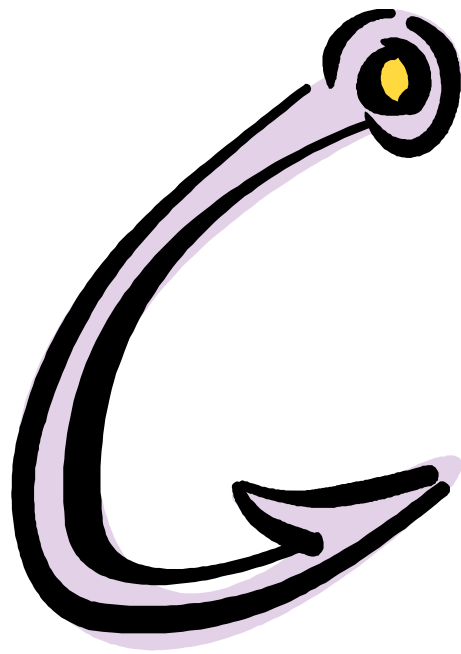


# WRITING HOOKS



*Beth Burke*

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# WRITING HOOKS














## ***What is a hook?***

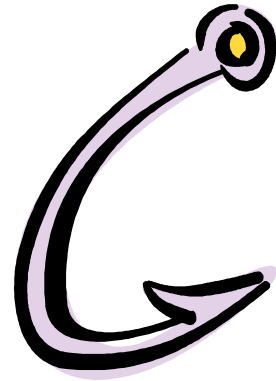
A **hook** (also called a lead) is a sentence, group of sentences or paragraph at the beginning of a writing piece. It captures (“hooks”) the reader’s interest, entices him/her to keep reading and establishes the author’s voice.

## ***How do I teach hooks?***

- ◆ Connect your “Hook instruction” to reading. Look at the Hooks that are used in the novels, articles, or other stories you are reading.
- ◆ Take a published selection of literature and have students try different Hooks for the same story.
- ◆ Use the samples of hooks with your students as models for their writing.
- ◆ Model creating your own hook using one of the samples from real literature.
- ◆ Don’t think of them as a definite list that you need to cover.
- ◆ Don’t think that you need to teach your children to use and/or identify each kind of hook.

# TYPES OF HOOKS

-  Action
-  Analogy
-  Command to the Reader
-  Bold Statement/ Interesting Fact
-  Character's Thought or Feelings
-  Definition
-  Dialogue or Quotation
-  Foreshadowing
-  Onomatopoeia
-  Question
-  A Theme Statement
-  Sentence Fragment
-  Setting/ Picture



# A Hook Mini-Lesson

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## **IRA/NCTE Standard**

Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

## **Objective**

Students will compose a hook in order to capture the reader's interest in their stories.

## **Opening Activities**

- Ask students to pull out the book they are reading right now and read the first paragraph. Ask students if any of their books really motivated them to want to read the rest of the book.
- Have one or two students share. Tell students that good authors create hooks to begin their stories to encourage people to “hook” them in and make them want to read on.
- Tell students the objective for the day: You will compose a “hook” to entice readers to read your story.

## **Procedure**

1. Ask students if they know any techniques a writer can use to hook readers into wanting to read the whole book in just the first few sentences. Elicit student responses. You may wish to write list of ways to hook a reader (refer to the Writing Hooks packet).
2. Select one of the hooks to display as a transparency and discuss it.
3. Model creating your own version of the hook.
4. Have students work in cooperative teams to try creating a hook as well.

## **Closure**

Ask students to verbalize why authors use hooks at the beginning of their writing.

## **Extension**

As students are working on their own writing, encourage them to use one of the hooks.

## **Assessment**

Observation of students' group work. You may score the students' group revisions on a 3-Point Scale:

- 3—Hook grabs the reader's attention using the topic of the “weak” sample and uses the hook technique.
- 2—Hook grabs uses the topic of the “weak” sample and uses the hook technique.
- 1—Hook uses either the topic of the “weak” sample and uses the hook technique.
- 0—Hook was off-topic or not complete.

# Hook: Action

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Example:

Arnie slammed the screen door and flopped into a chair.

from *Never Spit on Your Shoes* by Denys Cazet

Example:

Ahyoka's charcoal flew across the sycamore bark.

from *Ahyoka and the Talking Leaves* by Peter and Connie Roop and illustrated by Yoshi Miyake

Example:

When Mrs. Frederick C. Little's second son was born, everybody noticed that he was not much bigger than a mouse.

from *Stuart Little*, by E. B. White

Example:

Here is Edward Bear, coming downstairs now, bump, bump, bump, on the back of his head, behind Christopher Robin.

from *Winnie-the-Pooh*, by A. A. Milne

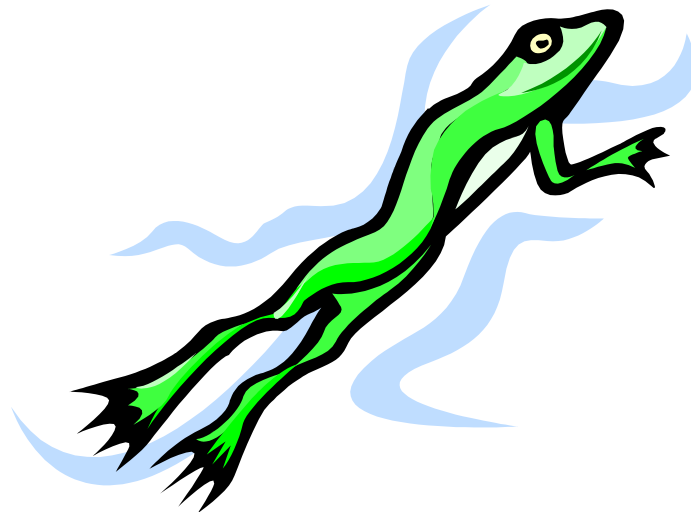
# Hook: Analogy

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Example:

