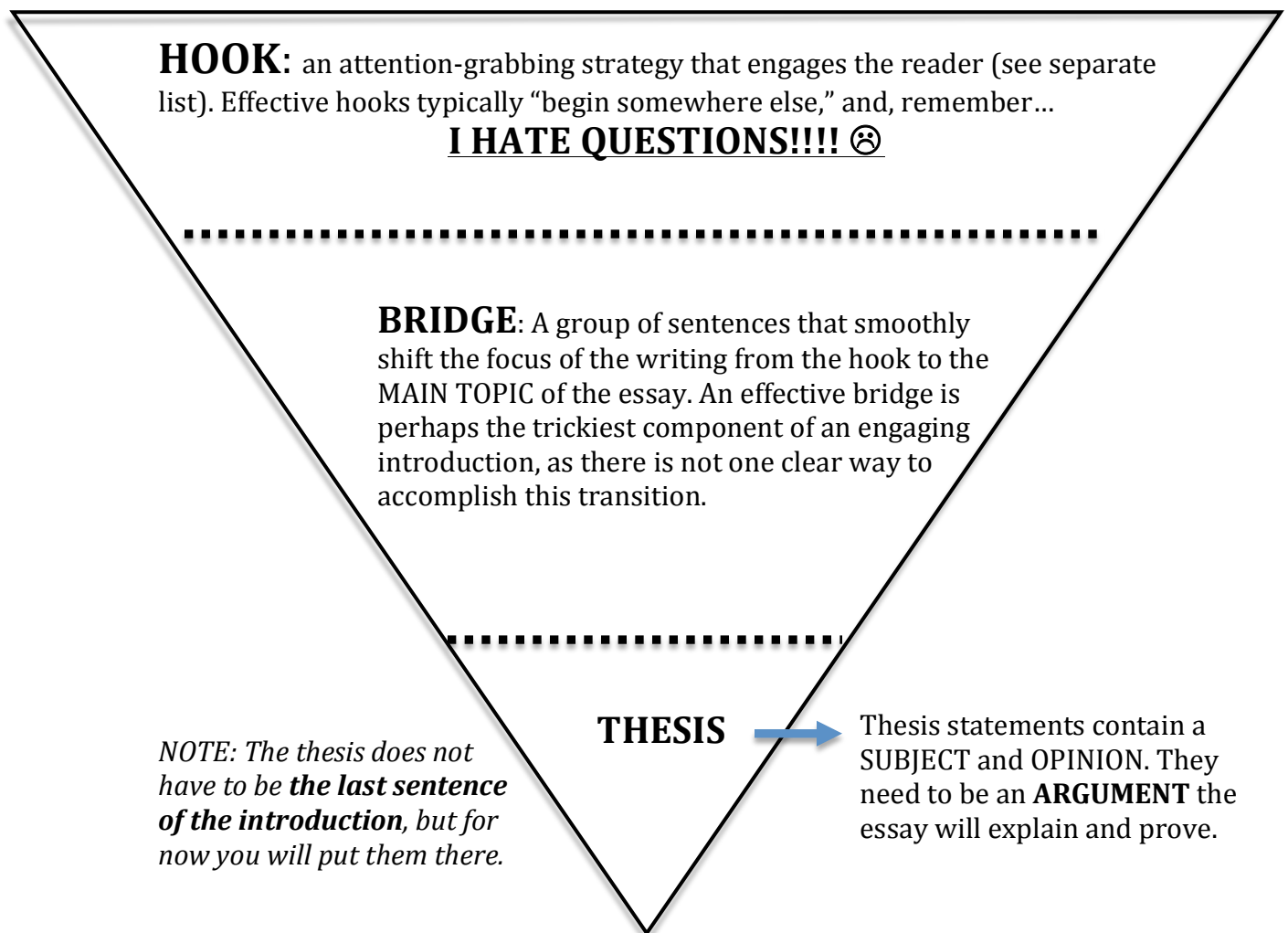


Writing Effective Introductions: A Magic Trick (sort of)

Think back to the first time you met me. Chances are I smiled warmly, shook your hand, and asked your name. I probably asked you something about yourself and let you know what class I teach, just to make sure you were in the right spot. I did not—I am sure—mumble under my breath, avoid eye contact, or growl, “Sit over there. You’re early, so I’m not ready to start class!” Obviously, I wanted to make a good first impression, so I took steps to communicate to you that you were welcome in my class and I was excited about the chance to get to know you better.

Well, as a writer, you need to make a conscious effort to be warm and welcoming to your reader. You want your reader to think, “Now **THIS** person is clever and warm and interesting. I want to read **MORE** of what he or she has to write.” To get this reaction, you need to create a **stylish, memorable, and effective introduction**.

The three parts of any effective introduction



Effective HOOK Techniques:

TAKE A RISK: *No matter which technique you use, BE ORIGINAL and take a risk. Boring writing is predictable writing. Do something different...and a little weird.*

Begin with a question: I know you have been taught to begin with an interesting question. Here's the problem. Your question isn't interesting. I know you think it is, but it isn't. Beginning with a question is a **lazy, unimaginative way** to begin your piece. You are more creative. DO SOMETHING ELSE.

Quotation or Statistic: This method is also pretty lazy, unless your quotation or statistic is particularly engaging. I encourage you to use another technique, but if you feel you have a great quote or statistic, you *might* use this technique off.

