Introduction

When we read aloud to our students, we read at the top of our game. We read with expression and fluency, offering drama and a very adult delivery. This same stance should inform our selection of mentor texts to support student writing projects. If we provide mentors on the same level as we think our students might write, we immediately limit the possibilities for their growth. If, on the other hand, we bring complex ideas and sentence structures to students through well-chosen mentor texts, we give them a vision of what is possible, and they have a model they can aspire to emulate.

When we position writers as apprentices to the masters of nonfiction, we can teach them to analyze mentor texts—notice language, style, visual and text features—and we can guide them as they implement those same elements in their own nonfiction writing.

Well-crafted nonfiction mentors serve as models for the use of imagery, detailed description, comparisons, precise word choice, direct address to a reader, and so much more. With high-quality nonfiction mentors in hand, nonfiction writers will begin to emulate rich language, eye-popping page layouts, carefully inserted similes, and thoughtfully placed text features—creating nonfiction writing that sizzles.
In this book you will find 20 original mentor texts designed to support your teaching of the purposes and features of high-quality nonfiction writing. Some are for use with the specific Extended Writing Units and Power Writes provided in this resource (See “Index of Lessons by Mentor Text” in the back of the lesson book.). But, because we hope that you will continue to explore nonfiction writing with your students long after you’ve exhausted this resource, we’ve included additional mentor texts for each of the five writing purposes. Six of these additional mentors are full-color posters that model the features of high-impact, visual texts. You’ll find them in a protective envelope included in the Explorations in Nonfiction Writing kit.

Depending on the needs of your students and your own personal preference, you may want to make multiple copies of each mentor text so that each student may have one to refer to when writing. The black and white versions found here were designed with copying in mind. If, on the other hand, you’d rather use an electronic projection device to display the mentors for whole-class viewing, you will find a full-color digital version of each mentor on the Resources CD-ROM.

We hope this special collection of nonfiction mentor texts will benefit you and your students as together you explore the world of nonfiction writing.

Linda Hoyt, Tony Stead

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Jet Engines: Powering a Changing World

Aviation Transformation

The jet engine, also called the gas turbine engine, is a very important part of the popular jet plane. The jet plane has opened up the world in ways that couldn’t have been imagined just a few decades ago. Although many planes still use propellers, the jet plane has made air travel faster, safer, and more efficient. With jet engines, airplanes can travel at speeds of up to 500 to 600 mph, which propeller planes cannot. The jet engine is also much more efficient than a propeller plane. It uses less fuel and produces less noise. This makes it a much better choice for long-distance flights, especially for short flights, where there is less need for fuel efficiency.

Military Might

The jet engine was invented as a way to power airplanes in the air. It was first used in World War II, when planes were powered by propellers. But as we saw in the last example, the jet engine is also very useful on land. It is used to power tanks, cruise missiles, and unmanned aircraft.

Cowboys, Cattle Herds, and…Me!

By David Silver

On a recent visit to Fort Worth, Texas, I was lucky enough to watch a real-life cattle herd on the Chisholm Trail. It was an experience I’m not likely to forget.

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Christa DeRidder / Shutterstock.com
It was supposed to be a thrilling adventure: a rafting trip with my mom, grandmother, and sister on a majestic, wild river in Peru. Instead, it turned into a life-threatening experience that tested my strength and courage in ways I never expected.

### INTO THE WILDERNESS

The river was a long way from civilization. To get there, we piled into jeeps and bounced and rattled for hours over a treacherous road through the mountains. When we reached the trail to the river, the jeeps could go no farther. Our guides loaded our gear onto donkeys, and we hiked down the steep, rutted trail. Occasionally we slipped and skidded, dislodging pebbles that shot off the path and disappeared into the jungle. As we descended, the roar of the river grew louder and louder.

