

Pre-Draft 2.1: Introductions

In this exercise, we will consider the importance of the introductory paragraph. Although the introductory paragraph is often the same as the thesis paragraph (particularly in shorter essays), it is also common to write an introductory paragraph separately and then introduce the thesis shortly after. In either case, it is necessary to seize the attention of the reader and hold it firmly. Here are a selection of well-known techniques and suggestions for opening an essay:

1. *Use a quotation.* "What, after all, is a halo? Just one more thing to keep clean" (Steven Fry, *The Lady's Not for Burning*). Whether it is an especially pithy quote from one of your texts, or one from an outside source which happens to bear on the subject, a quotation often catches the attention of the reader. You are not limited to Shakespeare: students have opened successful papers quoting political figures, celebrities, and popular songs, as long as the quotation is short and bears on the subject of the paper.
2. *Surprise or shock your reader.* Say something unexpected, whether it is the opening of your thesis or an obscure fact which can be used to illustrate the issue at hand. "As students in New York well know, schools are more segregated now than they have ever been at any point subsequent to Brown v. Board of Education."
3. *Give an example from your own experience.* If you are writing about class differences as experienced by children, give an example of the time you noticed class difference in the schoolyard. Illustrate the issue you are writing about and draw the reader in with a human example.
4. *Or, give an example from a famous author or essayist.* If you have no example of your own (or prefer not to use one), borrow one (properly attributed, of course) from a famous writer like Dorothy Parker or Mark Twain.
5. *Arouse curiosity in your reader.* A curious reader is a hooked reader, and a hooked reader will read further. "Although most readers will recognize the case of Brown v. Board of Education, few know about the equally important Griffin v. County School Board."
6. *Establish your topic.* This is always an important function, and a good writer can do this while making the reader interested. (See next example for an example of this.)
7. *Define your terms.* If you are going to be using particular terms in the essay, you can start the essay by defining them -- and if your terms are interesting, you may lure readers in to read further by making them wonder why you are going to be discussing it. "Eschatology: the study of death and apocalypse. The eschatology of various world mythologies has been well-studied, but that of modern fantasy, such as the *Harry Potter* series, is less established..."

Using any of the techniques outlined above, **write a proposed introductory paragraph** (it does not have to be an introduction you plan to use for Essay Two, but it can be, if you like). If you can think of a technique not outlined here, please feel free to use it. Your introductory paragraph does not have to contain a thesis (we can assume that the thesis will be introduced in a separate paragraph), but you may, if you wish, introduce the thesis in the introductory paragraph.

Double-space, print out, and bring your introductory paragraph to class (one copy).

Due 9/30