

Writer's Workshop

How to write an Introductory paragraph

mini lesson



HOW TO HOOK YOUR READER

It was a dark and stormy night...

Do you need help creating your introductory paragraph for your Personal Narrative? In class we discussed several techniques designed to capture your reader's interest with an attention-grabbing opening. Below are several examples to support you in your endeavors to bring your story to life within its first few lines. Remember, show your readers your story, do not tell them.



Reference/Definition

Today's word of the day is platonic . . . as in, we are just **pla-ton-ic** friends. Why is that so hard for him and everyone else to understand? We have been best friends for over seven years. Jeff is like my brother. (Well he was before today.) He sent me a text that said "I love you." I shared the song "F-R-I-E-N-D-S" by Marshmallow and Anne Marie as a reply. I was hoping this would be my final statement on the matter. (Gosh, was I wrong.) Twenty minutes later, he's frantically ringing my door bell. I struggle to open our home's rustic wooden door with one hand. My eyes pop, I spit out my Sprite, and then I'm left paralyzed with my mouth wide open. Jeff is holding a sign and surrounded by a group of our friends. Everyone is recording the moment. I hear someone yell, "Smile Summer, we're on IG Live!" He lifts the sign and I slam the door closed as a reflex. I murmur a curse word before realizing my Dad and my boyfriend are standing behind me. Dad's arms are folded and Caleb's face is tomato red. I think that's when I passed out.

Commented [RR(M1)]: Attention-grabbing opener

Commented [RR(M2)]: Exposition

Commented [RR(M3)]: Hook

Reflection

Some people call me weird, others say I'm lame, and a few just regularly stare at me. I don't care. I've never cared. People and their opinions of me don't matter. My brother says I'm a loser. My parents describe me as eccentric and eclectic. My teachers think I'm unique. All in all, I still don't care. I've never cared. People and their opinions of me have never mattered-until a guy named Blake Morrison joined my team. I'm intrigued. He's different. He seems to be all I can think about. Blake has smiled at me a few times; we have even talked after class. He's funny. In fact, I think he's pretty cool. I overheard him say that he hasn't been asked to the Sadie Hawkins Dance yet, but he wants to go. The girls have to ask the boys to be their date to the dance. I can hear girls whisper about asking Blake out. I never wanted to go to the dance. I never thought about going to the dance. That was until the teacher partnered us up for a project. Now is my opportunity. It's now or never . . . now . . . or never.

Vent

When you hate someone, everything that they do annoys you. The way that they walk. The way that they talk. The way that they chew. The dumb facial expressions that they purposely choose to make. Their voice. Their nail polish. The fact that they will flip their hair one million times because of their new hair extensions. (Yes, we all know their extensions.) Oddly enough, there's one thing that I actually agree with my mom on-hate is a strong word. It perfectly describes how I feel about Jade Green. I hate her; but today I'm going to do something about it.

Question

If you were facing death, how would you spend your last few moments alive? Would you attempt to tell everyone near and dear to you how much you love them? Maybe you would pray, and confess all of your sins and wrongdoings. More than likely, you would freeze in terror, cry like an infant, and squeeze your eyes closed until the pressure gave you a headache. Well about a year ago, I was in this exact situation. Here is how I chose to spend my moments when I was face-to-face with death.

Fact

Movies like *Jaws* and *Deep Blue Sea* present sharks as blood thirsty beings possessed by a craving for human flesh and blood. With over 375 shark species existing today, it is estimated that more than 90% of the human population possess a conscious or unconscious form of **galeophobia**, or the fear of sharks. Due to an increase in recreational water-based activities, shark attacks are on the rise. I desperately tried to explain all of this to my father when we discussed the location of our family's summer vacation. Oddly enough, he didn't seem to understand why I was so horrified by one of nature's most perfect killing machines. June 4, 2010 is a date I will never forget.

Event from the Rising Action/Flashback

I swam harder and harder, kicking my legs and moving my arms faster than I have ever done before. The screams of my family and friends were inaudible over the thunderous splash I made in the water. My vision was blurry, and my heart pounded so forcefully that its rhythm was all I could hear in my head. The distance to the boat began to decrease. My mother was crying and screaming hysterically, "Hurry, hurry, faster, faster, don't give up, please son, you're almost here, swim faster, it's right behind you."

Event from the Falling Action/Flashback

Leisurely I began to wake up. I don't remember much, just a dark place void of sound, warmth, and companionship. I could sense the light challenging my eyes to open. I wrestled with my body to unlock them. After a few moments, I was able to release a crack, but a throbbing pain accompanied this action, so I weakly forced the split closed. I could feel someone holding my hand. The embrace was warm, and there was a muffled noise. I could feel the presence of someone perched over me. Gradually, my senses began to return. I felt wet droplets land on my face, and I smelled a familiar fragrance. I forced a crevice between my eyelids again, this time they opened wider. I squinted my eyes to adjust to the beaming light from overhead. I was in a white room, surrounded by familiar people, but I couldn't think of their names at the moment. All I could wonder was *-what happened?*

Description of the Setting/Person

I think the butterflies in my stomach were playing football that day. I felt kind of queasy, nauseous in fact. My palms were sweaty like I had stolen money from the collection plate at church. The walls in the room seem to shift as though I was in a bad game of Jenga. Everyone was silent, and it was awkward-kind of like when you pass gas and there are only two people in the car. My siblings stared at me, attempting to pierce the facade of confidence I struggled to display. My dad gave me the box. It was red, small, and wrapped with a ribbon. He whispered in my ear, "You wanted this pet, now it's your responsibility to take care of it." I could feel the mouse move around in the box, scratching at its flooring. I took a big swallow, walked slowly towards my pet Scales' tank. My siblings watched me carefully, wondering if I would scream. I closed my eyes, and did the unthinkable.

Anecdote

I was sitting on my sofa, watching the most predictable scary movie ever. It was so typical-silly teenagers camping in the middle of nowhere, which just happens to be the site of a murderous killing spree by some supernatural, never-dying, psychopath. In any case, they're in the woods, it's the middle of the night, and then they hear an estranged sound. Of course, the inquisitive characters stop partying to check it out, but they never come back. So, their friends go out in search for them, and then they get a big surprise. That psychopath, that went on the murderous killing spree, that you heard about from all of the people who warned you not to go...he really exists, and guess what, he is not happy that you're in his neighborhood without calling first. I think my excessive criticism on the unsurprising events in the film must have ruined the movie for my family that night. Before asking me to leave, my mom and sister suggested that I film my own kid-friendly horror movie since I can apparently do so much better. To their amazement, that's exactly what I spent my summer doing.

Thought Provoking Prompt/Question/Command

Think about a time when you knew that you were wrong, but you were just too prideful, stubborn, or selfish to admit it. Maybe you lied to your teacher about doing your homework and became mad when

you were given silent lunch. Or do you remember that that time you told your parents you needed money for one thing, but spent it on something totally different? What about when you told your friend you liked someone, and then changed your mind when you found out that they didn't feel the same way? For me, I told a little white lie that turned into a showdown between me, my friends, and the eighth grade bully.

Try using these other techniques: Quote