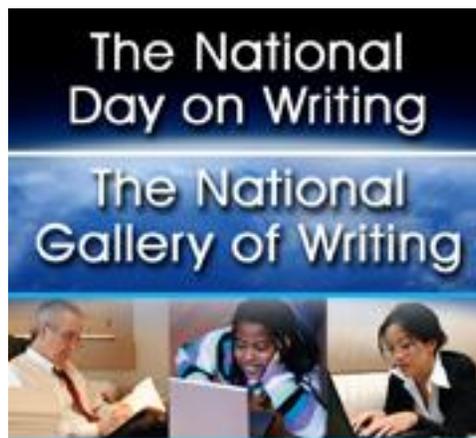


Beginning a Piece of Writing

An introduction to any piece of writing serves one function: hooking the reader to make him or her want to continue. But getting a piece of writing started with a good hook is often one of the hardest parts for writers. Knowing a few techniques that published authors use is as easy as picking up your favorite books and looking into how authors craft introductions. Once you have seen several techniques, write several opening sentences, using a different technique for each until you find one that fits your piece.

Here are some common hooks used by authors:



- *Start by describing the setting*
 - Early in the spring of 1750, in the village of Juffure, four days upriver from the coast of The Gambia, West Africa, a manchild was born to Omoro and Binta Kinte. Alex Haley, *Roots*
- *Start by describing the character*
 - Robert Cohn was once middleweight boxing champion of Princeton. Do not think that I am very much impressed by that as a boxing title, but it meant a lot to Cohn. He cared nothing for boxing, in fact he disliked it, but he had learned it painfully and thoroughly to counteract the feeling of inferiority and shyness he had felt on being treated as a Jew at Princeton. Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*
- *Begin with a shocking or interesting fact*
 - They shoot the white girl first. Toni Morrison, *Paradise*
- *Start with intentional fragments or repetition*
 - "The sea, the sea, the sea. It rolled and rolled and called to me. *Come in*, it said, *come in*. And in I went, floating, rolling, splashing, swimming, and the sea called, *Come out, come out*, and further I went but always it swept me back to shore." Sharon Creech, *The Wanderer*
- *Start with a question*
 - Where now? Who now? When now? Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*
- *Start with an action in progress*
 - The small boys came early to the hanging. Ken Follet, *The Pillars of the Earth*
- *Start with dialogue*
 - "Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents," grumbled Jo, lying on the rug. Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*
- *Start with the problem*
 - It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*
- *Start with a quote from another source*
 - "The ole ark's a-moverin', a-moverin', a-moverin', the ole ark's a-moverin' along." That ancient spiritual could have been the theme song of the United States in 1957. We were a-moverin' to, fro, up, down and often in concentric circles. Maya Angelou, *The Heart of a Woman*
- *Start with a combination of techniques*