grades 9–12

ALLISON MARCHETTI • REBEKAH O'DELL

writing with mentors

HOW TO REACH EVERY WRITER IN THE ROOM USING CURRENT, ENGAGING MENTOR TEXTS

FOREWORD BY PENNY KITTLE

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Foreword

I remember my first year of teaching in flashes of panic and despair, joy and exhilaration, young faces and sand blowing across the playground. Year one was a rollercoaster of screaming third graders and me barely holding on to the last car as we whipped around turns and accelerated into dips. All year I felt one grip away from being flung into the heat of a California desert afternoon.

I arrived with a flimsy understanding of everything, and that vulnerability wasn't hard to spot: I was friendless, adrift, and unsure. I soon mastered recess, dismissal, and lunch count, even tears (theirs) during math and tears (mine) while reading aloud *Where the Red Fern Grows*. But there was so much to learn about teaching and so little time to sit beside colleagues and labor over an idea, a unit, or a child's learning problem. No matter how hungry I was to learn, I didn't know who or what to study.

I mostly remember feeling alone.

I taught in four states before I worked in a school district that helped me think through my teaching with colleagues. So many teachers still learn to find mentors in books or we starve. Luckily, in my second year, a colleague handed me books by Donald Graves and Lucy Calkins. I mentored myself to their passion and purpose: watchful and filled with questions. With their wisdom I was able to isolate and try to understand recurring errors in my teaching of writing. I developed strategies. I got better.

Great teachers have an unstoppable drive to figure things out. We imagine that our classrooms might be places where, as Rebekah and Allison say, "the craft of writing is truly studied, not assigned, and we study it together," but we need mentors to show us how. You have two here in your hands. You'll see how they entice students to practice the moves of writers and when (and how) to be deliberate in teaching; you will see vibrant writing workshops in heterogeneous courses and in IB. You will understand how to immerse students in the trial and error that characterizes all learning. You will find ways to improve collaborative work and watch students sharing thinking, mentoring each other.

In *Writing with Mentors* you will see the landscape of workshop teaching through one focus: mentor texts. The book is packed with QR codes which link to texts you can use in your classroom tomorrow (like a diverse list of critical reviews, which will lift analysis to an authentic, lively place), and the authors offer smart advice for organizing these texts online for easy student access. With so many texts already gathered, it is as if Allison and Rebekah have done all the shopping for you—bringing you weeks of meals planned and all of the ingredients you need—but they will also cook beside you as you sift and toss and dance in your kitchen. The authors show you how to use mentor texts to inspire, to focus writers on structure, and to amplify the power of sentence structure and word choice. Most of all, they show you the handover that occurs when a teacher positions herself as one of many teachers in any classroom: the texts you study and the other writers in the room.

Allison and Rebekah demonstrate the limitless possibilities of daily practice in finding words to shape ideas. The student samples that will thrill you here are the product of an immersion in excellent models and the time to practice freely in notebooks. It is the regular-ness of this time that leads young writers to experiment and play, finding better words than the day before and taking on the nuances of voice from writers they admire. The authors even include a list of common questions writers have in conferences and how we might respond, always pointing students to mentor texts. This is an exciting book packed with vision. I read it in small chunks with my notebook beside me.

In my classroom I have a framed poster advertisement from 1998 for Don Graves' book *How to Catch a Shark: and Other Stories of Teaching and Learning*. Don is 19-years-old and shirtless in the photograph, gleefully clutching one fin of the shark he and his friend have just hauled in. I smile every time my eyes land on that photo; I see the sunset from his deck and hear his laughter. Don gave me the courage to write. So many teachers are afraid to put their voices out into the world. We know why. Criticism has fins that puncture enthusiasm. Rebekah O'Dell and Allison Marchetti show such courage here: not only to write for you, but the courage to trust their students to make almost all the decisions about their work—at all stages.

When we lost Don Graves in 2010 it silenced a voice that had led hundreds of thousands of teachers for a generation. Tom Newkirk, in a breakfast at NCTE in 2013, called for voices to carry his wisdom forward. Allison and Rebekah were there that morning

and became determined to write this book that you now hold in your hands. They quote Graves who believed we must help students "figure out how to solve writing problems . . ." as these two have figured out how to solve teaching problems. I love their expansive thinking of ways to work like writers, now and long past high school.

