. The questions/prompts listed on the following page assists students with comprehension, analyzing and evaluating informative/explanatory pieces as well as developing informative/explanatory writing skills.

Informative/Explanatory Text	Additional Information
<p><i>I Feel Better When There is a Frog in My Throat: History's Strangest Cures</i> by Carlyn Beccia</p> 	<p>Carlyn Beccia takes readers on a colorful and funny medical mystery tour to discover that while times may have changed, many of today's most reliable cure-alls have their roots in some very peculiar practices, and so relevant connections can be drawn from what they did then to what we do now.</p>
<p><i>The New Way Things Work</i> by David MacCaulay</p> 	<p>The information age is upon us, baffling us with thousands of complicated state-of-the-art technologies. To help make sense of the computer age, David Macaulay brings us <i>The New Way Things Work</i>.</p>
<p><i>Children of the Dust Bowl: The True Story of the School at Weedpatch Camp</i> by Jerry Stanley</p> 	<p>This true story took place at the emergency farm-labor camp immortalized in Steinbeck's <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i>. Ostracized as "dumb Okies," the children of Dust Bowl migrant laborers went without school--until Superintendent Leo Hart and 50 Okie kids built their own school in a nearby field.</p>
<p><i>If You Lived Here: Houses of the World</i> by Giles Laroche</p> 	<p>If you lived in the mountains of southern Spain, your bedroom might be carved out of a mountain. If you lived in a village in South Africa, the outside of your house might tell the story of your family. And if you lived in a floating green house in the Netherlands, you could rotate your house to watch both the sunrise and sunset.</p>
<p><i>Let Them Play</i> by Margot Theis Raven</p> 	<p>Author Margot Theis Raven recounts the inspiring true story of the Cannon Street All-Stars as they arrived in Williamsport, PA and never got the chance to play for the title thanks to the bigotry and ignorance of the South Carolina teams. Winning by forfeit, the Cannon Streeters were subsequently not allowed to participate in World Series Finals because they had not "played" their way into the tournament.</p>
<p><i>The Story of the Statue of Liberty</i> by Pegi Deitz Shea</p> 	<p>The Statue of Liberty stands as a powerful symbol of freedom to all. But what is her story? How did she come to be? From conception to construction, each element of the Statue of Liberty has a fascinating story of its own: a face bearing the likeness of the creator's mother; a hand and a torch traveling alone to America; seventy train cars packed with pieces.</p>
<p><i>Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass: The Story Behind an American Friendship</i> by Russell Freedman</p> 	<p>Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass were both selftaught, both great readers and believers in the importance of literacy, both men born poor who by their own efforts reached positions of power and prominence. Though their meetings were few and brief, their exchange of ideas helped to end the Civil War, reunite the nation, and abolish slavery.</p>
<p><i>The Camping Trip that Changed America</i> by Barbara Rosentstock</p> 	<p>In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt joined naturalist John Muir on a trip to Yosemite. Camping by themselves in the uncharted woods, the two men saw sights and held discussions that would ultimately lead to the establishment of our National Parks.</p>
<p><i>Throw Your Tooth on the Roof: Tooth Traditions from Around the World</i> by Selby Beeler</p> 	<p>What do you do when you lose a tooth? Do you put it under your pillow and wait for the tooth fairy? Not if you live in Botswana! In Botswana, children throw their teeth onto the roof. In Afghanistan they drop their teeth down mouse holes, and in Egypt they fling their teeth at the sun! Travel around the world and discover the surprising things children do when they lose a tooth.</p>
<p><i>Eye to Eye: How Animals See The World</i> by Steve Jenkins</p> 	<p>Steve Jenkins explains how for most animals, eyes are the most important source of information about the world in a biological sense. The simplest eyes—clusters of light-sensitive cells—appeared more than one billion years ago, and provided a big survival advantage to the first creatures that had them. Since then, animals have evolved an amazing variety of eyes, along with often surprising ways to use them.</p>
<p><i>A Butterfly Is Patient</i> by Diana Hutts Aston</p> 	<p>The creators of the award-winning <i>An Egg Is Quiet</i> and <i>A Seed Is Sleepy</i> have teamed up again to create this informative introduction to the world of butterflies. From iridescent blue swallowtails and brilliant orange monarchs, an incredible variety of butterflies are celebrated here in all of their beauty and wonder.</p>
<p><i>Mr. Ferris and His Wheel</i> by Kathryn Gibbs Davis</p> 	<p>Capturing an engineer's creative vision and mind for detail, this fully illustrated picture book biography sheds light on how the American inventor George Ferris defied gravity and seemingly impossible odds to invent the world's most iconic amusement park attraction, the Ferris wheel.</p>

Sample 3rd-5th Informative/Explanatory Mentor Text Questions

Check grade level reading/writing standards when choosing which questions/prompts to address. Create additional prompts/questions based on the standards for your grade level.