Finally, we saw it. The steel-gray water churned by fast, foaming around boulders. To get to the other side, where we could launch the rafts, was another challenge. We had to cross a high, flexible footbridge made of boards suspended from wire cables. The river seethed below the bridge. I knew a fall could be deadly. Holding tightly to the cables, I proceeded cautiously, setting my feet carefully as the bridge swayed with each step. I sighed with relief when I reached the other bank. Once everyone was safely across the bridge, we set up camp for the night.
Early the next morning, our guides prepared the rafts. We listened intently as they explained what to do if a boat flipped or if a passenger fell out. “Stay calm. Keep your head above water. We will rescue you.”

Somehow, their instructions made me feel more nervous, not less. As the youngest passenger, I would travel with the most experienced guide. Unfortunately, that meant I was separated from my mom, grandmother, and sister. I began to feel scared, but I told myself to be brave.

My guide helped me put on my helmet and tightened the straps on my life jacket so securely that I could barely breathe. Everyone clambered into the rafts. My heart pounded in my chest, and the angry roar of the river filled my ears as we pushed off from the bank. I perched like a
petrified canary on my flimsy seat, gripping with both hands as the raft rocked and bounced, water splashing everywhere.

Immediately, my guide began yelling, “Paddle left, paddle left,” to the other rafters, as the strong rapids rushed at us. Suddenly, we collided with a huge, swollen wave that lifted the front of our raft into the air and dumped us into the tumultuous river!

The violent waves pushed me under. My life jacket seemed to be no match for them. I felt like a sock in a washing machine as my arms and legs banged into rocks and I struggled to keep my head above the cold water. I found my courage and calmed down, which made it easier to stay afloat. But I was exhausted from the struggle and not sure how much longer I could go on.
Suddenly I felt someone grab hold of my life jacket and hoist me into the safety raft. The guide checked me for injuries, as he scanned the river for other passengers and gear in the water. When we reached the riverbank, I scrambled onto the rocks and watched as others were rescued from the turbulent waters.

I hugged my mom tightly, shivering from cold and fear. “I want to go home and see my dad and my dog,” I told her. “I am not getting back on a raft!”

My mom took a deep breath and explained that I had no other option. The only way downriver was on a boat, and I couldn’t risk the safety of the whole group by refusing to go.

I sat on the bank, turning over my feelings of fear and my mom’s words in my head. After what felt like hours, I realized that I was brave enough to conquer my fear and get back into a boat. When we were finally ready to raft again, my guide assigned me to the catamaran, which he said was safer than the regular rafts.

When the first rapids hit the front of the boat, I squeezed my eyes shut, afraid of what might happen. But just as the guide had promised, the catamaran didn’t shake and bounce with each wave. I felt much safer, and eventually I was able to enjoy our ride down the river. We floated by waterfalls cascading down the mountainsides, admired wild toucans flying among the trees, and finally arrived calmly at our destination.
AFTER THE JOURNEY

Nearly drowning was a terrifying experience. It made me realize how fragile my life is against the power of nature. But it also made me realize that I have strength and courage that I didn’t know I had until I was tested. Getting back in the boat let me see some beautiful aspects of Peru that I would have missed if I hadn’t conquered my fears. I’m glad I was able to share the rest of that adventure with my family.
On a recent visit to Fort Worth, Texas, I was lucky enough to watch a real-life cattle herd on the Chisholm Trail. It was an experience I’m not likely to forget.

The minutes slowly ticked by. Hundreds of other tourists had gathered around me, and together we lined the streets near Fort Worth’s Stockyard Station, waiting for cattle to arrive. Excitement buzzed in the air when, precisely at 11:30, a dozen gorgeous longhorns rounded the corner and filled the street.

I could not believe their enormous size or the strong sense of quiet power they evoked as they strode past. Most had reddish-brown speckled coats, but a few were black and white. Their long, heavy horns swooped out sideways and twisted up at the tips.

Five cowboys rode horses alongside the cattle. The horses snorted and plodded, their shoes clinking on the pavement as they moved. The cowboys whistled and called out commands. On their boot heels, spurs jingled like wind chimes. The cattle lowed softly in their throats, as if talking to each other. Occasionally one tipped back its head and bawled.