I am certain Don would have celebrated these wise, kind, and fearless advocates for young writers. This book vibrates with joy and possibility. Lucky you to have it in your hands.

—Penny Kittle
North Conway, NH

Introduction

HOW THIS BOOK CAME TO BE

Something shifted in us the morning of the Donald Graves breakfast at NCTE13.

Awed, sitting in the same room as all of our teaching idols and mentors, we listened as Tom Newkirk passed the torch to the next generation of innovative writing teachers:

"We're getting older," he joked. "We need *you* to continue the work."

We came to the breakfast that morning as inspired teachers largely tethered to our local context. We left as inspired educators who felt a responsibility to share well beyond our school and our city. For us, it was a catalyzing moment. We had always *wanted* to be in the conversation, but it wasn't until Tom Newkirk said that he *needed* us to be in the conversation, to continue the good work of Graves, Atwell, and Kittle, that we jumped.

That night, sprawled across our hotel beds as we worked on our presentation for the next day, our whole outlook changed. Tomorrow's presentation wasn't just a presentation—it was a contribution to something larger, something that might have a life past our 8:30 AM presentation slot. Looking back, before that night, the presentation we had made was for us—in the way a writer might write for herself. We were trying to understand something about ourselves as teachers, something about our students. But the breakfast changed everything. Suddenly we were thinking bigger, thinking with a sense of, "How could we contribute to this larger conversation?" Take-out cartons in hand, we excitedly made revisions to our presentation, edging toward this newfound sense of possibility.

A few days later, after we returned home from Boston, our blog, *Moving Writers*, was born, and it—and the incredible reader support we have found there—gave us the confidence and inspiration to write this book.

What You Will Find in This Book

This book was written to help you understand the potential that writing with mentors has for your students.

We've organized it into nine chapters that mimic the scaffolded instruction we use to support writers in our own classrooms, beginning with the teacher. As you look at the contents, you'll see that Chapter 1 offers a new way of thinking about mentor texts and the central role they can play in writing instruction. In Chapter 2, we explore what it means to be a teacher who puts her full faith in professional writers and leverages this faith as far as it can go in the classroom. We take you to our most trusted sources for finding mentor texts—sources that never tire and never feel old, sources we promise will excite both you and your students. Finally, we share our criteria for selecting the best mentor texts these sources have to offer.

In Chapter 3, we move into the classroom, offering a practical explanation of how a teacher might move from this trust in professional writers and discovery of rich texts to planning for instruction. In Chapters 4 through 8, we walk you through our work with students and mentors from the first day of school to the last—from the early stages of inspiration to the final moments of publication. We share lessons that demonstrate the enormous potential of mentors at every stage of the writing process.

Finally, we close with a chapter that explains why we teach with mentors at all, because it's the influence of writers that will endure long after our students have left our classrooms. With the help of mentors, we cultivate independence in our writers and help them build lasting writing lives.

You'll notice that chapters are punctuated with brief invitations (A Way In) to engage in the work your students will be doing or to think about your classroom and how the approach we're describing might work for you and your students. For these invitations, we suggest you reserve some space in your writer's notebook or find a small, separate notebook for the jotting and thinking you'll do over the course of this book.

Other chapters will engage you in some observational work: You'll listen as we "teach aloud," offering a window into our thinking as we search for, curate, and plan with mentor texts or talk to students about how to seek help and inspiration from the work of professional writers. And then you'll listen some more to the voices that really matter: the students'. You'll watch some of our students collect thinking, plan, play, draft, start over, write some more—with mentors at their side every step of the way. These students represent a wide variety of ability levels, from the most emerging writers to students who have always wanted to grow up to become writers, but they all have one thing in common: The quality of their writing has been markedly improved by the influence of mentor texts.

