Text excerpts from 6 Traits mentor texts (grades 4-8)

IDEAS

From “Pulling Up Stakes” by David Lubar in First Crossing: Stories about Teen Immigrants, Don Gallo, editor; published by Candlewick Press.

(pages 107-108)

I sighed too, and put my arms around her. Today, the sun would only be up for a short time. But in the months to come, there would be sun all the time. And I would have to tell Zinah the truth. In English. Or meet her only indoors. In nice dark places, where we can hold each other and whisper secrets in our native tongues.

There is a phrase in my book: “Tomorrow is another day.” Perhaps by then she’ll like me for who I am, not what she thinks I might be. Maybe Jonas and Mack can help me figure out the best way to tell her. Surely they understand American girls better than I do.

It will all work out. Before, I pulled up stakes. Now I am putting down roots. In this magical land of dark and light.

Thank you for sending me here, Uncle Ian. I forgive you. Because Americans are forgiving people, with warm hearts. And I am an American.

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From “The Swede” by Alden R. Carter in First Crossing: Stories about Teen Immigrants, Don Gallo, editor; published by Candlewick Press.

(page 153)

Our alibis lasted until Tuesday, when Luke started talking. Later he told Mike that he figured we’d all be heroes, our case something for the town to rally around. But that was bull. He just cracked. When the police came to arrest me, I’d already told Dad everything. He’s sticking by me, of course, but he’s not sleeping and looks at me now with stranger’s eyes.

So that’s it. I really don’t know how everything came apart like it did. I know what Storson did to Sioux River was wrong, but I also know that what we did to Per-Erik was just as wrong. He’d done nothing to bring it on himself, but we broke his heart anyway. I’m sure he’ll blame us and America forever. And us? We missed a chance to make him our friend. And that’s no small thing, man. No small thing at all.
From *Waiting for Normal* by Leslie Connor; published by Katherine Tegen Books

“I think you need heroes, too,” I said. I made a little fist for punch.

“Heroes?” she asked. “Like friends and family?”

“They can be friends or family,” I said. “Webster’s says—“

“Webster’s?”

“The dictionary,” I explained. “A hero is someone who sets themselves apart from others. You know—someone who is strong or shows courage, takes a risk. And I know Webster’s is probably talking about well-known heroes. Like from the newspapers and history books. Inventors and athletes and people like Martin Luther King.”

“Uh-huh.” Soula was still listening.

“But don’t you think it’s possible…”—I twisted up my face—“…that every person is a hero to someone else?” I said.

Excerpt from “The Monkey and the Crocodile” retold by Anne Terry White in *Across the Fields* grade 4 text of the Odyssey reading program, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1982 (pp. 31-32)

Now the Monkey well knew that, when Crocodiles open their mouths wide, they shut their eyes.

When the Crocodile lay on the rock with his mouth wide open and his eyes shut, the Monkey jumped.

But not into his mouth! Oh, no! He landed on the top of the Crocodile’s head, and then spring quickly to the bank. Up he whisked into his tree.

When the Crocodile saw the trick the Monkey had played on him, he said, “Monkey, you have great cunning. You know no fear. I’ll let you alone after this.”

“Thank you, Crocodile,” said the Monkey. “But I shall be on the watch for you just the same.”

Excerpt from “The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street” by Rod Serling; published by McDougal Littell in *The Language of Literature*, 1997 (p. 368)

**Figure One.** Understand the procedure now? Just stop a few of their machines and radios and telephones and lawn mowers…Throw them into darkness for a few hours, and then just sit back and watch the pattern.

**Figure Two.** And this pattern is always the same?

**Figure One.** With few variations. They pick the most dangerous enemy they can find…and it’s themselves. And all we need do is sit back…and watch.
Figure Two. Then I take it this place…this Maple Street…is not unique.

Figure One (shaking his head). By no means. Their world is full of Maple Streets. And we’ll go from one to the other and let them destroy themselves. One to the other…one to the other…one to the other—

Ending of “Breaker’s Bridge” by Laurence Yep; published in *MacMillan/McGraw-Hill Reading*, grade 5, 2003 (pp. 596-597); also in *The Rainbow People* published by HarperCollins

“How can we serve you and the other eight immortals?” the emperor asked the crooked old man.

“We are all bound by the same laws,” the old man croaked again, and then vanished.

