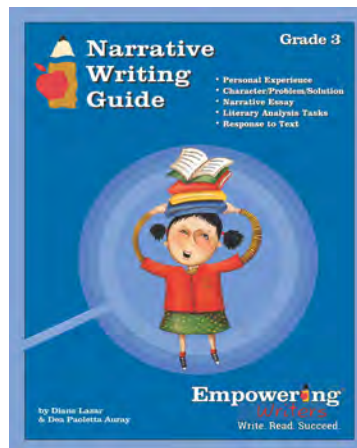




Grade 3 Narrative Writing Guide

Student Pages for Print or Projection

SECTION 2: Beginnings



www.empoweringwriters.com
1-866-285-3516

Name _____

STARTING OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT!

One way to make your writing more interesting and entertaining is by starting off with an irresistible, attention grabbing beginning! Here are some techniques authors use to begin their stories:

1. **AN ACTION** - *Put your main character in your setting doing something interesting and relevant to the story.*

Ask: What would you do?

Ex. I stepped up into the batter's box and tapped my bat on home plate. I was ready to play ball!

2. **DIALOGUE** - *Have your main character say something.*

Ask: What would you say?

Ex. "I'm up next!" I exclaimed to my best friend, Jonah. "I'm gonna hit one out of the park," I called over my shoulder as I stepped up to the plate.

3. **A THOUGHT OR QUESTION** - *Show the main character's thoughts, or raise a story question.*

Ask: What would you wonder or worry?

Ex. I'm due for a big hit! I just know this will be the one, I thought as I gripped the bat tighter and got ready for the pitch.

4. **A SOUND** - *Grab the reader's attention through the use of a sound.*

Ask: What might you hear?

Ex. Whoosh! Slap! The ball hit the catcher's mitt before I even had a chance to swing. "Strike one!" the umpire called out as I adjusted my feet and got ready for the next pitch.

Beginning Tips - Begin your story as close to the main event as possible. For example, if it's a story about finding a lost dog, don't begin two weeks earlier when the pet is safe at home. Instead, begin with your main character in frantic pursuit of the animal. If you're writing about a camping trip, don't begin by waking up, packing your gear and driving to the location — begin at the site! Get right into the action so that you don't lose your reader! Also, since it is very difficult to weave many characters throughout your story, a good strategy is to have your main character start off alone.

Name _____

ANALYZE THIS BEGINNING! (1)

Read this opening sentence. It's from the book Dexter the Tough by Margaret Peterson Haddix.

Dexter hated his new school already.

It was only his first day – barely his first hour. So far Dexter had decided that he hated the principal, the school secretary, and the janitor. He hadn't even met the janitor yet, but he hated him anyway. The janitor had made the floor so shiny and slick that Dexter slipped on it, falling right in front of a bunch of other kids.

Dexter hated those kids, too. They laughed at him.

Think about what you know about story beginnings. Circle the technique or techniques that the author used to grab your attention.

- An Action
- Dialogue
- Thoughts, Questions
- A Sound

After reading this opening line, write down what you are wondering about on the lines below:

CHALLENGE: Now it's your turn to find an example of a good story or chapter beginning that uses the same technique as Margaret Peterson Haddix used above. Be sure to write down the title of the book, page number, and the author's name.

* Dexter the Tough by Margaret Peterson Haddix, Simon & Schuster, Reprint 2008

Name _____

ANALYZE THIS BEGINNING! (2)

Read this opening sentence. It is from a chapter in Patricia MacLachlan’s book titled Arthur for the Very First Time.

The wind began in the night. Arthur awoke to hear the tree branches scraping against the window and the sound of sudden sheets of rain being pushed against the house.

Think about what you know about story beginnings. Circle the technique or techniques that the author used to grab your attention.

- An Action
- Dialogue
- Thoughts, Questions
- A Sound

After reading this opening line, write down what you are wondering about on the lines below:

CHALLENGE: Now it’s your turn to find an example of a good story or chapter beginning that uses the same technique as Patricia MacLachlan used above. Be sure to write down the title of the book, page number, and the author’s name.

* Arthur for the Very First Time by Patricia MacLachlan, HarperCollins, 2002

Name _____

ANALYZE THIS BEGINNING! (3)

Read this opening sentence. It is from the book Geronimo Stilton #1: Lost Treasure of the Emerald Eye by Geronimo Stilton.

It was nine o'clock and I, Geronimo Stilton, was late for work - again. I rolled out of bed in a minute and was dressed in two. Pretty fast, considering I am really not a morning mouse.

