

Choosing a Mentor Text

What is a “mentor” text?

A “mentor” text is a model text, geared towards the same audience, which you can use to help you consciously make rhetorical moves as you craft your popular article. Professional writers use mentor texts all the time to familiarize ourselves with a genre and understand the most effective rhetorical approaches that authors make to reach their audiences.

Should my mentor text be about the same topic I want to write about?

Actually, no – it doesn’t have to be. Your mentor text should be the kind of article you’d like to write, using a style and tone that you admire. The mentor text should either be published in the same publication that you want to write for, or a comparable publication with a similar audience.

What will I use my mentor text for?

You can turn to this article for guidance about style, tone, and structure. Feel free to do a Rhetorical Analysis of your mentor text using the same questions from the Rhetorical Analysis Sheet we used in class, to get at why your mentor text is effectively reaching its audience, and how you can do the same.

When should I choose my mentor text?

I recommend choosing your mentor text AFTER you have:

- 1) Selected your topic for the popular article (including the issue and your stance on it),
- 2) Chosen the magazine or digital publication that you want to write for, and
- 3) Identified the discourse community who you are speaking to.

I recommend choosing your mentor text BEFORE you:

- 1) Begin your research, and
- 2) Begin your writing, brainstorming, and outlining process. The mentor text can help guide these choices in a conscious way!

Which publication should I choose for my article?!?!

Picking a publication is often tricky, so I'm listing a bunch below that you might want to check out. Here are some questions to consider as you pick a print or digital publication to (hypothetically) pitch your article:

- 1) Who is the audience of this publication? What age, gender, cultural background, or other demographic factors contribute to this publication's readership?
- 2) Are readers part of a specific cultural group, have a certain level of education, special-interest group, or other discourse communities? What overlapping communities do readers belong to?
- 3) Why might this audience be interested in your article's topic and stance? What are you contributing to the conversation that would impact this audience? What would happen if your audience responds favorably to your argument? Might they take a particular action in their community or support an action, build awareness, or communicate your views to others?

Here are some popular publications that might be fun and rewarding to check out. Be sure to analyze their audiences before choosing a publication, and feel free to research all manner of print and digital publications beyond this list:

New York Times	Vox	Bon Appetit
Wall Street Journal	Thrillist	Glamour
The Atlantic	Bloomberg	GQ
Buzzfeed	Edible Communities	Vix
Vice	Lucky Peach	Jezebel
The Verge	Entertainment Weekly	City Lab
Rolling Stone	Polygon	The Cut
Forbes	Mental Floss	Eater
The New Yorker	Esquire	HuffPo
Refinery29	Vanity Fair	Wired