And then Breaker knew the old man for what he truly was—a saint and a powerful magician.

So the emperor spared Breaker and sent him to build projects all over China. And the emperor never regretted that he had let Breaker keep his head. But every year, the river washed away part of the bridge and every year it was rebuilt. And so things change and yet do not change.
Apology poem

Original version by William Carlos Williams; printed in the beginning of the book *This Is Just to Say* by Joyce Sidman; published by HMK Books for Young Readers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>This Is Just to Say</strong></th>
<th><strong>Linder example #1</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have eaten</td>
<td>I have ruined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the plums</td>
<td>the grilled cheese sandwiches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that were in</td>
<td>that were to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the icebox</td>
<td>our lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and which</td>
<td>you were all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you were probably</td>
<td>hungry and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saving</td>
<td>waiting to eat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for breakfast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forgive me</td>
<td>forgive me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they were delicious</td>
<td>I threw them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>so sweet</td>
<td>out the back door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and so cold</td>
<td>so they’d stop burning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Linder example #2
I have given
my reading students
too much to read
and write

you want to spend time
watching TV,
talking on the phone,
or doing nothing

Forgive me
I wanted you to be
better students and
hopefully go to college

Student response (by Caleb T.)
I have bought
too many video games
and spent too much time
drawing

Mrs. Linder wanted me
to read and write
a lot. She’ll be
mad if I don’t go to college

Forgive me
I just wanted to blast
zombies in Resident Evil,
and save Princess Peach in Mario.
I thought games were educational.
I was wrong.
…Mama-Mia!

Zero (student example by Hannah F.)
I don’t
exist
or
have a value

when you subtract
positive numbers or
add negative numbers
I can appear out of nowhere

Boston Tea Party (student example by Mallory S.)
We dumped all
of the tea
into the harbor
from the British East India Company

we were upset
about new taxes and cried
no taxation
without representation
forgive me but forgive us
I have left you we did not mean to
with nothing turn the harbor into a teapot
zilch, zip, zero we only wanted to be represented

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**READER’S THEATER**

based on the beginning of *I Want My Hat Back* by Jon Klassen; published by Candlewick Press.

The highlighted lines were added by the students to provide transitions from one event to the next.

**Scene 1**

**Narrator:** A Bear has lost his hat.

**Bear:** My hat is gone. I want it back.

**Narrator:** The Bear goes into the forest in search of his hat, and comes across a Fox.

**Bear:** Have you seen my hat?

**Fox:** No I haven’t seen your hat.

**Bear:** OK. Thank you anyway.

**Narrator:** Then the bear continues to a pond and sees a Frog sitting on its lily pad.

**Bear:** Have you seen my hat?

**Frog:** No I haven’t seen any hats around here.

**Bear:** OK. Thank you anyway.

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Beginning of *Wilma Unlimited: How Wilma Rudolph Became the World’s Fastest Woman* by Kathleen Krull; published by HMH Books for Young Readers

No one expected such a tiny girl to have a first birthday. In Clarksville, Tennessee, in 1940, life for a baby who weighed just over four pounds at birth was sure to be limited.

But most babies didn’t have nineteen older brothers and sisters to watch over them. Most babies didn’t have a mother who knew home remedies and a father who worked several jobs.

Most babies weren’t Wilma Rudolph.
Beginning of *The Wreck of the Zephyr* by Chris Van Allsburg; published by HMH Books for Young Readers

Once, while traveling along the seashore, I stopped at a small fishing village. After eating lunch, I decided to take a walk. I followed a path out of the village, uphill to some cliffs high above the sea. At the edge of these cliffs was a most unusual sight—the wreck of a small sailboat.

An old man was sitting among the broken timbers, smoking a pipe. He seemed to be reading my mind when he said, “Odd, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” I answered. “How did it get here?”

“Waves carried it up during a storm.”

“Really?” I said. “It doesn’t seem the waves could ever get that high.”

“The old man smiled. “Well, there is another story.” He invited me to have a seat and listen to his strange tale…

Excerpts from *An Island Scrapbook: Dawn to Dusk on a Barrier Island* by Virginia Wright-Frierson; published by Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers

Amy and I are awake before dawn on this September morning. It is the last week at our island house until next summer, and we don’t want to waste a minute of it. We dress quietly, grab our packs, and slip outside into the cool darkness of the salt marsh.

