

The *7 Elements* of a Differentiated Writing Lesson

The *Seven Elements*

Skill/Trait Focus
Mentor Text
Graphic Organizer
Student Choice
Teacher/Student
Writing Models
Students Talk
about Process
Real Revision



Mentor Texts:

One of the *Seven Elements of a Differentiated Writing Lesson*

The 7 *Elements* of a Differentiated Writing Lesson

The Seven Elements

Skill/Trait Focus

Mentor Text

Graphic Organizer

Student Choice

Teacher/Student
Writing Models

Students Talk
about Process

Real Revision

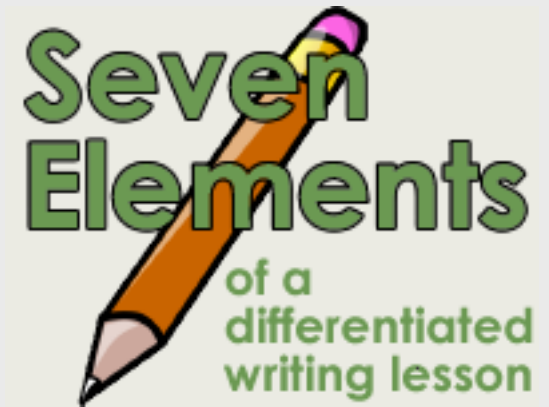


Hello, teaching colleagues! You're looking at a partial version of the "Mentor Text PowerPoint Presentation" I present during my 2- and 3-day professional development workshop: [The Seven Elements of a Differentiated Writing Lesson](#). You can purchase the entire PowerPoint on mentor texts (as well as for the other 6 Elements) at my website. Like this one, they are all self-paced for independent learning, but they also can be shared whole staff.

In six Northern Nevada counties, as part of my contract, I provide this workshop free-of-charge as a year-long professional development experience to *any* school that requests my services.

During June, July, and August, I am available for hire to provide this 2- or 3-day workshop for schools or districts outside of Northern Nevada. You may contact me at my website for details.

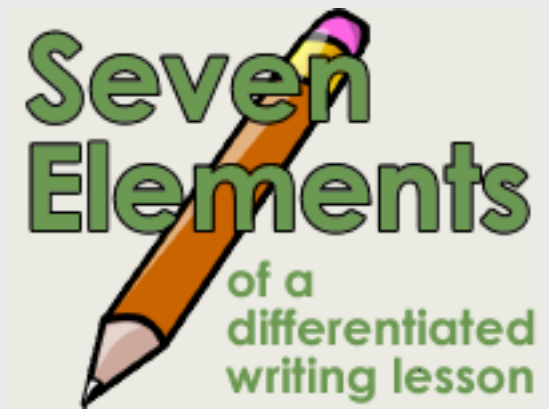
Essential Question: What's the difference between an *idea* mentor text, a *structure* mentor text, and a *craft* mentor text?



Mentor Text, my definition: a published piece of writing whose idea, whose structure, or whose written craft techniques can be discussed by student writers during a writing lesson for the purpose of inspiring them. I believe there are three types of these texts.

idea mentor texts	structure mentor texts	craft mentor texts
This mentor text's unique or interesting idea is used to inspire a fresh or unique idea from your student writers.	This mentor text provides a structure that student writers can "borrow" to write about their own unique ideas.	This mentor text contains well-crafted writing techniques that can be analyzed and imitated by student writers.

Essential Question: What's the difference between an *idea* mentor text, a *structure* mentor text, and a *craft* mentor text?



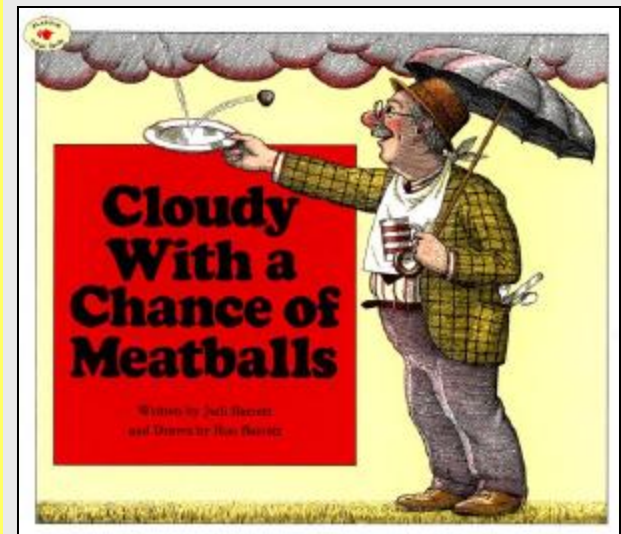
Here is my 1st example of an *idea* mentor text...

**idea
mentor texts**

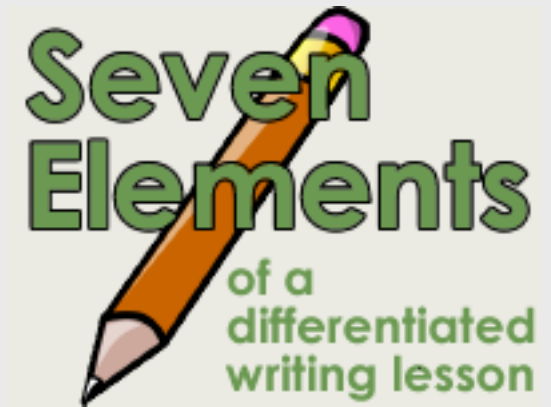
This mentor text's unique or interesting idea is used to inspire a fresh or unique idea from your student writers.

[Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs](#) is a fun story about the land of Chew-and-Swallow, where it rains different foods for breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day. This is a unique idea that can be used to inspire original ideas!

You might, for example, challenge your students to write about an original day in the land of Chew-and-Swallow, using foods that were not used in the original text. Or you might invent an original land where something *else* unusual rains from the sky.



Essential Question: What's the difference between an *idea* mentor text, a *structure* mentor text, and a *craft* mentor text?



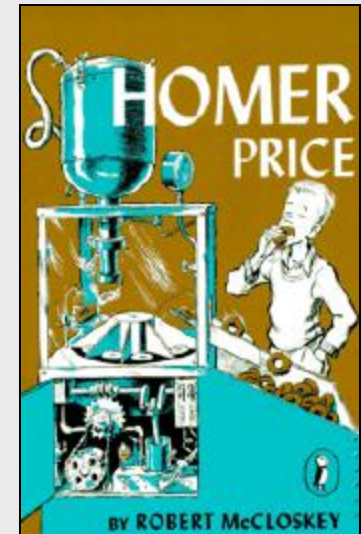
Here is my 2nd example of an idea mentor text...

**idea
mentor texts**

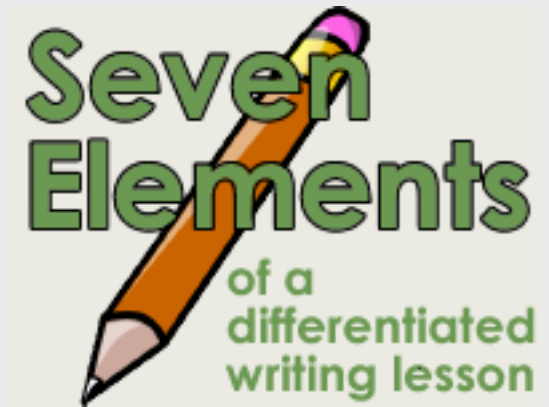
This mentor text's unique or interesting idea is used to inspire a fresh or unique idea from your student writers.

The most memorable chapter from [Homer Price](#) has to be the chapter about the automatic doughnut machine that goes a little haywire, making way too many doughnuts. An automatic food-making machine is a unique idea!

You could have your students create original written descriptions about automated machines that they wish they owned. You could even have kids draw and then "market" their original machines to each other!



Essential Question: What's the difference between an *idea* mentor text, a *structure* mentor text, and a *craft* mentor text?



Here is my 3rd example of an idea mentor text...

**idea
mentor texts**

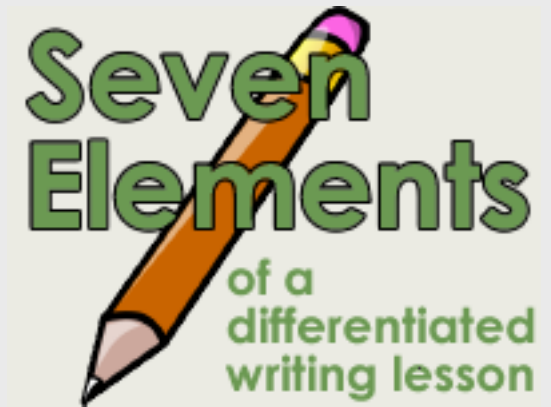
This mentor text's unique or interesting idea is used to inspire a fresh or unique idea from your student writers.