Although we've written this book with upper middle to high school–aged students in mind, the mentor text approach to writing instruction is relevant to a wide range of writers at all grade levels. In fact, mentor text instruction has traditionally occurred in

the primary grades, well-documented in books like Katie Wood Ray's *Study Driven*, Ralph Fletcher's *What a Writer Needs*, and Ruth Culham's *The Writing Thief*. And while the texts we refer to are geared toward a more mature audience, the philosophy and organizational tools, as well as the ways of talking to students about mentors, are timeless and ageless. We have always taught by the mantra "Good teaching is good teaching," and we use elementary school materials all the time and adapt them for high school.

Our hope in this book is to show you a way mentors can help you teach anything you need or *want* to teach in writing. A way that will stimulate both you and your students. A way that is grounded in the work of real writers and the real reading you do every day. A way that naturally differentiates instruction for your students while preserving your time and energy. A way that is sustainable and fresh and will serve your students well long after they leave your classroom.

CHAPTER ONE

A Classroom Where Mentors Matter

The room is filled with the quiet buzz that always accompanies writing as students dig in to their study of critical reviews. Reed skims several restaurant reviews by Pete Wells, restaurant critic for the New York Times, *pausing to jot down notes in the margins. Studying the reviews gives him a feel for what kind of information he might need in his own review—service notes, food descriptions, and so on. Nearby, Ari prepares for drafting. She studies John Green's review of* Eleanor & Park, *searching for a possible structure for her own work. Further along in the process, Cole checks his commas against* The A.V. Club's *Ryan Smith's punctuation in a game review of* Titanfall. *A few students gather around a laptop with Pete Wells' review of M. Wells Steakhouse. They are studying how Wells uses hyperlinks to extend his writing and further connect with his audience. Others listen to Ken Tucker's Fresh Air podcast of his review of Pharrell Williams' album* G I R L *as they ready their own podcasts for publication. Their ears perk up as the words and rhythms of Tucker's writing soak in.*

Meanwhile, I move around the room, clipboard in hand, stopping to confer with different students. I pause at Niki's desk. "How's it going?" I ask. She explains she wants to show how It's Kind of a Funny Story *is different from the other novels she's read about high school drama, but she can't find the words. I read her beginning and scan my mental filing cabinet for a mentor text that might help her move forward. "This is a great start," I say, pointing to her opening paragraph.*

"You might take a look at John Green's review of Eleanor & Park. *He shows how Rowell's book stands apart and is different in a sea of young adult love stories. He does this same thing in his review of* The Hunger Games *and* The Dead and the Gone." *I wait until she locates the reviews at nytimes.com and promise to return later to see how her piece is coming along.*

A small group of writers calls from the opposite side of the room. "I don't know what else to put in," I hear one of them say. The students working on movie reviews tell me their writing feels incomplete, that their pieces are missing something, but they don't know what. I suggest they take a break from their own writing and return to A. O. Scott's review of The Fault in Our Stars. *When they find it, they decide to walk through the review again, paragraph by paragraph, and jot down the kinds of details Scott includes in his review. Nearby, Jake works with Joshua Alston's review of a* Modern Family *episode to learn how to express disappointment in a product while maintaining a professional tone. "I thought it would be more useful since the other reviews were mostly positive and praised the products," he tells me.*

Before I know it, the bells rings. Papers flutter. Binders snap shut. "Good work today, writers!" I shout above the clamor. In seconds, the classroom is empty. I conferred with five writers—not nearly as many as I would have liked. But I feel confident the others were in good hands. As another group of students files in, I pause for just a moment, grateful for the mentors in the room—Green, Wells, Smith, Tucker, Scott, Alston—and the teaching they made possible.

—Allison

From Reed's review of a local restaurant

[The] inside is different than any other restaurant, in the sense that it is cluttered and dirty. The lock to the bathroom door is broken, and there are words and pictures scribbled all over the walls. Waiters are screaming, dropping things, pushing customers out of their way, and it sometimes takes over an hour to get a table. Despite these unwelcoming aspects of the restaurant, it serves and is known for some of the best Italian food in the state.

Consider the scene above. Students are spread out around the room; some are working individually while others are working in small groups. There are brainstormers and drafters and publishers and readers and thinkers and rethinkers and tinkerers—everyone moving, everyone caught in his or her own flow, everyone writing, and everyone *engaged with mentor texts*. It might seem chaotic. It might seem impossible. But it's not. This is what mentor texts can make possible in your classroom, and this book is about the instructional approach we use to carry out this teaching in our classrooms.

