Beginnings: 3 Examples (And Why They Work)

Julie Patterson

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Touchstone Texts: Beginnings: 3 Examples (and why they work)

by Julie Patterson, writer-in-residence

STAY CONNECTED

After my post about “Beginnings: Meditations and Ends” a few weeks ago, a teacher friend reached out to me.

“When I tell students I want them to work on ‘the beginning,’ I don’t mean all that rising action you memorize. I mean much simpler stuff. I just want them to write an opening that draws readers in. I am talking about a hook.”

I wouldn’t call crafting a compelling opening just one at random. It is much more intentional than that.

When you teach “beginnings” in your classroom, don’t let the author begin that story for you. Choose one of the texts begin that story for you.

But notice how I talked about these openings. It isn’t just the author telling a story or introducing a character, it is the reader deciding how to begin a piece of writing, no matter what the genre is. This is deeper and more useful applied when deciding how to begin a piece of writing, not just once but every time you begin a text, creating theories as to what makes a compelling opening, not simply memorizing a list of strategies and knowledge--applicable to a wide range of communication materials, whether or not they are in a particular genre.

So there we have three ways to start a story: (1) with a description of an important character, (2) with a reflection on birthdays: the main character; (3) with a reflection on birthdays: the main character.

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