Watching this traveling concert of cattle, horses, and cowboys, I was transported. The trappings of modern life seemed to fall away as I imagined myself on one of those majestic horses, riding across the plains of the Old West and herding longhorns, my head down and shoulders braced against the wind.

After just a few minutes, the sounds of the herd grew fainter as the magnificent animals turned another corner and moved out of view. The crowd around me stirred, and I sensed that people were beginning to leave. But I remained rooted to the spot awhile longer, still lost in another time, riding with the Fort Worth herd.
Dear Mr. Woods:

I heard that at the school board meeting this week, the school board members are discussing a new homework policy. Some parents want their kids to have less homework, but many teachers think homework is necessary. I want to give you a student’s opinion.

In my opinion, students should have homework, but we should only have a certain amount every night, such as 30 minutes. Why only 30 minutes? There are many important reasons.

First, many students have activities after school. By the time I have my yearbook meeting, sports practice, dinner, and music lesson, it’s almost 9 p.m. If I have more than 30 minutes or so of homework, I get to bed too late and go to school tired the next day.

Another point to consider is that when students work at home, it’s hard to get help with homework. My parents don’t always know all the answers, and they also have their own work to do. I can’t get help from a teacher at night. So, if I have a lot of homework, I might do it wrong without getting the help I need.

Finally, kids need time to relax. We’re going to grow up and have to work hard, so we should have time now just to be kids. It’s good to have time to ride my bike, go play at the park, or just relax. With too much homework, the leisure time is gone! And teachers need time to relax, too. Too much homework means a lot of grading for them.

I know that sometimes I need to practice the things I’ve learned in school, so homework is a good idea. But please don’t give us too much!

Sincerely,

Martha Swanson
GET UP AND GET MOVING!

10 REASONS YOU DON’T EXERCISE

1. Your clothes would get sweaty.
2. Your hair would get messy.
3. It’s cold out.
4. It’s hot out.
5. You’re tired.
6. You’d rather sleep.
7. You don’t like to exercise alone.
8. You don’t like to have people see you exercise.
9. Your muscles will get sore.
10. You don’t have time.

It’s too hot. You’re tired. You don’t have time. If you think those are good reasons to avoid exercise, maybe you’d better think again.

Science says we’ll all be healthier if we get moving. Indeed, the U.S. government’s 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans (the Guidelines) recommend an hour or more of activity daily for children and teens.
EXAMINE THE EVIDENCE

The Guidelines aren’t just numbers pulled out of the air. The recommendations come from a committee of experts appointed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. “They reviewed evidence over many years and many different health outcomes,” explains Janet Fulton at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (CDC). “That’s why these guidelines are called evidence based.”

Different scientific studies explored physical activity’s impact on mortality rates, disease rates, mental functioning, general fitness, and other factors. The experts also explored physical activity’s impact on different groups, including children and teens, adults, elderly people, pregnant women, and people with disabilities. They tailored the Guidelines’ advice for each group.

Because children and teens are growing and maturing, the Guidelines recommend that they do three different types of activity at least three days each week: Vigorous aerobic activity that gets the heart beating faster; muscle-strengthening activities that use the body’s weight or other resistance to tone muscles; and bone-strengthening exercises that usually involve some force or impact on the body.

“There is some overlap,” explains Fulton. For example, jumping rope is aerobic activity that also strengthens bones. Climbing on monkey bars strengthens muscles while also raising the heart rate.

UNDERSTAND THE BENEFITS

The long-term benefits of regular physical activity include longer life expectancy, better weight management, and better overall health. Physical activity also lowers risks for many diseases, including heart disease, stroke, and some cancers.

“Basically, there’s no system that it doesn’t have a positive effect on, at least when done in moderation,” says Antronette Yancey at the University of California at Los Angeles. She served on the Guidelines’ expert committee. More importantly, Yancey says, physical activity “can produce immediate benefits.”

