

Writing Tipsheet 1

How to hook your readers

One of the tricks writers use to *hook* their readers, is to write a fantastic first paragraph. The challenge is to make the paragraph so good, the reader can't put the book down. Sometimes the author does this by introducing one or more characters and a mystery. Take a look at these great first paragraphs.

1. "Angela Throgmorton lived alone and liked it that way. One day while doing some light dusting, she heard a knock at the door. There, on her front step, was a baby monster."
Old Tom, by Leigh Hobbs
2. "Once I was living in an orphanage in the mountains and I shouldn't have been and I almost caused a riot.
It was because of the carrot."
Once, by Morris Gleitzman
3. "If you are interested in stories with happy endings, you would be better off reading some other book. In this book, not only is there no happy ending, there is no happy beginning and very few happy things in the middle. This is because not very many happy things happened in the lives of the three Baudelaire youngsters."
A Series of Unfortunate Events, by Lemony Snicket

In each of the above paragraphs we meet some characters and we're forced to wonder – What will happen next?

1. Who is the baby monster and where did it come from?
2. Why was the character in the orphanage and how did they cause a riot with a carrot?
3. Who are the Baudelaire youngsters and why were their lives so unhappy?

Activity: Now it's your turn! Write an un-put-downable first paragraph by introducing a character and a mystery.

Improve your writing with *word pictures*

Sometimes when we're reading a book, it's almost as if we're watching a movie. The author uses words that help us to *see* the story. These words are called *word pictures*. Here is an example which describes the School Principal from *Arnie Avery*.

"He sat behind his desk, bolt upright like an ostrich. The smell of boot polish filled the room, so my eyes were immediately drawn to the shiny shoes sticking out from under his desk."

How did you imagine the Principal? The words bolt upright like an ostrich make us think he's tall and thin. The smell of boot polish filled the room gives us a hint that the room is small. And the shiny shoes sticking out from under his desk help us to see the Principal's long legs. It also tells us that he's probably tidy because likes to polish his shoes.

Activity: Find an interesting picture of a person in a magazine. Try to write a short description of that person using some *word pictures*.