In chapter 3 of [Lord of the Flies](#), two characters describe the same exact same setting (the unexplored jungle); one sees the jungle as a dangerous place; the other describes the jungle as a beautiful and mysterious place. Unique!

Students could think of a setting—a real one or an imaginary one—and then think of two characters who would feel different about the place. They could write about the same setting from two different perspectives, showing how differently the two see things.



Essential Question: What’s the difference between an *idea* mentor text, a *structure* mentor text, and a *craft* mentor text?



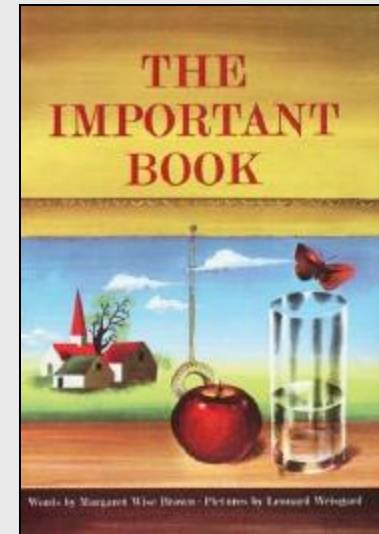
Here is my 1st example of a structure mentor text...

**structure
mentor texts**

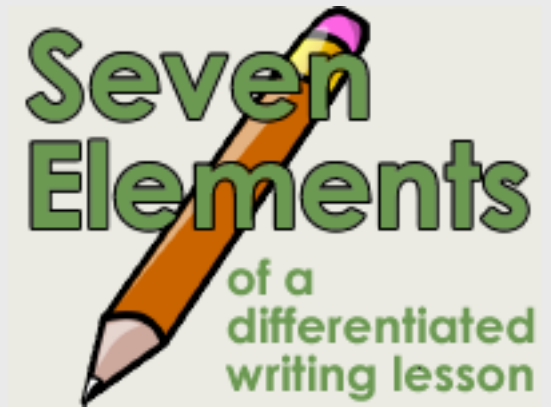
This mentor text provides a structure that student writers can “borrow” to write about their own unique ideas.

Margaret Wise Brown’s [The Important Book](#) is probably the most widely used “structure mentor text.” It provides a simple-to-follow pattern that is repeated on every page, each page exploring a different topic: wind, apples, etc.

Students can write “Important Book-inspired” passages about any topics of study—science, history, geography—or about more personal topics they have a connection to. The book’s very safe structure can be used to write about any topic. If you don’t know this book, ask a colleague.



Essential Question: What's the difference between an *idea* mentor text, a *structure* mentor text, and a *craft* mentor text?



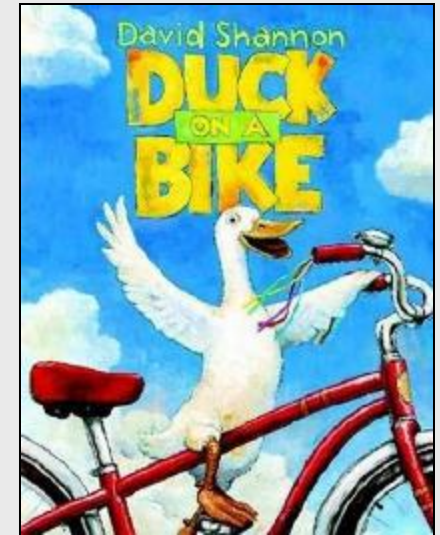
Here is my 2nd example of a structure mentor text...

**structure
mentor texts**

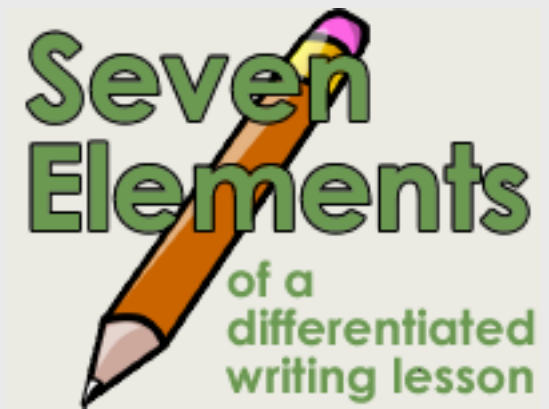
This mentor text provides a structure that student writers can “borrow” to write about their own unique ideas.

