

# WINTER

## Mentor Sentences

### from Language Arts Classroom

#### **How do I use this material?**

You are currently on the “key” to these winter mentor sentences. Read the questions and change anything that you would like worded differently. Then, go to “File” and scroll down to “make a copy.” That will be your students’ copy (change the name at the top of the document). Erase all the answers. The “share” button is in the top right of the screen. Download the document and share electronically or make print copies.

#### **A few notes:**

The books used are all labeled as young adult. None of the excerpts should be controversial, but the books might be. Having the books on-hand is a great way to encourage independent reading. Use your best judgement regarding what books will work in your classroom.

The excerpts are from:

- √ The Sea in Winter (2 pages)
- √ Girl in Pieces (2 pages)
- √ If I Stay (4 pages)
- √ Me and Girl and the Dying Girl (2 pages)

#### **Possible uses:**

This material will work over several days as small activities or as bell-ringers. You can cover one book per day, perhaps one sheet per day.

Also, these activities yield themselves to group work well. Divide students, and give each group a set of colored sheets. After students work, have them present to the class.

Finally, you can easily make posters with Canva. I have done the hard work for you—I read all the books and found wintry excerpts! Turn those pieces into posters to display in your room.

### **What should I do with mentor sentences?**

Mentor sentences are a great way to get students to see common grammatical pieces in a new way, to connect grammar to writing, and to meet language standards in a fun manner. Highlight that these authors created these sentences and revised them to make their books the best they can possibly be. By looking at literature in this way, students can apply that energy to their writing.

### **What questions can I ask about mentor sentences?**

Of course, the questions provided will help you to meet standards and to show students the importance of language-use. You can ask or add other questions based on your classes' understanding:

- How would adding or removing a piece of punctuation change the meaning?
- Could this sentence become more than one sentence? Could several sentences be combined? What is the effect?
- In what ways does the writing style influence the flow or build suspense?

Another method of looking at mentor sentences includes a four-step process:

1. Read the sentence carefully.
2. Deconstruct it.
  - Identify parts of speech and define key vocabulary.
  - Find phrases and clauses.
  - Look at punctuation.
3. Find the message.
4. Tie the meaning to the language.
  - How does the word choice influence the overall meaning?
  - What is the sentence helping to establish? Consider tone, character, or setting.

Finally, I would love to help you if you need any guidance with these activities. Email me: [lauralee@languageartsclassroom.com](mailto:lauralee@languageartsclassroom.com) or find me on Instagram: [lauralee\\_moss](https://www.instagram.com/lauralee_moss)

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## MENTOR SENTENCES

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Hour: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: First, read the excerpt. Then, look at the sentence structure of each sentence. Finally, answer the questions below.

Excerpt: *The Sea in Winter*, Christine Day

The inside of this bus is humid, and the windows are foggy, so I open mine about an inch, relishing the cold snap of fresh air. The sky is covered in gray cotton clouds. The pavement outside is stained with wet spots that look like inkblots. It's starting to rain again. Tiny droplets splatter across the windows. The water streaks are short and thin as paper cuts.

1. The first sentence is long. What type of sentence is it? What is the effect of its length? *The sentence is long, but it is a compound sentence. It has two conjunctions: and, so. It ends in a phrase. The length makes the reader understand how humid the bus feels.*
2. The final three sentences are simple sentences. What image do they convey? *The water is described in terms of smallness: tiny, short, thin. The use of short and simple sentences emphasizes the message.*

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Directions: First, read the excerpt. Then, look at the sentence structure of each sentence. Finally, answer the questions below.

Excerpt: *The Sea in Winter*, Christine Day

(1) The wind picks up as we hike back to the car, a rustling hush through the pines and foliage. (2) It whips my dark hair around my shoulders, the strands lashing against my cheekbones. (3) Gusts of air and seawater pummel the rocky shore. (4) Even with my base layers on and the stiff shell of my red winter jacket shielding my torso, I can't help but shiver.