We aren't the first teachers to use mentor texts in our writing instruction. It's a practice we learned from our own teaching mentors—Nancie Atwell, Penny Kittle, Kelly Gallagher, Ralph Fletcher, Katie

Wood Ray, and Jeff Anderson to name just a few. These teachers first showed us the enormous potential of teaching writing by showing students "what's possible from the best writers" (Kittle 2008, 39).

Mentor texts are model pieces of writing—or excerpts of writing—by established authors that can inspire students and teach them how to write, and they have become the single most important element of our writing instruction. We used mentor texts sparingly in the beginning—mainly to introduce students to a new genre of writing or to illustrate a specific skill—but our dalliance with these texts and the authors behind them quickly turned into a full-on love affair when we realized all that they enable.

Mentor texts enable student writers to become connected to the dynamic world of professional writers. Mentor texts enable independence as, over time, students are able to find and use the inspiration and craft elements found in the sentences and pages of their favorite writers. Mentor texts enable complete creativity and individuality to emerge in student writing and in writing instruction. Mentor texts enable a teacher, whose planning time and knowledge of every potential genre of writing is limited, to reach every writer in the room, on any given day, whatever the writers' needs. Mentor texts enable all of us—teachers and students alike—to do far more than we could ever do on our own.

From Niki's book review of *It's Kind of a Funny Story*

Many teen books of this day and age deal with romance as a main focal point in their stories. Some seem to be rather quickly formed and slightly unbelievable for the depth of love the characters have for each other. But *It's Kind of a Funny Story* [by Ned Vizzini] centers around self-discovery and the road to happiness, which is a refreshing read in comparison. Craig's hesitant relationship with Noelle is slow and steady, neither of them quite mentally ready for a real romance, which is a rational decision to make. It's not a book about sad teens finding love to make themselves happy again. It's more a book about a sad teen finding happiness within himself on his own terms, and if there's a slight romance along the way, then that's nice. Coincidentally, Vizzini writes with personal experience, which makes the book feel even more genuine. In fact, the whole basis of the book centers around his experience in a psychiatric hospital when he was younger.

Creating Conditions for Writers and Mentors

In the opening vignette, students are in so many different places at once—both physically scattered about the room and in different phases of the writing process. While mentor texts are at the heart of it all, this picture might seem overwhelming. Even though it

From Ari's book review of *Looking for Alaska*

Once Pudge meets Alaska, everything changes. In the book, after just one glance, it is apparent Pudge has fallen in love with Alaska. Pudge is drawn to not only her physical beauty, but also to her personality. Alaska is confident and strong, but also acts depressed and self-conscious and Pudge is intrigued by her mysterious and unknown story. Alaska takes Pudge on wild adventures and shows him how to live life to the fullest, but with Alaska's reckless personality she can't even keep herself safe. *Looking for Alaska* [by John Green] is an exciting and emotionally gripping novel about one boy who knows everyone's last words, but will never know Alaska's.

might seem complicated to juggle so many students with so many different needs in so many different places in their writing, there are a few classroom conditions that make this kind of teaching possible.

Space and Time for Writing

First, and most important, students are actively engaged in writing. As you can see in the opening vignette, writing isn't an assignment students complete at home in isolation. Writing, in all its messiness, happens during class where students have resources at their fingertips, where they can immediately experiment with the techniques from that day's writing lesson, where they can get feedback from peers and confer with a teacher. After a little notebook time and a brief writing lesson, the rest of the class time is devoted to the work you see in the opening vignette—planning, drafting, revising, collaborating, conferring, and, of course, learning from mentor texts.

Most professional writers have very specific writing habits. They write at a certain time of day, in a certain place, with a certain pen or a certain drink in hand. This predictability helps them dive into the thinking and get into the flow of writing. The time we give to writing during class creates similar writing habits for our students. Nancie Atwell reminds us that "[w]riters need regular, frequent chunks of time they can count on, anticipate and plan for. Only when [we] make time for writing in school, designating it a high-priority activity of the English program, will [. . .] students develop the habits of mind of writers—and the compulsions" (1998, 91). We devote our time to this because writing is a high-priority activity for us, and our students need writing time they can depend on in order to "figure out how they will solve writing problems" (Graves 1994, 65).