Stories like [Duck on a Bike](#) utilize storytellers’ “series of three” pattern (remember Goldilocks?). In this story, a Duck rides a bike across the farm; 3 different animals each stop, observe, and make three different commentaries.

Students can use this story’s pattern to create an original story about pretty much anything: something unusual can happen, and three different animals or characters all have a moment to react to it. Add an introduction and a conclusion, and you have a complete story!



Essential Question: What's the difference between an *idea* mentor text, a *structure* mentor text, and a *craft* mentor text?



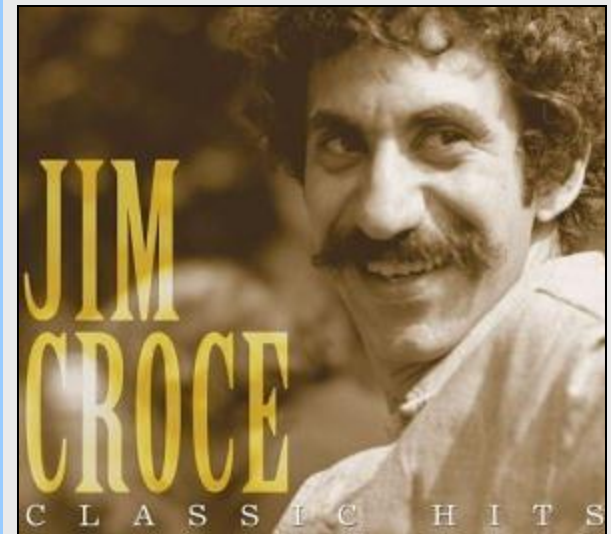
Here is my 3rd example of a structure mentor text...

**structure
mentor texts**

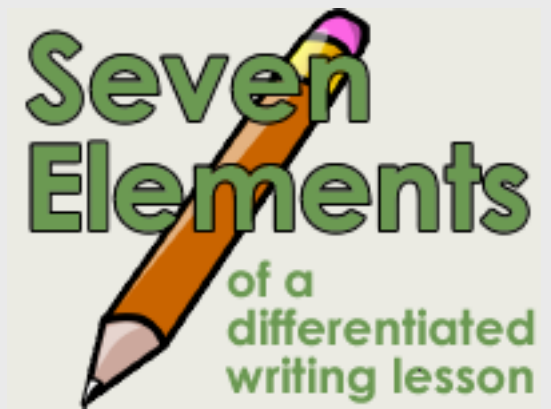
This mentor text provides a structure that student writers can “borrow” to write about their own unique ideas.

Jim Croce’s song, “[I Gotta Name](#)” has three different stanzas. Each song stanza focuses on a different thing the singer carries around with him as he walks down the “road of life.” The three things are: a name, a song, and a dream.

Students can create original three-stanza poems about walking down “life’s road.” Each stanza of the poem can explore one important item the poet plans to carry with him/her as they “take on the world” when they become independent adults.



Essential Question: What's the difference between an *idea* mentor text, a *structure* mentor text, and a *craft* mentor text?



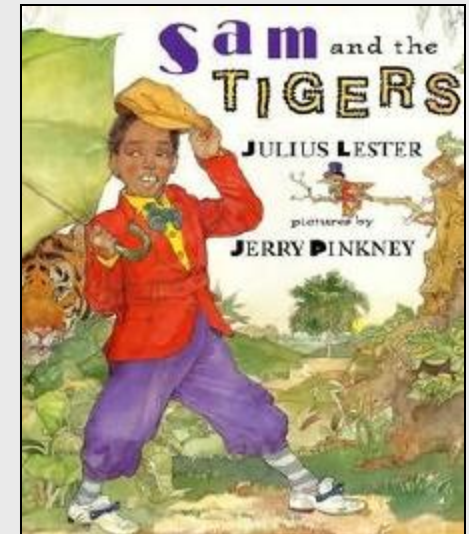
Here is my 1st example of a craft mentor text...