1. Explain the phrase at the end of the first sentence. *The phrase is explaining "the wind." As the characters hike, they hear movement through nature. Not only does the sentence establish where the characters are, but it also gives movement to the characters' experiences.*
2. The final three sentences are simple sentences even though sentence #2 is lengthy. What is the effect of three simple sentences that vary in length? How do you know? *Sentence #2 conveys that her hair is long, and the sentence is also lengthy. The flow of the sentence matches the flow of her hair. Sentence #3 is short, and the shortness adds to the effect of "pummel." #4 has several phrases before the independent clause. The message of #4 is that even though the character is dressed warmly, she is still shivering. The buildup emphasizes her coldness.*

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Directions: First, read the excerpt. Then, look at the sentence structure of each sentence. Finally, answer the questions below.

Excerpt: *Girl In Pieces*, Kathleen Glasgow

The sky here is different than in Tucson, a brighter blue, almost candyish. The clouds seem to hang in it so gently, like puffs of smoke. The car is thick with the smell of snack food, sugary soda.

1. Every sentence in this excerpt is a simple sentence. Look at the rhythm of the sentences. What do you notice? *In all of these simple sentences, the subjects are at the beginning of the sentence: sky, clouds, car. Readers do not have to build to the end of the sentence to discover the subjects; they are quite straight-forward.*
2. What imagery builds the setting? *Students might note that they can “see” this setting with the blue sky (it might remind them of a candy store), puffs of smoke for clouds, and a sugary, high-fat smell in a small car. The comparison of the car is probably small compared to the openness of the sky. Bright blue contrasts nicely with gray. Finally, “puffs of smoke” are easily seen during the winter against a bright sky.*

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Directions: First, read the excerpt. Then, look at the sentence structure of each sentence. Finally, answer the questions below.

Excerpt: *Girl In Pieces*, Kathleen Glasgow

It's almost dark now; the white lights dangling along the patio's roof are as fuzzy as the snow I left behind in Minnesota.

1. This excerpt contains a semicolon. Explain its function. *The semicolon is joining clauses. "It's almost dark now" is an independent clause. The rest of the sentence (after the semicolon) explains what the narrator sees in the darkness.*
2. Note the simile used. What is its effect? *Snow is white and can be blinding when hit with light. Since the lights are dangling, they are showing off a "fuzziness." The effect is increased imagery.*

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Directions: First, read the excerpt. Then, look at the sentence structure of each sentence. Finally, answer the questions below.

Excerpt: *If I Stay*, Gayle Forman

Everyone thinks it was because of the snow. And in a way, I suppose that's true.

1. This sentence opens the book. Explain its effectiveness or lack of effectiveness at inviting the reader in, setting the tone, and establishing the setting. *Immediately, readers understand that something happened because of the snow. The snow could be setting up a problem like people trapped in a snowstorm or a car wreck. The tone is a bit ominous and mysterious. The setting probably takes place during the winter.*
2. Look at the pronouns used in this excerpt. Are they ambiguous? If so, what is the effect? *"It" is used in the first three words of the book. The reader has no idea what "it" references, so the pronoun is ambiguous. Here, the author is probably "breaking a grammar rule" to add mystery and suspense.*

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Directions: First, read the excerpt. Then, look at the sentence structure of each sentence. Finally, answer the questions below.

Excerpt: *If I Stay*, Gayle Forman

I can tell Dad is happy. Barely an inch of snow means that all the schools in the county are closed, including my high school and middle school where Dad works, so it's an unexpected day off for him, too.

1. This sentence connects two characters with the setting. Analyze the effectiveness of doing so. *The narrator is a student, and her father is a teacher. They share the fun of an unexpected snow day. It does not seem that their relationship is adversarial.*
2. Look at the commas in this excerpt. Can you explain their purposes? *The first comma is around a phrase and clause that modifies which schools are closed. The second comma is in front of a coordinating conjunction. The final comma is before a common adverb, "too."*

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Directions: First, read the excerpt. Then, look at the sentence structure of each sentence. Finally, answer the questions below.