For starters, regular physical activity improves your overall fitness. Your bones and muscles grow stronger. You can do more before tiring. And exercise can bolster the immune system, so you’re less likely to get sick.
THE WHITE HOUSE SAYS, “LET’S MOVE!”

Physical activity is key to First Lady Michelle Obama’s “Let’s Move” campaign to lower obesity rates in children and teens. Currently, nearly a third of American children are overweight or obese. Being active makes it easier to avoid unhealthy weight gain.

“It gives you time to blow off steam,” adds 16-year-old Matthew Kowalski, also on Long Island. He really welcomes physical activity after a long day of sitting and concentrating at school.

Interestingly, researchers at East Carolina University found that students stayed on task better when classes included regular exercise breaks throughout the day. Other studies suggest that regular physical activity improves decision-making and planning abilities. That includes “being able to accomplish what you’re trying to accomplish, being creative, and not making bad judgments,” explains Yancey.

OVERCOME INERTIA

Part of Isaac Newton’s first law of physics says that a body at rest tends to stay at rest. Unfortunately, that holds for our exercise habits, too.

“The important thing is finding something that’s fun to do,” stresses Fulton. Charlie likes soccer and fencing. Danielle runs and does yoga. Matthew plays hockey and lacrosse and runs track.

Being with friends helps. “Running around circles for track isn’t all that fun,” admits Matthew. “But when it’s you and five guys, and as you’re running, each guy has a joke, it makes it that much better.”

Of course, everyone is busy, so Fulton also advises, “Build activity into your life.” Charlie often walks to and from school or to friends’ houses.

Yancey wants kids to go further and push schools to add “instant recess” breaks throughout the day. “It needs to be an ordinary part of the day,” Yancey says. Just as many restaurants and offices are now non-smoking places, she says, schools and offices should become places of no prolonged sitting.

In the meantime, enlist friends’ help, and motivate each other to stay active. “I’m someone calls me up and says, ‘I’m going running. Do you want to come?’ says Danielle, ‘I go, ‘Why not?’”

And on days when you might make excuses, remember how good a physical activity can make you feel. “I realize that when I get to hockey, it will be better there than me just sitting at home doing homework,” says Matthew. “As soon as I get on that ice, I’ll be glad I’m there.”

So, get moving, have fun, and get (or stay) healthy!
Want to make a difference in the world? Then get going—to any one of the places described here.

#1 Ronald McDonald House
Ronald McDonald Houses provide homes for families while their seriously ill children are receiving medical treatment. As a house volunteer, you can prepare meals, perform household chores, and offer comfort to families.

#2 Food Bank/Food Pantry
If you volunteer at a food bank or pantry, you can sort and pack donated food or distribute it to needy families.

#3 Animal Shelter
Animal shelters in the United States care for up to 8 million dogs and cats each year. As a shelter volunteer, you might tend to animals or perform office duties.

by Christine Graf
#4 Homeless Shelter
There are as many as 750,000 homeless men, women, and children in the United States. Many of them spend their nights in homeless shelters where volunteers serve meals, organize food and clothing drives, and deliver food to people living on the streets.

#5 Nursing Home
More than 1.5 million people live in American nursing homes, and some get no visitors. If you volunteer at one of these places, you can offer companionship to residents or perform entertainment (music, dance, etc.).

#6 Habitat for Humanity Job Site
Habitat for Humanity has provided hundreds of thousands of low-income families with affordable housing. Volunteers who aren’t handy with a hammer can help with fund-raising or provide meals for workers.

#7 Operation Adopt a Soldier Office
There are many organizations operating under different names that send care packages to American soldiers serving in war zones. Volunteers collect, pack, and ship donated items. They also raise funds to cover the high shipping costs.

#8 Local Blood Bank
People who donate one pint of their blood at a blood bank can save the lives of as many as three people. Donors must be at least 17 years old, but you can still help to organize blood drives.

