

All About Hooks: How to Catch the Reader so They Won't Let Go

Starting a writing piece is the most important part, but it's also the hardest. Which explains why I, sitting here, writing this piece am having difficulty beginning. The intro is the first paragraph your reader will read, and your hook is the first sentence. It is your chance to shock your readers and encourage them to read further. How might you do this? There are numerous ways to call the reader to the rocks of your essay (like a siren) including with a quote, anecdote, conceit, description, fact, paradoxical statement, question, or list of examples. All of them can serve as your hook, just take your pick. As a fisherman has different baits and lures for different species of fish, a writer has a different hook for a different situation. Here are some examples, read each one and reflect on what makes it unique and interesting, think about why it makes you more interested in the rest of the piece, and what kinds of situations each type might be used for. Use the space provided to jot down some notes and to try your hand at writing a hook of your own.

A quote:

"I think art blocks come from people's life journeys," says Rainn Wilson, an American actor known for his role as Dwight Schrute in *The Office*. "If you don't know who you are or what you're about or what you believe in, it's really pretty impossible to be creative."

An anecdote:

Seven years ago, in third grade, I was sitting in class working on an assignment with my perfectly pointed pencil. Scribbling away, scrawling words across the paper my hand moving faster and faster in a vain attempt to transform the ideas stuck in my head into wor—Snap!

A conceit:

The most ferocious beast every artist will surely have to battle numerous times is the dreaded art block. It's a clot in your flow of creativity, the Evil Queen of your desired fairytale. But an art block is not an issue you can simply wish away with a shooting star. No amount of "bippity-boppity-boos" can save you from what is every artist's nightmare.

A detailed description:

Innumerable candles were lit, the fire dancing to the beat of the tranquil music. The sun shone through the half-curtained windows parallel to those in peace. With thoughtless minds and closed eyes, a dozen hopefuls sat cross-legged while leaves fluttered in the hushed winds. The music came to an abrupt stop, filling the room with still breaths, still fingers, still minds, still flames. The steady voice of Nalinikanth Pathi broke the silence to lead the journey towards a more desirable tomorrow.

An interesting fact or statistic:

Phantom vibration syndrome – a phenomenon where you think your phone is vibrating but it's not – draws a clear line between enjoyment and addiction which was once a blur. And, not surprisingly in this day and age, 89% of people have experienced these phantom vibrations on multiple occasions.

A paradoxical statement:

The only thing that I know is that I know nothing. For everything I know is in actuality nothing. When compared to the vast knowledge contained within the universe how can I know anything? Yet, I know everything more than everything that came before me. I dare to know nothing of everything, and everything of nothing. It is the nothingness of everything and the everythingness of nothing that drove me here. Here to 221B Baker Street.

A question:

Has anyone ever said, “failure is the first step to success”? Or that “over the hill the grass is greener”? They're lying. These adages are falsely planting fake seedlings of optimism. This positivity can soon turn toxic, greener than the leaves of an oleander, and more rancid than the sewage under the bustling streets of Philadelphia. Ever hear that “after every storm comes a rainbow”? Well, that's nothing but a lie. This storm has been raging for all of life with no end in sight, slowly tearing apart at its very essence. The sunlight needed for this rainbow is covered by clouds – clouds that can never be moved, even with the fiercest winds.

A list of relevant and interesting examples:

Nothing is freer than the sound of the water, its peace, its pace, its pulse. Nothing is freer than floating in a boat, surrounded by all kinds of nature: plants, wildlife, birds, fish, bugs. Nothing is better than paddling a canoe.

Now that you've gotten to read some examples, notice that each is different, yet each is the same. They all catch your interest, netting you into wanting more, yet each does so in a different way. Think about which type is your favorite, think about what makes it your favorite, and think about how you might write your own. Use your new knowledge to practice casting your line, using your favorite hook, to catch the reader.

Questions?

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