Personal story: Readers respond to a personality, so share a short story about a moment in your life. You can accomplish quite a bit in a few short sentences if you give the reader an intimate, memorable "slice of life."

Anecdote: Again, tell a brief story but take it from someone else's life. You do not need to use your story. EXAMPLE:

Before efficient extraction methods developed in the late 1880s, aluminum was VERY difficult to mine. As a result, pure aluminum was more valuable than gold. Napoleon gave banquets where the most honored guests were given aluminum utensils, while the others made do with gold.

Metaphor: Creating your own metaphor or analogy is a wonderful way to add style to your writing. Beginning with your own comparison shows you understand so well that you can illustrate nuances through your own figurative language. Mastering the metaphor should be a goal of any writer.

Unexpected Claim: "There are more slaves in the world today than at any point in human history." This statement seems to be false, but it is actually true. Beginning your essay with an unexpected claim can be very effective.

Vivid Description: Paint a word picture for your reader, focusing in on some object, place, or moment that connects to your general topic. If you can create memorable imagery, your readers will be more likely to engage with your essay.

Humor: If the situation calls for it, humor can be incredibly effective. Of course, humor is the most difficult tone to create in writing, but if you can pull it off...go for it.

???Your Choice???: This is not an exhaustive list. Try some other strategy not listed here. The most important thing is to be ORIGINAL and MEMORABLE.

Sample Introductions

DIRECTIONS: Using three different colored pencils, **CIRCLE and LABEL** the HOOK, the BRIDGE, and the THESIS in the following introductions. After circling and labeling these components, **determine which HOOK strategy** the author uses. Refer to the separate handout and write your guesses in the space provided.

The Clay Marble Essay

_____ = Hook Strategy

Reading a book is a bit like experiencing the different seasons throughout the year. As a book progresses, its contents noticeably change. As the end draws closer, white pages do not turn a golden yellow or brilliant orange and fall from the binding, but a careful reader will notice a change in more subtle things like moods, themes, settings, or characters. Authors often use change to emphasize certain lessons they want the reader to understand. The Clay Marble is no exception. Minfong Ho purposefully changes her characters in order to highlight key lessons she hopes the readers will learn.

“Down With Posters” Blog Post by Mr. Neal

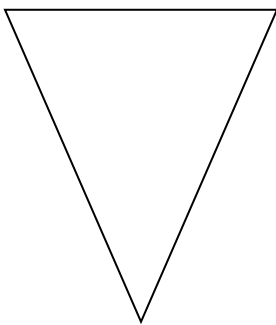
_____ = Hook Strategy

I despise glitter. It’s proudly tacky and sinisterly invasive. Once a bedazzled project crosses the threshold of my classroom, the insidious sparkles permanently lodge in every nook and cranny. Months later I look like Lady Gaga because I’ve accidentally scratched my head after brushing up against an errant drift of pixie dust. I ban the stuff. We’ve all seen effective projects carried out in this medium. Engaging visual aids, family trees in foreign languages, and movie posters for novels all make sense and can lead to critical thought. I argue, however, that this work becomes more effective and more sophisticated when teachers use web 2.0 tools to increase collaboration, develop authentic audiences, and extend the feedback loop.

A Christmas Carol

Christmas as many know it today would not exist without Ebenezer Scrooge. Charles Dickens' holiday story has been very popular since it was first published, and many people believe that this novel's popularity has shaped many of our current attitudes and rituals at Christmas time. One of the main reasons readers still enjoy this story is because of the dramatic changes that occur to Scrooge's attitude in just one magical night. In the beginning of the story he is a mean old man who treats people badly and has no friends. On Christmas Eve the ghost of his former partner, Jacob Marley, visits him and warns him about the consequences of his behavior. He also foretells the visit of three ghosts, suggesting that Scrooge can avoid a terrible fate if he is willing to change. At the end of the novel Ebenezer Scrooge is a completely different man who has learned valuable lessons and who treats people the same way he wants to be treated.

DIRECTIONS: Now, you will write your own practice introduction. I will give your thesis statement and a random topic with which to begin your introduction. You will need to decide on the **HOOK** strategy (or strategies) you will use. Your goal: to write an engaging, memorable, and polished introduction that begins with an effective **HOOK** (connected to the random topic), transitions smoothly to a controlled **BRIDGE** that narrows the focus, and ends with the **THESIS** I give you.



1. **Hook:** *attention grabbing strategy*
2. **Bridge:** *several sentences that narrow the focus of the reader's attention*
3. **Thesis:** *a clear sentence containing a **SUBJECT** and **OPINION** that answers the prompt and gives the focus of the essay.*

Your Sample Introduction

Your random topic: _____

Your HOOK strategy (you chose): _____

[illegible]

THESIS: Video games help students because they teach problem solving skills and improve hand-eye coordination.

THESIS: Video games hurt students because they decrease individual's attention span and damage eye sight.

THESIS: Schools should increase the length of recess in each school day because physical activity helps our brains work more effectively.

THESIS: Professional athletes deserve the high salaries they earn because they generate considerable money for the cities and organizations in which they play.

THESIS: Professional athletes do not deserve the high salaries they earn because they do not contribute to society in meaningful ways.