Units of Study

Rather than organizing writing around works of literature, we organize our writing instruction into units of study—each unit focusing on a single genre or writing technique. In the vignette, the class is studying the genre of critical review. They had previously

studied narratives, and, after critical reviews, they will study the technique of weaving evidence into their writing to support their purpose. Throughout the course of a school year, students write in a wide variety of forms and for a variety of purposes (Chapter 3 details many of these for you). This is how professional writers work, and this is how we want our students to work, too. We want them to develop authentic ideas and then find the forms that fit them. While our students do write about literature, it is just one of the genres they explore.

In each unit of study, students read like writers, diving deeply into mentor texts to uncover essentials of the genre. We teach writing lessons that hone in on techniques that will raise the level of every student's writing. We confer with students as they write to encourage them, nudge them, and lean into their needs as writers. The craft of writing is truly *studied*, not assigned, and we study it together.

Choices for Writers

While the whole class studies a single genre or technique together in each unit of study, students are given lots of room for choice. Donald Graves said that when students don't have any choice over their writing, their work becomes "dishonest" and removed from the true purposes of writing. As a consequence, "the student can even graduate without learning that writing is the medium through which our most intimate thoughts and feelings can be expressed" (Graves 1994, 62). By offering choices in topic, process, and mentor texts, we promote creativity and diversity in our student writers.

CHOICE OF TOPIC

In our classrooms, you won't find an entire class writing an essay on a single piece of literature. You won't find writing prompts. Instead, students are choosing their own topics so they are engaged and so they can "discover what moves them and what they think" (Graves 1994, 67). You can see this clearly at work in

From Cole's review of the video game *Elder Scrolls V*

The *Elder Scrolls V* begins with creating a character. The options of creation in this game are extremely detailed, but do take some time to complete. For example, do you want a 3 inch beard or a 9 inch beard, and do you want it to be brown or dark black? Some players were very pleased with the amount of customization options, but others were not as pleased due to the fact that it took some time to create the character. There are multiple races a player can choose to be. You could be anything from a giant cat with ferocious scars, tattoos, and piercings, to a giant lizard with scales and gizzards. Personally, I prefer the Khajjit, a giant cat species, due to the fact that it gives a better unarmed attack, better pickpocketing, lockpicking, archery, one-handed attack, and sneak.

From Jake's product review of KDV Elite basketball shoes

While the KDV Elite may be aesthetically pleasing and the signature shoe of basketball player Kevin Durant, it is not worth the demanding price of $180. What I will give the KDV Elite is exceptional traction. The traction features storytelling traction, a traction pattern that represents the player in a different way than the standard herringbone traction pattern. The traction seemed to work decently on clean courts at first but did not hold well on dusty courts. The more I played with the shoes, however, the better the traction got on both court surfaces. But you will need to wipe consistently. One thing I found out the hard way: when cutting or making moves, you will need to stay firmly planted on the ground because if you even slightly tilt your foot, you will slip badly and fall hard because of the carbon fiber siding. You must consistently wipe to ensure best available traction.

the vignette. While all students are studying and crafting critical reviews, and while all the teaching is focused on elements of critical reviews, students have chosen both the type of critical review they will write and the topic. Some have chosen to write reviews of books they love, while others write film reviews, restaurant reviews, and video game reviews. Students are engaged because they can pursue their passions, their interests, and their wonderings all within the framework of a whole-class unit of study that teaches them the skills of critical review they'll need for college and beyond.

Perhaps even more important than engagement, however, is the way choosing their own topics for writing helps students craft powerful personal identities at such a critical time in their lives. What they choose to write about makes students *known*—to themselves, their teachers, their classmates, and the larger world—in a way quite unlike anything else. Because of their choices, someday many years from now, students will be able to look back at the writing they did when they were sixteen and glimpse the people they used to be. And we all know, you don't get sixteen back, so what a gift this writing will be.