…I paint a tiny study of the sunrise every few minutes until the soft orange light becomes a fireball…

When our paintings are finished, we walk under the old dock to look at the mudflats teeming with fiddler crabs and patterned with the tracks of night-prowling raccoons…

We decide to walk through the maritime forest to the ocean…

We emerge from the forest shade to a beautiful view of the windswept grasses on the dunes…

Now we head back to our house to sort out or treasures on the front porch…

At sunset, we walk back through the forest to the pond…

Tomorrow when we walk out to the ocean, the tide will have swept clean the shells and tracks from today…
“Mother to Son” by Langston Hughes

Well, son, I’ll tell you:
Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.
It’s had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare.
But all the time
I’m been a-climbin’ on,
And reachin’ landin’s,
And turnin’ corners,
And sometimes goin’ in the dark
Where there ain’t been no light.
So boy, don’t you turn back.
Don’t you set down on the steps
“Cause you finds it’s kinder hard.
Don’t you fall now—
For I’m still goin’, honey,
I’m still climbin’,
And life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.

―

“Washing Machine” by Bobbi Katz in Dirty Laundry Pile by Paul Janeczko, editor; published by HarperCollins

I’m the washing machine.
I make dirty clothes clean,
so that nobody has to rub:

Glubita, glubita, glubita, glubita, glubita, glubita…GLUB.

Swizzle-dee-swash—

Swizzle-dee-swash—

I talk to myself,

while I do the wash!

Babba-da-swaba—

I change my song

as the cycle moves along.

Soapsuds gurgle through my hose.

Then…

Blub-blub-a-dubba—

I rinse the clothes.

Blippety-blop—blippety-blop—

I spin, spin, spin

and then…

I stop.

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“The Circuit” from *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child* by Francisco Jiménez; published by Houghton Mifflin

(page 69)

The rest of the month I spent my lunch hours working on English with Mr. Lema, my best friend at school.

One Friday, during lunch hour, Mr. Lema asked me to take a walk with him to the music room. “Do you like music?” he asked me as we entered the building. “Yes, I like *corridos,*” I answered. He then picked up a trumpet, blew on it, and handed it to me. The sound gave me goose bumps. I know that sound. I had heard it in many *corridos.* “How would you like to learn how to play it?” he asked. He must have read my face because before I could answer, he added, “I’ll teach you how to play it during our lunch hours.”
That day I could hardly wait to tell Papá and Mamá the great news. As I got off the bus, my little brothers and sister ran up to meet me. They were yelling and screaming. I thought they were happy to see me, but when I opened the door to our shack, I saw that everything we owned was neatly packed in cardboard boxes.

Every word my parents spoke to me or about me I absorbed and kept and remembered. All of them.

I have no idea how I untangled the complicated process of words and thought, but it happened quickly and naturally. By the time I was two, all my memories had words, and all my words had meanings,

But only in my head.

I have never spoken one single word. I am almost eleven years old.

Pink Boy
stands at the board.

He can’t multiply
18 by 42.

I go to the board,
chalk the answer
in five moves.

My cheekbones lift
To the ceiling
Until I see horror
On the faces
Of Pem and SSì-Ti-Vân…

I know
Pink Boy will get me,
but right now
I feel smart.

October 20

Excerpt from “A Conversation with My Dogs” by Merrill Markoe; published by McDougal Littell in The Language of Literature, 1997 (pp. 168-169)

Me: Let’s just level with each other, okay? The real reason you both follow me every place I go is that you secretly believe there might be food involved. Isn’t that true? Isn’t that the real reason for the show of enthusiasm?

Stan: Very nice talk.

Bob: The woman has got some mouth on her.

Me: You mean you deny that every time you follow me out of the room it’s actually because you think we’re stopping for snacks?

Bob: Absolutely false. That is a bald-faced lie. We do it for the life experience. Period.

Stan: And sometimes I think it might work into a game of ball.

Bob: But we certainly don’t expect anything.

Stan: We’re way past expecting anything of you. We wouldn’t want you to overexert yourself in any way. You have to rest and save up all your strength for all that Kleenex fetching…”
WORD CHOICE

from *The Flag We Love* by Pam Muñoz Ryan; published by Charlesbridge Publishing

The opening stanzas
Our flag is our country’s symbol
Of ideals that are meant to last
It’s a promise for our future
A reminder of our past.