To answer the questions or address the prompts, students should use evidence from the text to support their answers.

Illustrations

- Did the author include illustration with the book? Who is the illustrator?
- What kinds of illustrations were included? (diagrams, photos, maps, charts, graphs, tables)
- What is the purpose of the illustrations or other media? Is there anything that could be added or done to improve these?
- Did the illustrations help to understand the text better? Why or why not?
- Were labels and captions used? If so, did they help to understand the information better? Why or why not?

Text Structure

- Did you use the table of contents or the index? For what? Was the information located quickly?
- Are there headings and subheadings in this text? Did they help you “see” how information is presented?
- What is the topic of this piece/section/page? Is it easy to locate?
- Are there other ways information is presented in the book, chapter, or passage? Examples include:
 - Information is chronologically ordered
 - Information is listed
 - Information is shown in comparison or contrasted
 - Information is written in cause and effect relationship
 - Information is narrated as a problem and solution
 - Information is presented as a main idea or topic and then has ideas have supporting details
- How does the author introduce the topic? What techniques does the author use to hook the reader?
- How does the author develop the topic? (With facts, definitions, details, questions or other information and examples?)
- How did the author close the piece/section/book?

Content

- What does the author teach about the topic? Do we have questions?
- What topic(s) does this book or chapter describe?
- Is the information easy to understand? Why or why not?
- What facts were easiest to learn about? Why?
- What else would you like to know about this topic? How can you find it?
- Was the title misleading? Did you expect to discover information that wasn't there?
- Did the book/chapter/passage give you enough information? If not, what else do you need to know?
- What vocabulary is important within this piece? What is provided to help determine the definitions?
- What linking words are used to create clarity and flow? Are there places in which the sequence is not clear?
- Does this book provide recent information? Is there a better source of information?
- What qualifies the author to write this information? What kind of research did that author have to do to write the text?

Style

- Do you understand what the author is saying? What information is the easiest/hardest to understand? Why?
- What could the author have done to make the information easier to understand?
- Would this book or information be different if it were written 10 years ago? Why?
- By reading, did you discover anything that could help you outside of school?
- Was the information well organized? Give an example of why or why not.
- Is the information told straight to you or is it in story form?

Resource questions were adapted from:

Boyles, N. (2004). Constructing meaning: Through kid friendly comprehension strategy instruction. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House.

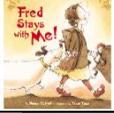
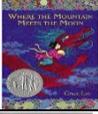
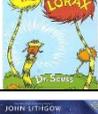
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Sample 3rd -5th Writing Narrative Mentor Texts

Writing Standard #3

The mentor texts listed below are samples of picture books that could be used in the classroom when teaching students how to write a narrative piece.

Using a specific set of questions to analyze the craft within a mentor text can open students to new ideas to consider in their own writing. The questions/prompts listed on the following page assists students with comprehension, analyzing and evaluating narrative pieces as well as developing narrative writing skills.