If you hopped like a frog...you could jump from home plate to first base in one mighty leap!

from *If You Hopped Like a Frog* by David M. Schartz



# **Hook: Command to the Reader**

Example:

Call me Ishmael. Some years ago-never mind how long precisely-having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world.

from *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville

Example:

If you are interested in stories with happy endings, you would be better off reading some other book. In this book, not only is there no happy ending, there is no happy beginning, and very few happy things happen in the middle.

from *A Series of Unfortunate Events: The Bad Beginning* by Lemony Snicket



# Hook: Bold Statement

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Example:

Mama never mentioned it, but I'm sure I musta been born with a baseball in my hand, its smooth white skin curving into my tiny brown palm.

from *A Strong Right Arm: The Story of Mamie "Peanut" Johnson* by Michelle Y. Green

Example:

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU'VE EARNED A PENNY.

It will buy anything that costs one cent.

from *How Much is a Million* by David A. Schwartz and illustrated by Steven Kellogg

Example:

If you asked the kids and the teachers at Lincoln Elementary school to make three lists--- all the really bad kids, all the really smart kids, and all the really good kids—Nick Allen would not be on any of them. Nick deserved a list all of his own, and everyone knew it.

from *Frindle* by Andrew Clements

## **Hook: Character's Thought or Feelings**

Example:

It was almost December and Jonas was beginning to be frightened. No. Wrong word, Jonas thought.

from *The Giver* by Lois Lowry

Example:

Call me Ishmael. Some years ago-never mind how long precisely-having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world.

from *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville

Example:

He did not want to be a wringer.  
This was one of the first things he had learned about himself.

from *Wringer* by Jerry Spinelli

Example:

Ramona Quimby hoped her parents would forget to give her a little talking-to. She did not want anything to spoil this exciting day.

from *Ramona Quimby, Age 8* by Beverly Cleary

# Hook: Definition

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Example:

The earth beneath our feet usually feels solid and firm. Yet a million times each year—an average of once every thirty seconds—somewhere around the world the ground shakes and sways. We call this an earthquake.

from *Earthquakes* by Seymour Simon



# **Hook: Dialogue/ Quotation**

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Example:

One morning a mosquito saw an iguana drinking at a waterhole. The mosquito said, "Iguana, you will never believe what I saw yesterday."

from *Why Mosquitos Buzz in People's Ears* by Verna Aardema and illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon

Example:

"Where's Papa going with that ax?" said Fern to her mother as they were setting the table for breakfast.

"Out to the hoghouse," replied Mrs. Arable. "Some pigs were born last night."

from *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White and illustrated by Garth Williams

Example:

"Angelo! Angelo! Look! A Boat!" Angelo put down the net he was mending, pushed his red cap back off his forehead, and looked at Michelle.

from *Red Sails to Capri*, Newberry Honor Winner by Ann Weil

Example:

"Now remember," Mother said, "your father and I are bringing some guests by after the opera, so please keep the house neat."

from *Jumanji*, by Chris Van Allsberg

# Hook: Foreshadowing

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Example:

When I was in elementary school, I packed my suitcase and told my mother I was going to run away from home.

from *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George

Example:

One day, Grandfather wouldn't get out of bed. He just lay there and stared at the ceiling and looked sad.

from *Stone Fox* by John Reynolds Gardiner

# Hook: Onomatopoeia

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Example:

*Zum. Zum buzzz. Zum. Zum. Buzz.* Berlioz had been practicing for weeks, and now just when the orchestra was going to play in the village square for a gala ball, a strange buzz was coming from his double bass.

“Why now?” Berlioz said to himself.

from *Berlioz the Bear* by Jan Brett

Example:

Cows in the pasture,

moo,

moo,

moo

from *Barnyard Banter* by Denise Flemming

# Hook: Question

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Example:

What would you like to learn about the world? What problem would you like to solve? These are things scientists often think about. They consider what the answer might be. Then they set out to find the answer. As they work, scientists think about what they see. They think about what has happened in the past. They think about why things seem surprising. Much of a scientist's job is thinking.

from *Think Like a Scientist* by Melissa Blackwell Burke (a Steck-Vaughn Pair-It book)

Example:

What are big and small, and help you stand tall?  
Bones!

from *Skeletons! Skeletons! All About Bones* by Katy Hall and illustrated by Paige Billin-Frye

Example:

Have you ever flown a paper airplane? Sometimes it twists and loops through the air and then comes to rest, soft as a feather.

from *The Paper Airplane Book*, by Seymour Simon

# Hook: Theme Statement

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Example:

(After the introduction)  
It was the sea that Mafatu feared.

from *Call it Courage* by Armstrong Sperry





# Hook: Sentence Fragments

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Example:

Poor Wodney.

Wodney Wat.

His real name was Rodney Rat, but he couldn't pronounce his r's.

from *Hooway for Wodney Wat* by Helen Lester

Example:

Cows in the pasture,

moo,

moo,

moo

from *Barnyard Banter* by Denise Flemming

# Hook: Setting/ Picture

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Example:

A long time ago, in a certain place in Africa, a small village lay across a river and half a day's journey from a city where a great king lived.

from *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* by John Steptoe

Example:

Once upon a time, but not very long ago, deep in the Australian bush lived two possums. Their names were Hush and Grandma Poss.

from *Possum Magic* by Mem Fox and illustrated by Julie Vivas

Example:

Once, in the middle of winter, when snowflakes were falling like feathers from the sky, a Queen sat sewing by the window, and its frame was of black ebony.

from *Snow White by the Brothers Grimm*, freely translated from German by Paul Heins and illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman