

The Hooks and Ladders of Writing Handout Sheet

RMOWP 2016 Writing Workshop

The Hooks

The Opening Line

- Intrigues the reader to read further.
- The “make it or break it” line.
- Questions to ask yourself when writing your hook:
 - Who is my audience?
 - How do I want them to feel?
 - What do I want them to take away?

The Opening Paragraph

- A sample of what the rest of the manuscript will be.
 - Establishes authority.
 - Provides a thesis statement or goal.
 - Introduces the author’s chosen voice.
- Opening paragraph techniques:
 - Baited – hints about something important that will be discussed later. May reveal a startling fact.
 - Funnel – general statement that narrows on a specific theme. May begin with an inspirational quote.
 - Rhetorical – asks a question, requiring the reader to consider their response before reading further. Usually the question is answered within the essay.
- Openings to avoid:
 - Vague generalities, i.e., *In today’s world...*
 - Flat statements, i.e., *The purpose of this essay...*
 - A definition, i.e., *According to Webster’s dictionary...*
 - An apology, i.e., *You may not agree with me, but...*

The Ladders

Paragraph Transitions

- Transitions are the springboard for the next paragraph.
- Paragraph transitions carry ideas or introduce changes in thoughts from one paragraph to another.
- Transitional techniques include the following:
 - Elaborate on an idea presented in the preceding paragraph.
 - Introduce a new or related idea.
 - Describe a consequence, implication, exception, or problem with the idea presented in the preceding paragraph.

- Indicate time, chronology, or how or when something occurs within the context of the article.

The Closing Sentence

- Brings closure to your reader.
- Look for the nearest exit.
- Don't tie it up in a bow.
- Last sentence techniques:
 - Bring the writing full circle by mirroring the beginning hook or paragraph.
 - End with a quotation.
 - End with a surprise statement or startling fact.
 - End with an image, action, dialogue, or reflection.

Suggestions for Further Reading:

- *A Writer's Guide to Using Eight Methods of Transition*, by Victor C. Pelligrino
- *Hooked: Write Fiction that Grabs Readers at Page One and Never Lets Them Go*, by Les Edgerton
- *On Writing Well*, by William Zinsser

Have Questions? Please feel free to email me at staatve@sbcglobal.net.