"Cheese slices! I hate Monday morning." I grumbled while brushing my teeth with cheddar-flavored toothpaste. Then I hurried downstairs, stumbled over my tail, and tumbled all the way down to the door.

Think about what you know about story beginnings. Circle the technique or techniques that the author used to grab your attention.

- An Action
- Dialogue
- Thoughts, Questions
- A Sound

After reading this opening, write down what you are wondering about on the lines below.

CHALLENGE: Now it's your turn to find an example of a good story or chapter beginning that uses the same technique as Geronimo Stilton used above. Be sure to write down the title of the book, page number, and the author's name.

**Geronimo Stilton #1: Lost Treasure of the Emerald Eye by Geronimo Stilton, Scholastic Paperbooks, Reissue 2011*

Name _____

ANALYZE THIS BEGINNING! (4)

Read this opening sentence. It's from the book The BFG by Roald Dahl.

Suddenly, a tremendous thumping noise came from outside the cave entrance and a voice like thunder shouted, "Runt! Is you there, Runt? I is hearing you jabbeling! Who is you jabbeling to, Runt?"

Think about what you know about story beginnings. Circle the technique or techniques that the author used to grab your attention.

- An Action
- Dialogue
- Thoughts, Questions
- A Sound

After reading this opening line, write down what you are wondering about on the lines below:

CHALLENGE: Now it's your turn to find an example of a good story or chapter beginning that uses the same technique as Roald Dahl used above. Look in your school or classroom library. Be sure to write down the title of the book, page number, and the author's name.

* The BFG by Roald Dahl, Puffin Books, Reprint 2007

Name _____

ANALYZE THIS BEGINNING! - MAKE-IT-YOUR-OWN

Now it's your turn to find an example of a good story or chapter beginning that uses one of the strategies for entertaining beginnings. Look in your school or classroom library. Be sure to write down the title of the book, page number and the author's name.

Read this opening sentence from _____ :
Title

by _____

Think about what you know about story beginnings. Circle the following technique or techniques that the author used to grab your attention.

- An Action
- Dialogue
- Thoughts, Questions
- A Sound

After reading this opening, write down what you are wondering about on the lines below.

Name _____

SPRING!

REMEMBER: Attention grabbing beginnings often use one of the following techniques:

- ACTION: What would you do?
- DIALOGUE or EXCLAMATION: What would you say?
- A THOUGHT/QUESTION: What are you wondering/worrying?
- A SOUND: What would you hear?

Read this story beginning. It is not very interesting. The reader may not be entertained enough to want to read on. Revise this story beginning so that it is interesting and entertaining. Use one of the four techniques listed above. (Do not write the whole story—just the beginning.). Then compare the before and after version. Which would you rather read?

This is a story about me. One spring day I sat outside. I like the spring. I liked to be outside.



Name _____

A BEE IN MY BEDROOM

REMEMBER: Attention grabbing beginnings often use one of the following techniques:

- **ACTION:** What would you do?
- **DIALOGUE or EXCLAMATION:** What would you say?
- **A THOUGHT/QUESTION:** What are you wondering/worrying?
- **A SOUND:** What would you hear?

Read this story beginning. It is not very interesting. The reader may not be entertained enough to want to read on. Revise this story beginning so that it is interesting and entertaining. Use one of the four techniques listed above. (Do not write the whole story—just the beginning.). Then compare the before and after version. Which would you rather read?

I saw a bee fly through my bedroom window.

Name _____

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

REMEMBER: Attention grabbing beginnings often use one of the following techniques:

- **ACTION:** What would you do?
- **DIALOGUE or EXCLAMATION:** What would you say?
- **A THOUGHT/QUESTION:** What are you wondering/worrying?
- **A SOUND:** What would you hear?

Read this story beginning. It is not very interesting. The reader may not be entertained enough to want to read on. Revise this story beginning so that it is interesting and entertaining. Use one of the four techniques listed above. (Do not write the whole story—just the beginning.). Then compare the before and after version. Which would you rather read?

I got up, ate breakfast, put on my clothes and waited for the school bus on my first day at my new school.

Name _____

COYOTE

REMEMBER: Attention grabbing beginnings often use one of the following techniques:

- ACTION: What would you do?
- DIALOGUE or EXCLAMATION: What would you say?
- A THOUGHT/QUESTION: What are you wondering/worrying?
- A SOUND: What would you hear?

Read this story beginning. It is not very interesting. The reader may not be entertained enough to want to read on. Revise this story beginning so that it is interesting and entertaining. Use one of the four techniques listed above. (Do not write the whole story—just the beginning.). Then compare the before and after version. Which would you rather read?