CHOICE OF PROCESS

In this kind of flexible, responsive, student-centered writing environment, students also work to "find their own process for each piece" (Kittle 2008, 12). While all students have a common due date, how each student gets there is largely up to him or her. Because we recognize that writers work in different ways, students are allowed to move at their own pace and make lots of choices about the process they will use to go from an idea to final publication. Notice in the vignette, some students are still brainstorming, while a few are in the thick of drafting, and one group is forging ahead toward publication. Regardless of

where they are in the process, students are using mentor texts to support them, choosing the ones that are most germane to whatever they are working on at that moment.

When decisions about process are in students' hands, they have a chance to learn what does and doesn't work for them as writers. And no question about it, lots of them spend time learning what doesn't work, but it's their learning to own. All successful writers have to find a process that works for them. If students are simply checking off requirements from a predetermined process defined by someone else, there is no hope they will become the purposeful, independent writers we want them to be. So we let students choose how to move forward as writers, making sure their mentors are close by to guide them, and we're there to give them advice and teaching as well.

CHOICE OF MENTOR TEXTS

Because we use multiple mentor texts throughout a unit of study, students also make decisions about which mentors they want to guide them in their writing, and they do this in every phase of the process. You can see this clearly in the opening vignette where the class is working with mentor texts showing a range of critical reviews (see Figure 1.1). Notice that students choose their mentors for a variety of reasons, but they all have to do with *how* the reviews are written rather than *what* they are about.

For example, Ari studies John Green's review of *Eleanor & Park* because she is also reviewing a single book and is looking for a way to organize her thoughts and structure her writing. In another corner of the room, at Allison's suggestion, Niki studies the same Green review but for totally different reasons. She wants to see how he develops a particular kind of content (comparing and contrasting). Pete Wells' restaurant reviews help Reed, who's just started drafting, figure out how to develop his content, and another group who's mostly finished drafting consider how they might use hyperlinks. A few students who are ready to publish and want to create audio texts listen to Ken Tucker's podcast to get ideas for their own publications. Green, Wells, Tucker—together these writers show students many ways to write an excellent review and many different ways to get there.

When students choose the mentor texts they wish to learn from throughout the process of writing, their choices help them each develop an individual writing voice. Just as our individual speaking voices are tuned to the sounds, habits, and tendencies of the people we hear speaking around us, our students develop voice as writers by listening to the writing of the mentors around them, especially the ones they've chosen. One student might be drawn more to the witty, self-deprecating voice of David Sedaris, while another wants to sound more like the lyrical voice of Sandra Cisneros. Just as they so easily adopt the language of their peers, students take on the nuances of voice from the writers they most admire.

"Young Love, Complicated by Cancer" by A. O. Scott
A review of the American romantic comedy-drama film directed by Josh Boone, based on the novel of the same name.

Text 1.1 "Young Love, Complicated by Cancer" by A. O. Scott *http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/06/movies/the-fault-in-our-stars-sets-out-to-make-you-cry.html?_r=0*

"*Titanfall* Supplants Its Ancestors with Speed and Scale" by Ryan Smith
A review of Respawn Entertainment's *Titanfall*, a multiplayer, first-person video game.

Text 1.2 "*Titanfall* Supplants Its Ancestors with Speed and Scale" by Ryan Smith *http://www.avclub.com/article/titanfall-supplants-its-ancestors-speed-and-scale-202272*

"A Farewell to Twang" by Jon Caramanica
A review of *1989*, the fifth studio album by American singer-songwriter Taylor Swift.

Text 1.3 "A Farewell to Twang" by Jon Caramanica *http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/26/arts/music/taylor-swift-1989-new-album-review.html*

"Fred and Barney Would Feel Right at Home" by Pete Wells
A review of the American steakhouse M. Wells in Long Island City, Queens.

Text 1.4 "Fred and Barney Would Feel Right at Home" by Pete Wells *http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/29/dining/restaurant-review-m-wells-steakhouse-in-long-island-city-queens.html*

"Scary New World" by John Green
A review of young adult dystopian novels *The Hunger Games*, by Suzanne Collins, and *The Dead and the Gone*, by Susan Beth Pfeffer.

Text 1.5 "Scary New World" by John Green *http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/09/books/review/Green-t.html?pagewanted=all*

continues

"Two Against the World" by John Green
A review of the young adult novel *Eleanor & Park* by Rainbow Rowell.