Narrative Mentor Texts	Additional Information
<p><i>Fred Stays with Me!</i> by Nancy Coffelt</p> 	<p>Told from the point of view of a young child whose parents are divorced, Fred Stays with Me follows a girl and her dog, Fred, from one parent's house to the other's, giving her a sense of continuity and stability.</p>
<p><i>The Princess and the Pig</i> by Jonathan Emmett</p> 	<p>There's been a terrible mix-up in the royal nursery. Priscilla the princess has accidentally switched places with Pigmella, the farmer's new piglet. The kindly farmer and his wife believe it's the work of a good witch, while the ill-tempered king and queen blame the bad witch—after all, this happens in fairy tales all the time!</p>
<p><i>Where the Mountain Meets the Moon</i> by Grace Lin</p> 	<p>In the valley of Fruitless Mountain, a young girl named Minli lives in a ramshackle hut with her parents. In the evenings, her father regales her with old folktales of the Jade Dragon and the Old Man on the Moon, who knows the answers to all of life's questions.</p>
<p><i>Jumanji</i> by Chris Van Allsburg</p> 	<p>Over thirty years ago, Peter and Judy first found the game—Jumanji—with the instructions that once the game is started, it must be finished or it will go on forever.</p>
<p><i>Ruth and the Green Book</i> by Calvin Alexander Ramsey</p> 	<p>1950's Jim Crow laws were unkind to many African Americans who traveled. The Green Book is given to Ruth and her family as they traveled south from Chicago to Alabama and she realizes the kindness of strangers can be relied upon. Although this book is fictional, the Green Book and indignities of the Jim Crow laws are historical fact.</p>
<p><i>The Lorax</i> by Dr. Seuss</p> 	<p>Long before saving the earth became a global concern, Dr. Seuss, speaking through his character the Lorax, warned against mindless progress and the danger it posed to the earth's natural beauty.</p>
<p><i>Never Play Music Right Next to the Zoo</i> by John Lithgow</p> 	<p>A concert gets out of hand when the animals at the neighboring zoo storm the stage and play the instruments themselves in this hilarious picture book based on one of John Lithgow's best-loved tunes.</p>
<p><i>The Secret Knowledge of Grown Ups</i> by David Wisniewski</p> 	<p>Parents are always spouting these rules. Do they really care about nutrients and mattresses, or are they hiding something? Luckily, one fearless grown-up will risk his neck and his dignity to find out. Disguised as everything from a chocolate milk scuba diver to a giant nose, this counterspy uncovers the disturbing truth.</p>
<p><i>When I Was Young in the Mountains</i> by Cynthia Rylant</p> 	<p>An evocative remembrance of the simple pleasures in country living; splashing in the swimming hole, taking baths in the kitchen, sharing family times, each is eloquently portrayed here in both the misty-hued scenes and in the poetic text.</p>
<p><i>Shoes from Grandpa</i> by Mem Fox</p> 	<p>Jessie, an active girl of nine or so, is growing out of her clothes, and all of the members of her large and loving family get carried away in their eagerness to provide her with a new wardrobe. .</p>
<p><i>Wonderstruck</i> by Brian Selznick</p> 	<p>Ben and Rose secretly wish their lives were different. Ben longs for the father he has never known. Rose dreams of a mysterious actress whose life she chronicles in a scrapbook. When Ben discovers a puzzling clue in his mother's room and Rose reads an enticing headline in the newspaper, both children set out alone on desperate quests to find what they are missing. (Brian Selznick also wrote <i>The Invention of Hugo Cabret</i>).</p>
<p><i>The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore</i> by William Joyce</p> 	<p>The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore is a modern masterpiece, showing that in today's world of traditional books, eBooks, and apps, it's story that we truly celebrate—and this story, no matter how you tell it, begs to be read again and again.</p>
<p><i>The One and Only Ivan</i> by Katherine Applegate</p> 	<p>Inspired by the true story of a captive gorilla known as Ivan, this illustrated novel is told from the point of view of Ivan himself. Ivan spends his life painting behind glass walls at the mall until Ruby a baby elephant, enters the enclosure. An unlikely friendship develops.</p>

Sample 3rd-5th Narrative Mentor Text Questions

Check grade level reading/writing standards when choosing which questions/prompts to address. Create additional prompts/questions based on the standards for your grade level.

To answer the questions or address the prompts, students should use evidence from the text to support their answers.

Author/Illustrator

- Who are the characters or people in the piece? How does the illustrator show this?
- How does the author help us get to know the characters?
- What might the author had to have known to write this book?

Setting/Tone

- Where does this story take place? Is there more than one place?
- What is the place like?
- When and where did this story take place? How do you know?
- Could there be a place like this? What evidence/proof/background knowledge do you have?
- Which part of the story best describes the setting?

Characters

- Who are the main characters in the story?
- Do you like or dislike them? Why? (Have they done something to make you feel this way?)
- Do any of the characters change in the story? How? Support with evidence from text.
- Does a character do things that are good/bad? What? Support with evidence from text.
- Choose a character. Why is the character important to the story? Use the text to support answer.

Plot/Problem/Solution

- What are the main things that have happened in the story? How does the illustrator show this? How does the author show this?
- How does the author feel about what happened? How can you tell?
- Is there a challenge/goal/problem? Is there more than one problem?
- What do the characters/people do to solve the challenge/goal/problem?
- How do you know that the problem was solved in this way?
- What would you have done differently if you had been one of the characters?
- Can you think of another way that something in the story might have happened?
- What might have happened if a certain action had not taken place?
- How did the author close the piece?

Theme/Tone

- Is there a message/lesson the author is trying to teach in this story? What is it? Use evidence from text to describe it.
- Why did the author write this book? Use evidence from the text.
- Does the book make you feel a certain way? Are there words that the author uses that make you feel that way?
- Is there a part of the story that describes the atmosphere? How does the writer do that? (words)

Resource questions were adapted from:

Boyles, N. (2004). *Constructing meaning: Through kid friendly comprehension strategy instruction*. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House.

Owocki, G. (2013). *The Common Core writing book, K-5: Lessons for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.