Excerpt: *If I Stay*, Gayle Forman

“What do you know, the snow’s already melting,” Dad says, puffing on his pipe. I go to the back door and peek outside. A patch of sunlight has broken through the clouds, and I can hear the hiss of ice melting.

1. These sentences open the book. Explain their effectiveness or lack of effectiveness at inviting the reader in, setting the tone, and establishing the setting. *Since the character telling the story mentions herself in first person, readers can assume this story is told in first person. Additionally, she is with her family during a wintry month. Finally, the “hiss of ice melting” provides imagery that invites the sun.*
2. Look at the pronouns used in this excerpt. Are they ambiguous? If so, what is the effect? *The sentences have several pronouns: what, you, his, I. The pronouns are not incredibly ambiguous because we understand the narrator is speaking. “What do you know” is a common expression, but readers might not know who “you” is.*

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Directions: First, read the excerpt. Then, look at the sentence structure of each sentence. Finally, answer the questions below.

Excerpt: *If I Stay*, Gayle Forman

I lean my head against the car window, watching the scenery zip by, a tableau of dark green fir trees dotted with snow, wispy strands of white fog, and heavy gray storm clouds up above. It's so warm in the car that the windows keep fogging up, and I draw little squiggles in the condensation.

1. This sentence begins the story's initial incident (a car crash) and occurs very early in the story. What type of sentence is the first sentence? What is the effect of having this long sentence? *Even though this sentence is long, it is a simple sentence. I, subject; lean, verb. The other pieces set off with commas are phrases. The wintry setting is established with scenery: dark green fir trees, white fog, and gray storm clouds. The character recognizes the wintry atmosphere without really "doing" anything. She is simply leaning her head, watching the wintry setting zoom by.*
2. What type of sentence is the second sentence? How does the pacing of this sentence move along the story? *This sentence is compound-complex. It, subject; is, verb; that starting an adjective clause ("that the windows keep fogging up"); and, coordinating conjunction; I, subject; draw, verb. The length shows the passage of time.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Hour: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: First, read the excerpt. Then, look at the sentence structure of each sentence. Finally, answer the questions below.

Excerpt: *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl*, Jesse Andrews

It was late November but not cold yet.

1. This sentence is quite short. Evaluate its effectiveness in establishing the setting. *Students will likely remark that the short sentence is effective because they understand that time of year where winter is coming, but they are not terribly cold. They should note that not every sentence needs to be elaborate and long. A short sentence can convey meaning well.*
2. Is a comma needed in this sentence? What would be the effect of adding a comma after “November”? *Students should recognize that for sentence structure, a comma is not technically needed because an independent clause does not follow “but.” However, especially in fictional works, authors do “break” grammar rules. Adding a comma would add a pause for the reader and emphasize the character’s feeling of temperature. Since there is no comma added, readers can infer that this sentence simply established the setting quickly.*

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Directions: First, read the excerpt. Then, look at the sentence structure of each sentence. Finally, answer the questions below.

Excerpt: *Me and Early and the Dying Girl*, Jesse Andrews

Winter break was almost over. It hadn't snowed yet.

I was sweating a lot under my winter coat because I had biked from my house. Also, my glasses were all fogged up, so I had to take them off and squint around like a mole-rat.

1. What type of sentences are the first two sentences? How do you know? *The first two sentences are simple sentences. The formations: break, subject; was, verb. It, subject; had snowed, verb*
2. What type of sentences are the two final sentences? How do you know? *The first sentence in the second paragraph is complex with a formation: I, subject; was sweating, verb; because, subordinating conjunction for the dependent clause; I, subject; had biked, verb. The second sentence is compound: glasses, subject; were, verb; so, coordinating conjunction; I, subject; had + squint, compound verbs.*