Text 1.6 "Two Against the World" by John Green *http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/10/books/review/eleanor-park-by-rainbow-rowell.html*

"Pharrell Williams: Just Exhilaratingly Happy" by Ken Tucker
A review of *G I R L*, the second studio album by American recording artist and record producer Pharrell Williams.

Text 1.7 "Pharrell Williams: Just Exhilaratingly Happy" by Ken Tucker *http://www.npr.org/2014/03/06/286864627/pharrell-williams-new-album-is-as-happy-as-its-hit-single*

"*Modern Family*: 'A Hard Jay's Night': Wash That Man Right Outta Your Hair" by Joshua Alston
A review of *Modern Family* "A Hard Jay's Night," Season 5, Episode 19.

Text 1.8 "*Modern Family*: 'A Hard Jay's Night': Wash That Man Right Outta Your Hair" by Joshua Alston *http://www.avclub.com/tvclub/modern-family-hard-jays-night-203009*

Figure 1.1 Mentor Texts Students Used in a Study of Critical Reviews

Mentor Texts for All Phases of Writing

Mentor texts have the potential to inspire and teach students at every step of the writing process, from play and experimentation with words, to planning for writing, to crafting and revising, to publishing. As we explained earlier, throughout a unit of study, students are choosing mentor texts that will help them most in their writing at any given time. For example, the students studying Pete Wells' work are reviewing products or experiences with major visual components; a book review wouldn't really help. So they gather around Wells' review because it has numerous hyperlinks and a slideshow of pictures. Some of these same students, however, worked with John Green's *Eleanor & Park* review at another point in the study—when they were looking for ways to begin. As teachers, it's important we understand all the different ways mentors might support writers in different phases of the writing process so we can help students engage strategically with the mentors they choose. Figure 1.2 highlights some of the most common ways mentors support students in different phases of the writing process.

Writing Phase	Mentor texts can help writers . . .
Play	✳ dream up new topics ✳ complicate old ideas ✳ discover new sentence possibilities ✳ develop perspective on an issue ✳ discover a new approach to writing in a certain genre
Planning	✳ generate new ideas or give life to old ideas ✳ understand features/techniques of a genre ✳ find a structure to begin writing ✳ focus on tone and audience in a given genre ✳ narrow or expand ideas to include in a draft
Drafting	✳ keep the big picture (of the genre) in mind ✳ shape themes and purposes ✳ experiment with form ✳ troubleshoot writing struggles ✳ find additional examples of interesting craft beyond those shown in the writing lesson
Getting Writing Ready for Readers	✳ create multimedia publishing opportunities through hyperlinks, photos, and video ✳ discover different ways of publishing work ✳ learn formatting and citation rules of a genre ✳ create subsections and sections to organize their content ✳ identify mechanical and grammatical errors

Figure 1.2 Ways Students Use Mentor Texts Throughout the Writing Process

Space and time for writing, units of study, choices for writers—these conditions, when coupled with mentor texts, create classrooms where students can make decisions that maximize their creative potential and empower them as writers. Time and again when these conditions are present, we see students who feel supported and uplifted and encouraged to take risks. We see students who feel capable—equipped with the tools they need to write, prepared for any writing situation. Most important, they feel valued.

Through their work with mentor texts, these writers are ushered into a larger writing community where their ideas and words matter.

Closing Thoughts

Imagine what it would be like to be a student in the classroom in the opening vignette. To know that each day you will have the opportunity to learn from multiple mentors, each of whom will offer a different perspective. To know, as you open your writer's notebook, that today's class will be different from yesterday's because you are someplace new in your work, and your work shapes your daily experience. To know that you will be encouraged to make choices, think for yourself, exercise independence, learn about your world, and create. To believe, as you study the words of other writers, that the work you are doing is just as real and important and meaningful.

These are the outcomes that keep us teaching with mentor texts. We want nothing more than to help cultivate happy, productive, resourceful writers who see the value in what they are doing to their lives inside and outside of school. As you read on, we hope you'll return to this vignette and the others we've interwoven throughout the book as reminders of what's possible for you and your students.