



## The Hook

Remember that an introduction should capture the reader's interest. How does it do this? A device that gets the reader's attention is a *hook*. Like a hook on a fishing line can catch a fish, a hook in an introduction can *catch* a reader.

A hook for an essay can be created in a variety of ways:

### Anecdote

An anecdote is a very, very short story. If an anecdote is used to begin an essay, it must be related to the main point of the essay.

Here is an example of an introduction containing an anecdote. The anecdote is underlined for you:

When I was a child, I used to imagine that I could fly. I would glide down the steep hill in front of my house on my bicycle, feet splayed out sideways, not even needing to pedal. Faster and faster I would go until the hill would begin to level out at the bottom and I would gradually slow down, feeling half sorry and half relieved for, although the speed was fun, it was also frightening. Now that I am in my teens, sometimes I feel that way about growing up, too. I am excited to be almost old enough to drive, vote, work, and live on my own, but sometimes I feel scared and not quite ready. Being a child has several benefits. A child has few responsibilities, a child can be silly and have fun, and children often seem to have a better grasp of what is really important in life. I think that young people are in too much of a hurry to grow up, and they should try to hang on to their childhood a little longer.

An anecdote is a brief, relevant story. It is not more than a few sentences. It is related to the main point or argument, in this case that young people should slow down and not be in a hurry to grow up.

### Startling Statement

Give a surprising fact or statistic, particularly one to which your audience (readers) can relate. If you are writing for teens, give an interesting statistic about teens, for example. Again, as with the anecdote, the fact must be related

to your topic. It must also be correct! Be sure that you give credit to the source of your information. This type of hook works particularly well in a persuasive essay.

Here is an example of an introduction that uses a startling statement as a hook. The startling statement is underlined for you:

According to Health Canada, nearly one hundred percent of all smokers smoked their first cigarettes when they were in their teens. Although so much more is known about the harmful effects of tobacco, and although there have been a lot of efforts to discourage teens from smoking, too many teens are trying smoking, which can lead to a lifelong addiction. Obviously information and public service announcements are not enough. Canadian society needs to take a stronger stand against teen smoking. The federal government should require that tobacco be available only through establishments that cater to people over eighteen.

## **Quotation**

Opening with the words of an expert, a world leader, or a celebrity can get your reader's attention. This also adds extra credibility to what you have to say if an expert or respected figure says something similar. Be sure that you give credit to the source of your quotation. For example, the paragraph about not being in a hurry to grow up might start with this quotation:

Albert Einstein said, "I never think of the future - it comes soon enough."

## **Involve the Reader**

One way to capture your reader's interest is to speak directly to him or her. For example, you might begin with something like the following:

If you enjoy working with computers, you may be considering a career in the IT industry.

## **Ask a Question**

This is similar to the "involve the reader" strategy. Here is an example:

Are you in a big hurry to grow up?

Whether the reader answers yes or no, the question has probably captured his or her interest. However, if the reader answers no, he or she may read no further.

## **Background or Historical Information**

Sometimes giving your reader some general background or historical information about your topic is helpful. This can not only interest your reader in the topic, it can also help him or her to understand your essay better. As with the anecdote, this information should be very brief, such as the underlined section in the following example:

The history of Canada and that of Great Britain are closely linked. It has been only about forty years since Canada stopped flying the Red Ensign, a flag that contained the Union Jack, and began flying its own flag, the Maple Leaf. Only about twenty years have passed since Canada attained the right to change her constitution without the approval of British Parliament. Like it or not, our ties to Britain are part of our Canadian identity. Therefore, Canada should not be so quick to disown the British monarchy. The monarchy still has a meaningful role to play in the minds and hearts of a great many Canadians.

These are some ways in which an essay writer can capture the reader's interest. Of course, other ways or combinations of methods are possible. For example, the question may be combined with the startling statement, as in this example:

Did you know that nearly one hundred percent of Canadian smokers started smoking in their teens?

Hopefully, these ideas will help you develop your ideas for writing your own introductions.

Remember: An introduction first "*hooks*" the reader, and then it leads into the thesis statement. Some hooks lead quite naturally to the thesis, as in the example about the British monarchy. Sometimes, you need to add a sentence or two to make the transition, as in the anecdote example