

Writing Catchy Introductions

As a writer, your top objective in the introduction to a personal narrative should be ***to catch the reader's attention***. After all, if the introduction DOESN'T get the reader interested, he or she is unlikely to continue reading.

These techniques are especially helpful when writing an introductory paragraph. You might

1. begin with a funny story to set a humorous tone
2. begin with an anecdote that reveals some key trait of your character
3. start with a simple fact that will be important later
4. set the mood with vivid, specific details; in other words, add a *snapshot*
5. draw your readers into your writing with a question or two
6. gain your reader's attention with a startling fact, a confession, quotation, or hint of what's to come
7. start out with dialogue

These introductory paragraphs grab the reader's attention. What strategies do they use?

"Two cups of coffee, a bagel with cream cheese, and a hot pretzel." It was a typical order at the snack bar at the citywide garage sale my parents helped run every April. The event was supposed to raise enough money to make some improvement. This was my first year at the snack bar, though, and I was worried that instead of raising money, I would end up owing it.

I was only eight, but I remember it like yesterday. I was sitting in doctor's office when they gave my parents and me the shocking news. "I am sorry to tell you this, but your daughter's condition is getting worse. The only way to fix it is by surgery."

No one expected such a tiny girl to have a first birthday. In Clarksville, Tennessee, in 1940, life for a baby who weighed just over four pounds at birth was sure to be limited. But most babies didn't have nineteen older brothers and sisters to watch over them. Most babies didn't have a mother who knew home remedies and a father who worked several jobs. Most babies weren't Wilma Rudolph.

Have you ever imagined what it would be like to play in the NBA? To glide down the Court, matching strides with the greatest basketball players in the world? To hear the roar of the Crowd as you throw down a dunk, or swat an opponent's shot into the bleachers?

It's every kid's dream.

And for the fortunate few who make it to the NBA, it's a dream come true. —*NBA Game Day* by Joseph Layden and James Preller

His mother was ugly. His father was ugly. But Shrek was uglier than the two of them put together. – Shrek! by William Steig

They murdered him. – *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier

“Your father has met an accident.” – *The Barn* by Avi

A thin crescent moon, high in the sky, shed faint white light over Dimwood Forest. Stars glowed. Breezes full of ripe summer fragrance floated over nearby meadow and hill. Dimwood itself, veiled in darkness, lay utterly still. – *Poppy* by Avi

Try to imagine a star so big that it would fill all of the solar system within the orbit of Earth, which is 93 million miles from the Sun. A star so turbulent that its eruptions would spread a cloud of gases spanning four light-years, the distance from the Sun to the nearest star. A star so powerful that it glows with the energy of 10 million suns, making the brightest ever observed in our galaxy, the Milky Way. – “At the Core of the Milky Way, the Brightest Star Ever Seen” by John Noble Wildord

My grandmother lives on the other side of the earth. – *Sitti’s Secrets* by Naomi Shihab Nye

Willy wouldn’t hurt a fly. – *Willy the Wimp* by Anthony Brown

Have you even eaten a pine tree? —1970’s commercial

Adapted from *Craft Lessons* by Ralph Fletcher and Joann Portalupi, *Reviser’s Toolbox* by Barry Lane, and *After THE END* by Barry Lane.