#9 Roadside, Park, or Nature Area
There is no shortage of litter in our country, but there is a shortage of people who are willing to clean it up. Local communities sponsor clean-up days when volunteers pick up trash.

#10 Fill in the Blank ______________________
This one is up to you. There are hundreds of places where kids can volunteer—where will you decide to go?
Get Some D’s

Why you need it
Your body makes vitamin D when your skin is exposed to sunshine. These days, people don’t go outdoors as much as they used to, and they wear sunblock whenever they do. The result is less direct exposure to the sun, and less vitamin D in their bodies. That’s a shame because:

- **Vitamin D supports bone development.**
  It helps prevent rickets, a disease that can lead to bowed legs and shortened limbs.

- **Vitamin D supports the immune system.**
  It helps build the body’s natural immunity to many infections and diseases, including some cancers, diabetes, and even viruses like the flu.

How to get it
Try these simple strategies for getting more D’s in your life.

- **Enjoy sunlight (in moderation).**
  Too much sun causes sunburn and skin cancer, but a little sun each day can help your body manufacture its own vitamin D. Head outside, but always use common sense.

- **Eat a D-rich diet.**
  The foods that are highest in vitamin D include sockeye salmon, fish liver oils, catfish, canned tuna in oil, sole, and sardines. If you don’t like fish, try a tall glass of milk that’s fortified with vitamin D. But you’ll need five cups a day plus a serving of salmon to get enough.

- **Take supplements.**
  Can’t get enough D’s from the foods you eat? Talk with your parents and doctor about taking vitamin D3 tablets to reach the recommended 600 IU (International Units) per day.

Getting the right amount of vitamin D matters. Do your health a favor and get some D’s today!
“Do not be afraid to start over” (page 15). That is the advice Esperanza hears from Abuelita, her grandmother, as she learns to crochet. It takes on new meaning as Esperanza’s life is ruined and rebuilt in *Esperanza Rising*, by Pam Muñoz Ryan. This novel has a nonstop action, larger-than-life characters, historical details, and wonderful writing. It brings a Mexican-American immigrant’s experiences to life in its pages.

**Nonstop Action**

The plot in *Esperanza Rising* moves fast. It begins on Esperanza’s 13th birthday, when she is a spoiled rich girl living on a vast ranch in Mexico. In the next few chapters, she is forced to flee from her burned-out home with her mother and the cook and gardener and their son, Miguel. They hide under the false floor of a rickety truck that takes them to a new life as farmworkers in California. By her 14th birthday, Esperanza has completely changed her habits and attitude. She has formed a new family, helped her mother survive deadly Valley Fever, and helped bring Abuelita out of Mexico to join them. I think that at the end Esperanza is falling in love with Miguel and they are planning the future together.
Larger-Than-Life Characters
I love the characters in this novel! It includes everyone from bad guys—bandits and villainous uncles—to best friends to amazingly strong role models. They include Esperanza's brave mother, her wise grandmother, and the new friends in camp who help Esperanza learn to take care of babies, do laundry, and work in the packing sheds.

The best character is Esperanza herself. She starts out spoiled and selfish, but you can’t help feeling sorry for her as she loses her Papa and her home. And you can’t help admiring her as she takes on a lot of responsibility and learns to think about people beyond herself in California. She even rescues Marta, a girl about her age who is helping to form a workers’ union that could threaten Esperanza’s job.

Historical Details
This novel accurately portrays the experience of moving to the United States from Mexico in 1930. For example, it provides facts about the Mexican Revolution, Valley Fever, and the Deportation Act of 1929. The beginnings of the Great Depression and glimpses of the Japanese-American experience and Oklahoma “Okies” experience are also woven into Esperanza’s story. You can learn a lot about immigration, prejudice, and the farmworkers’ rights movement by reading this book.