**craft
mentor texts**

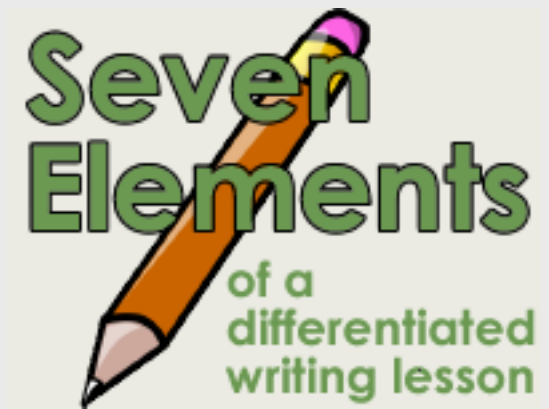
This mentor text contains well-crafted writing techniques that can be analyzed and imitated by student writers.

Julius Lester's [Sam and the Tigers](#) contains wonderful color similes, fresh and lively, not the forced similes our students sometimes write when we ask them to revise. Each piece of Sam's clothing is described with this type of simile.

Students can analyze and discuss what makes the similes in this book "fresh" and "not forced." They can then write something new (a color poem, perhaps) or revise a piece of writing, making sure to use fresh similes that Julius Lester would be proud to know he inspired from them.



Essential Question: What's the difference between an *idea* mentor text, a *structure* mentor text, and a *craft* mentor text?



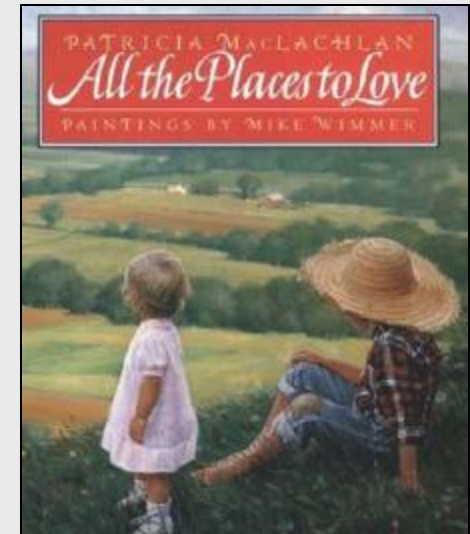
Here is my 2nd example of a craft mentor text...

**craft
mentor texts**

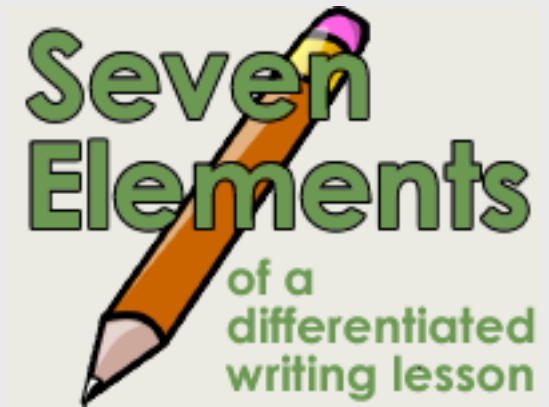
This mentor text contains well-crafted writing techniques that can be analyzed and imitated by student writers.

Anything by Patricia MacLachlan is just amazingly well-crafted. In [All the Places to Love](#), one of the techniques used when describing her childhood home in the country is to begin her sentences with a variety of prepositions.

Students can analyze and discuss how beginning some sentences with prepositions (instead of using *I* and *the* all the time) can create a series of sentences that have more flow to them. Students can revise a setting description, changing just some of the sentences to begin this way.



Essential Question: What's the difference between an *idea* mentor text, a *structure* mentor text, and a *craft* mentor text?



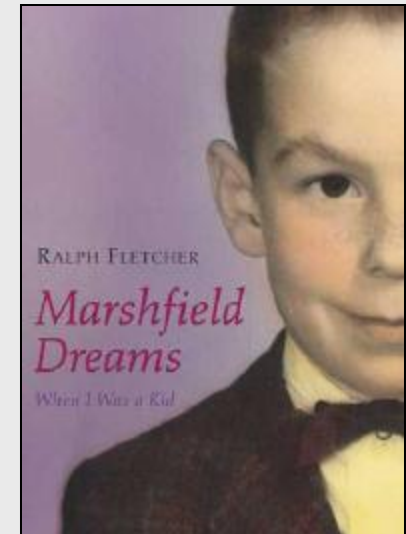
Here is my 3rd example of a craft mentor text...

