



Openings and endings toolkit

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To create openings and endings that hook the reader you might want to:

N/R	Y1/2 As in N/R plus:	Y3/4 As in Y1/2 plus:	Y5/6 As in Y3/4 plus:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn a 'Once upon a time' opening Learn 'Once upon a time there was a ... who lived ...' to establish a character in a setting. E.g. 'Once upon a time there was a pirate who lived on an island.' Learn to end a story with 'Finally' or 'In the end' plus 'happily ever after'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think about how the character feels/ what the character wants before the story starts Add more ways to start a story, using the 'time' starter 'one', e.g. <i>One day; One morning; One afternoon; One night ...</i> Add in 'early' or 'late', e.g. <i>Late one night; Early one morning ...</i> Use 'place' starters, e.g. <i>In a distant land; Far, far away; On the other side of the mountain, etc.</i> Use more time starters, e.g. 'Once, not twice; Long ago; Many moons ago ...' End by stating how the character has changed or what has been learned, 'He would never steal again.' Or, take your characters home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use time (<i>Late one night</i>), weather (<i>Snow fell</i>) or place starters (<i>The river teemed with fish</i>) – 'who', 'where', 'when', 'weather' and 'what' (is happening) to orientate the reader Start with the name of your character, e.g. 'Bill stared out of the window'. Think about how the character feels (or personality, e.g. bossy) and show this at the start, e.g. 'Bill glared at his teacher.' Use dramatic speech – "How do we escape now?" (Try warnings, worries, dares, secrets.) Start with questions or exclamations to hook the reader's interest, e.g. "Run!" they yelled./ "What is it?" she muttered. End by showing how the character has changed, 'Bill grinned.' or what has been learned, e.g. a moral 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Hook' the reader, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Usually</u>, <i>Tim enjoyed playing in the park but ...</i> Use a contrast, e.g. inside/ outside: <i>Outside, the wind howled. Inside, the fire blazed.</i> Use a <u>dilemma</u>, <u>desire</u> or <u>unexpected</u> event, e.g. <i>Jo wept.</i> Suggest something dangerous might happen (<i>the ancient bridge shook</i>) or has happened (<i>smoke rose from the village</i>) Dismiss the 'monster', e.g. <i>Tim had never believed in ghosts.</i> Create a mood (<i>The fog shrouded ...</i>) Use a 'trigger' to catch the reader's interest, e.g. <i>someone wants something; is warned not to do something; has to go somewhere; is threatened; has lost something; a mysterious parcel arrives</i> Use a flashback or forwards. End by showing what the main character has learned or how they have changed. Make a link back to the beginning. Have the author comment on events.

Useful ideas for teaching openings and endings – always co-construct the toolkit with the class



Model all aspects of the toolkit and display possible openings and endings on the washing line or working wall

N/R	Y1/2 As in N/R plus:	Y3/4 As in Y1/2 plus:	Y5/6 As in Y3/4 plus:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice and use common openings and endings from well-loved picture books • Repeat common storytelling openings/ endings such as <i>'Once upon a time'</i> or <i>'Finally, they ...'</i> in storytelling • Emphasise in storytelling the importance of the main character and where they lived • Use banks of familiar characters and settings to develop familiar opening patterns such as <i>'Once upon a time there was a ... who lived ...'</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hot seat, in role, as a main character at the start of a story – <i>what do they feel/ desire, where do they live/ where are they going/ what are they doing</i> – then turn into oral telling of the opening or shared writing • Repeat hot seating of the main character to develop the ending, focusing on how the character has changed or what has been learned • Notice, collect and try using openings from picture books and oral stories • Build up a bank of cards with time starters, characters, settings so that children can choose different ways to open/ end stories • Use objects, pictures, film clips, trips, visitors to trigger story beginnings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use drama to develop 'show not tell' to deepen openings and endings • Use role-play to develop possible 'speech' openings and translate with shared writing • Collect and categorise openings from story books, e.g. ones that start with speech, a character's name, the setting, a question, a dilemma, etc. • Discuss which openings hook the reader and what techniques are being used • Work on planning with a character, in a <i>place, the time of day</i> and <i>weather</i>. Then add in <i>'why the character is there'</i> and <i>'how the character feels'</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect adverbials to hook the reader, e.g. <i>'Usually', 'amazingly', 'suddenly'</i> • Work from objects, images, experiences • Model how to tease the reader by leaving gaps and a back-history, e.g. <i>'Mrs Jenkins was not going to be fooled again.'</i> • Compare different openings/ endings by quality writers and discuss which is most powerful and why. Then contrast the openings with their endings; look for links • Use shared and guided writing to model effective openings that hook the reader and endings that draw a story together. Reflect what has changed/ been learned • Experiment by writing various openings, thinking about the desired effect on the reader, e.g. to make them laugh, feel sad, want to read on, etc.