The many connotations
For which our banner stands
Reflect our country’s best intentions
And the people of this land.

Examples: a teacher raises a radiant flag, a diligent Stars and Stripes waved on, a casket draped with a solemn flag, explorers carried a weary flag, children wave their festive flags, and so on

Excerpts from *Heat* by Mike Lupica; published by Puffin Books
(p. 200) Michael looked down at the birth certificate again. It was shaking in his hand, like a leaf in a strong wind. He looked up at El Grande.

(p. 201) Michael thought the head of Little League was looking at Justin’s dad like something he just noticed on the bottom of his shoe.

(p. 206) Then he took his stance, not looking at Justin until the last possible moment, at which point he felt like he was watching a cartoon and could actually see smoke coming out of his ears, Justin was that mad.

Excerpt from *The Graveyard Book* (pp. 2, 4) by Neil Gaiman; published by HarperCollins

There was a hand in the darkness, and it held a knife. The knife had a handle of polished black bone, and a blade finer and sharper than any razor. If it sliced you, you might not even know you had been cut, not immediately.

The knife had done almost everything it was brought to that house to do, and both the blade and the handle were wet.
**Five Senses Poems**

**Green** (student example by Bobby R.)

Green looks like mistletoe at Christmas,
Green smells like a succulent kiwi,
Green smells like pine tree leaves,
Green sounds like a flower with a buzzing bee,
Green feels like grass when you roll around on it.

**Baseball** (student example by Julie N.)

Baseball looks like buys running from base to base
Baseball tastes like buttery, salty popcorn
Baseball smells like sweaty, rich team members
Baseball sounds like passing and sliding
Baseball feels like the excitement of watching your favorite player

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Excerpt from “Mother and Daughter” by Gary Soto in *Baseball in April and Other Stories*; published by Harcourt (pp. 64-65)

They danced two fast ones before they got a slow one. As they circled under the lanterns, rain began falling, lightly at first. Yollie loved the sound of the raindrops ticking against the leaves. She leaned her head on Ernie’s shoulder, though his sweater was scratchy. He felt warm and tender. Yollie could tell that he was in love, and with her, of course. The dance continued successfully, romantically, until it began to pour… *(sensory details)*

Yollie went to a mirror. She looked a little gray now that her mother’s makeup had washed away but not as bad as some of the other girls. She combed her damp hair, careful not to pull too hard. She couldn’t wait to get back to Ernie.

Yollie bent over to pick up a bobby pin, and shame spread across her face. A black puddle was forming at her feet. Drip, black drip. Drip, black drip. The dye was falling from her dress like black tears. Yollie stood up. Her dress was now the color of ash. She looked around the room. The other girls, unaware of Yollie’s problem, were busy grooming themselves. What could she do? Everyone would laugh. They would know she dyed an old dress because she couldn’t afford a new one. She hurried from the restroom with her head down, across the cafeteria floor and out the door. She raced through the storm, crying as the rain mixed with her tears and ran into twig-choked gutters. *(vivid description)*
“What? Oh! No!” screamed Pandora.

For out of the box came awful things, the gifts of Zeus. Winged things and crawling things. Slithering things and creeping things, bringing with them a slime of dark and gray despair. Some creatures had pointed ears; some had flat, furry heads. Some had wicked eyes. Some were fanged, with scaly arms and hands. Some were tiny. Others were giant size. There were plagues of sorrow and pain. There was misery, holding its dripping head. Envy took hold of Pandora and tried to tear her hair out. Poverty slid hungrily across the floor and melted into the air.

Pandora flung herself at the box. She caught the lid and managed to fit it on.

But it was too late. All of the awful things were out of the box. They clamored through the house and on out into the street, the town, the whole world, it seemed.

Margot stood apart from them, from these children who could never remember a time when there wasn’t rain and rain and rain. They were all nine years old, and if there had been a day, seven years ago, when the sun came out for an hour and showed its face to the stunned world, they could not recall. Sometimes, at night, she heard them stir, in remembrance, and she knew they were dreaming and remembering gold or a yellow crayon or a coin large enough to buy the world with. She knew that they thought they remembered a warmness, like a blushing in the face, in the body, in the arms and legs and trembling hands. But then they always awoke to the tatting drum, the endless shaking down of the clear bead necklaces upon the roof, the walk, the gardens, the forest; and their dreams were gone.