**craft
mentor texts**

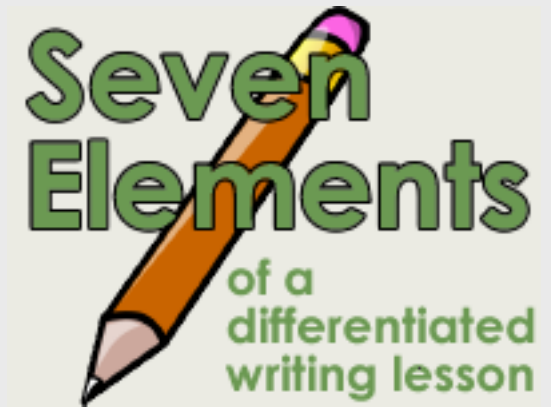
This mentor text contains well-crafted writing techniques that can be analyzed and imitated by student writers.

Ralph Fletcher's [Marshfield Dreams](#) is his autobiography. One style technique Fletcher is so skilled with is his use of subtle alliteration. His descriptions very subtly place verbs and adjectives together so the sounds play off one another.

Students can analyze and discuss *any* of the short chapters from this book, looking for instances of subtle alliteration. They can then be prompted to look in their own writing for places where subtle alliteration would add to the writing, perhaps making it more fun to read aloud.



Essential Question: What's the difference between an *idea* mentor text, a *structure* mentor text, and a *craft* mentor text?

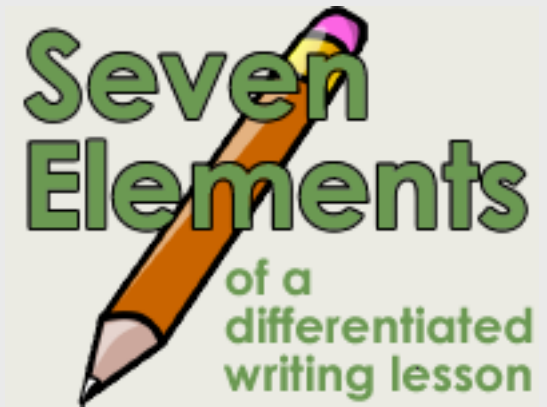


Here's what I believe about Mentor Texts:

Most teachers, I am pretty sure, already know a lot about using *idea* and *structure* mentor texts to inspire their student writers. In my workshop, participants newly embrace the idea of using *craft* mentor texts as a powerful way to teach writing skills and revision. We spend a lot of time exploring all three types, but our *craft* mentor text discussions are generally the most appreciated by teachers.

idea mentor texts	structure mentor texts	craft mentor texts
This mentor text's unique or interesting idea is used to inspire a fresh or unique idea from your student writers.	This mentor text provides a structure that student writers can "borrow" to write about their own unique ideas.	This mentor text contains well-crafted writing techniques that can be analyzed and imitated by student writers.

Essential Question: What's the difference between an *idea* mentor text, a *structure* mentor text, and a *craft* mentor text?



A Task for You:

Look through your favorite texts on your classroom bookshelf, starting with those you already use to inspire student writers. Begin classifying them as *idea*, *structure*, or *craft* mentor texts. Did you find gaps like I did when I did this task? Can you adapt lessons at my website's [Mentor Text Page](#) to help begin filling those gaps? Do your colleagues have gap-filling lessons they might share with you? Look into it! 😊

idea mentor texts	structure mentor texts	craft mentor texts
This mentor text's unique or interesting idea is used to inspire a fresh or unique idea from your student writers.	This mentor text provides a structure that student writers can "borrow" to write about their own unique ideas.	This mentor text contains well-crafted writing techniques that can be analyzed and imitated by student writers.

The 7 Elements of a Differentiated Writing Lesson

The Seven Elements

Skill/Trait Focus
Mentor Text
Graphic Organizer
Student Choice
Teacher/Student
Writing Models
Students Talk
about Process
Real Revision



Hello again, teaching colleagues! You've just watched at a partial version of the "Mentor Text PowerPoint Presentation" I present during my 2- and 3-day professional development workshop: [The Seven Elements of a Differentiated Writing Lesson](#). You can purchase the entire PowerPoint on mentor texts (as well as for the other 6 Elements) at my website. Like this one, they are all self-paced for independent learning, but they also can be shared whole staff.

During June, July, and August, I am available for hire to provide this 2- or 3-day workshop for schools or districts outside of Northern Nevada. You may contact me at my website for details. I would be honored to further explore mentor texts and my six other effective elements of differentiating writing instruction with your staff or district. Please contact me!