This is a story about how I saw a coyote in the desert.

Name _____

BEFORE AND AFTER REVISION ACTIVITY (1)

Read this story **beginning**. It is BORING!

This is a story about riding a horse.

Revise this story **beginning**. Use one of the following techniques to make this beginning ENTERTAINING!

- **Action** - Ask: what might you be doing/how would you be moving if you were riding a horse?
- **Dialogue or an Exclamation** - Ask: what might you exclaim as you were riding a horse?
- **Thoughts, Questions** - Ask: what might you think, wonder or worry as you ride a horse?
- **A Sound** - Ask: what might you hear as you ride a horse?

Name _____

BEFORE AND AFTER REVISION ACTIVITY (2)

Read this story **beginning**. It is BORING!

I found a hundred dollar bill.

Revise this story **beginning**. Use one of the following techniques to make this beginning ENTERTAINING!

- **Action** - Ask: what would you be doing/how would you be moving if you found that much money?
- **Dialogue or an Exclamation** - Ask: what might you say or exclaim out loud if you found that much money?
- **Thoughts, Questions** - Ask: what might you think, wonder or worry as you pick up the money?
- **A Sound** - Ask: what might you hear as you find the money?

Name _____

BEFORE AND AFTER REVISION ACTIVITY (3)

Read this story **beginning**. It is BORING!

One sunny day I was going to the museum to see a T-Rex.

Revise this story **beginning**. Use one of the following techniques to make this beginning ENTERTAINING!

- **Action** - Ask: what would you be doing/how would you be moving if you were excited about going to the museum to see the T-Rex?
- **Dialogue or an Exclamation** - Ask: what might you say or exclaim out loud if you were inside the museum looking up at T-Rex?
- **Thoughts, Questions** - Ask: what might you think, wonder or worry as you looked around at the dinosaurs?
- **A Sound** - Ask: what might you hear as you get observe the T-Rex?

Name _____

The Bake Sale

Splat! I cracked an egg and the firm, yellow yolk fell into my mixing bowl. How I loved baking! My grandfather had not only shared his extra special secret recipe for oatmeal raisin cookies with me, but shown me exactly how to make them. From start to finish, I'd make them all by myself and they'd be the hit of the bake sale.

"Are you sure about that Susie," my friend Kate had asked, looking worried. She thought that baking from "scratch," (without using a store-bought mix) was really tricky. But she didn't know how often I'd helped my grandfather whip up a batch of these tasty cookies, or how carefully he'd taught me the rules of baking. I knew how important it was to sift and carefully measure the flour. I understood why it was important to use softened, but not melted, butter and, of course, I knew better than to crowd too much cookie dough onto one cookie sheet. So my answer to Kate's question was a definite "yes!" I was sure I could make cookies for the bake sale all by myself and they'd turn out delicious.

It was important that they turn out well because we were going to charge money for them at the 3rd grade bake sale. Everybody in my class was excited about contributing a goodie to sell at the bake sale, which was our way of raising money to pay for a field trip to the zoo. Kate was bringing brownies that she and her mother would make from a mix. My friend Theo said he'd bring a berry pie and Willa's mom had promised to make her famous carrot cake with crunchy walnuts and a sweet pineapple filling.

We'd made signs with brightly colored markers reading **Third Grade Bake Sale, Saturday 9 AM, Park Lane Elementary School** and posted them up all over town. All the 3rd graders would meet our teacher that morning where we'd set up picnic tables in the shade of the towering elm tree that stood on the green lawn in front of our school. On the picnic tables, we'd set up an irresistible display of pies, cakes and cookies, each carefully wrapped

(continued)

in clear plastic to protect their lusciousness. Just thinking about the selection of treats, some crispy and chocolatey and others chewy and fruity, made my sweet tooth smile!

So here it was Friday night and I was making my oatmeal raisin cookies. My mom wanted to help, but I'd promised her that I was up to the job on my own. The only thing I wasn't allowed to do by myself was put the baking sheets into the oven or take them out when they were done.

I started by making a creamy mixture of softened butter and sugar. Then, I added the other ingredients. The last step was stirring in a cup of juicy raisins.

It wasn't long before the dough was thoroughly mixed and ready for the oven. I put heaping spoonfuls of it onto the cookie sheet, carefully spaced so that the cookies wouldn't meld together as they baked, and called my mom to put them in the oven.

The last thing I did was set the timer for exactly 10 minutes. I had to be certain not to burn them! Then, I had to have a taste. I was in for the surprise of a lifetime when I licked the wooden spoon with which I'd been mixing the dough. Instead of the sweetness I'd been expecting, my dough was bitter. What had gone wrong?