Wonderful Writing
Pam Muñoz Ryan’s writing style sweeps you along in her story. She often conveys events and characters’ emotions through small, clever details, such as when Tío Luis “hands Mama Papa’s silver belt buckle, the only one of its kind,
engraved with the brand of the ranch” (page 20). You know, without actually knowing yet, that Esperanza’s beloved Papa is dead.

Ryan also creates vivid descriptions and images of traveling by truck and train, of working and living in the farm camp, and of the land and the crops growing on it. Each chapter is named for what is being harvested at that time: grapes, papayas, figs, and guavas in Mexico; cantaloupes, onions, almonds, plums, potatoes, and so on in California. When the last chapter is titled “Grapes,” like the first chapter, you know that Esperanza is truly happy again.

**How It Raises My Hopes**

Although *Esperanza Rising* is set in 1930, it makes me think today about what other people may have experienced and how their lives may be different from mine—and how they might be similar. This novel has universal themes about loving your family and wanting to be together more than anything. Though she is fictional, Esperanza is based on a real person, the author’s grandmother and her real-life experiences. Her character is an interesting, exciting, and inspiring example for me. I think every reader could find something to appreciate in *Esperanza Rising*—hope rising.
Smithsonian:
A Website Worth Visiting!

Are you lucky enough to live near the Smithsonian museums in Washington, D.C.? If not, you still have access to this astounding collection of resources on the Smithsonian Website. Just type Smithsonian in the search box, or enter the Web address: www.si.edu.

EXPLORE 19 MUSEUMS AND A ZOO

Right away, you’ll notice the one major drawback to this site: It’s way too easy to get distracted by all the fascinating features! For example, you will be captivated by the slide show that promotes special events and highlights fascinating objects in the museums. You can also spend a lot of time in the sections below the slide show: Explore Our Exhibitions, Search Our Collections, and Browse Our Encyclopedia. Fortunately, each has a menu on the left side that helps you narrow your search. Explore Our Exhibitions is the best! It lets you click Kids Favorites and the name of a museum to see a video and an overview of the most popular exhibits in each of the Smithsonian’s 19 museums and the National Zoo.

But I’ve gotten distracted! How do you find what you are looking for on this site? Fortunately, there is an easy-to-use toolbar at the top of the home page. Click on the Kids tab. Once again, you’ll be tempted to explore an intriguing feature, Highlights for Kids. Here you’ll find my absolute favorite distraction: AnimalCams. If your browser supports the web cam connection, you can watch your favorite animal live at the National Zoo! If a cam isn’t working, you can still watch video clips of fantastic events like scientists bottle-feeding clouded leopard cubs.
FIND THE FACTS YOU NEED

Back to business! How do you track down just the information you need for a homework assignment or report? It takes perseverance and self-discipline, but you can do it! On the Kids page, click the second category, Encyclopedia Smithsonian. Now don’t get distracted by the Activities and Games links that appear in the middle of the page! Stay focused on the search section on the left. Write your topic in the Keyword Search box and click Go. Hopefully, you will get a list of links to interactive and print information that will help you learn about the topic.

If you want to narrow your search, you can use the checklist to check the museums you want to include. Just remember to unclick them if you want to do a new search! They don’t clear automatically, which is a little frustrating.

If you DON’T get any links on the Kids page, you can go back to the home page and enter your topic in the Keyword Search box there. It will yield links that aren’t included on the Kids page. Some of the links may be above your reading level, but you will still find information you can use, especially in the visuals.

THERE’S SO MUCH TO LEARN!

The Smithsonian Website is overflowing with fun and useful learning experiences. There is plenty of print information, but the best parts are the interactive features: tours of museum exhibits, informational videos, interviews with Smithsonian scientists, and those great animal cams! Whether you want to spend an hour on a virtual visit to the Air and Space Museum, learn how to grow a butterfly habitat garden, meet a paleontologist, or find out what lives in the Amazon River, the Smithsonian Website is the right site for you.
Thank you for sampling this resource.

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