I was even more upset when the first batch came out of the oven, flat and dense.

"What did I do wrong?" I asked Mom.

She took a small bite of a still hot cookie. "I think I know," she said, quietly. "Did the recipe say baking powder or baking soda?"

There it was — my mistake. I'd added baking powder instead of baking soda. That was the reason my cookies had a bitter taste and a heavy, rather than a crumbly, texture. How could I have made such a dumb mistake? I felt like crying!

In the morning, Mom and I stopped at the bakery and bought a selection of cookies to bring to the bake sale. I felt like such a failure when I saw Theo's pies and the cake Willa's mom had baked. Even Kate's brownies, which I knew came from a boxed mix, looked delicious with messy swirls of frosting

(continued)

and rainbow sprinkles. My cookies looked perfect, but they were obviously store-bought, and I felt ashamed of them and myself for making that dumb mistake. Miserably, I added my contribution to the table of sweet treats.

“What happened?” Kate asked. When I told her, she just shrugged and said “Oh well, Susie. You tried. The next batch of cookies you bake will probably come out just right.”

Theo agreed. “My grandmother did most of the work on my pies,” he admitted. “It’s cool that you even tried to make cookies all by yourself.”

“My mom says baking is kind of like a science experiment,” Willa said. “Even a little tiny mistake makes a big difference.”

My friends made me feel much better and our bake sale turned out to be a smashing success. By lunchtime, every single sweet, even my store-bought cookies, was sold and we had a nice amount of money to add to our field trip fund.

Looking back, I realized that being miserable about a batch of bitter cookies was like crying over spilled milk. It just made no sense. From now on, I decided I was going to forgive myself for my mistakes. I’d take advice from more experienced bakers and try again...and again and once again, until I got it just right. If I kept trying, there was no doubt I’d master the science of baking and the first people to taste my triumphs would be my kind and honest friends.



Name _____

LITERARY ANALYSIS TASK: BEGINNINGS

ENTERTAINING BEGINNING: The main character is introduced in the beginning of the story. The main character is also called the point-of-view character.

You've read the story The Bake Sale. Write an essay identifying the techniques the author uses to create an entertaining beginning and explain why this is important for the reader. Explain what you learn about the main character's motivation and conflict. Provide evidence from the text to support your ideas.

THINK ABOUT IT: Is this a narrative or informational assignment?

Your teacher will walk you through the following STEPS:

1. Read, annotate, analyze, and summarize the story.
2. Fill in the following:
 - Who is the main **point of view character**? _____
 - What is the **setting**? _____
 - What is the main character's **motivation**? (What does she/he want?) _____

 - What is the **conflict**? (Who or what stands in the way of the main character's motivation?) _____
 - Fill in the summarizing framework that outlines the **plot**.

This story is about _____.

The problem /adventure experience _____.

The problem was solved, experience or adventure concluded when _____.

- What is the **theme**? _____

3. Think about the assignment:

- What techniques does the author use to create an entertaining beginning?
- Why is this important to the reader?
- What do you learn about the main character's motivation for the story?
- What do you learn about the conflict the main character faces?

(continued)

4. Your teacher will MODEL this process with you. You may use the sentence starters to help you cite examples in the source text.

Sentence Starters for Literary Analysis:

- The reader discovers that_____.
- In the beginning of the story, the author _____.
- We see that _____.
- The author reveals _____.
- (Character’s name) influenced the story by__.
- In this story_____.
- The reader understands this when_____.
- In the story, evidence suggests that_____.
- It isn’t long before we discover_____.
- Through the text we learn that_____.
- In paragraph _____, we see that _____.
- We know this because _____.
- We see this when_____.

Name _____

NARRATIVE EXTENSION TASK: BEGINNINGS

You've read the story, The Bake Sale. At the end Susie vows to continue trying to bake the best oatmeal raisin cookies just like her grandfather taught her. Write a new entertaining beginning for the **next** time that Susie attempts to bake the cookies.

THINK ABOUT IT: How has Susie changed based on her experience last time she made these cookies? What might she do differently?

REMEMBER: Here are the techniques you might use. Then, use the productive questions to help generate your beginning. Use one or more of these techniques in your entertaining beginning.

Action - Ask: *What would Susie do?*

Dialogue/Exclamation - Ask: *What would Susie say or exclaim?*

A thought or question - Ask: *What would Susie wonder or worry?*

A sound - Ask: *What would Susie hear?*
