

Openings and endings toolkit © Pie Corbett 2024



Talk for Writing

Always ask, “What mood am I trying to create?” – then you can select words that fit.

Openings and endings should be taught and collected across the year as an ongoing toolkit for stories.

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

Nursery/Reception	Y1/2: as in N/R+	Y3/4: as in Y1/2 +	Y5/6: as in Y3/4 +
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn a <i>Once upon a time</i> opening Learn <i>Once upon a time, there was a ... who lived ...</i> to establish a character in a setting: <i>Once upon a time, there was a pirate who lived on an island.</i> Get the story going with <i>One day</i> Take your character home at the end of the story Learn to end a story with <i>Finally, ...</i> Learn how to use a <i>happily ever after</i> ending 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think about how the character feels/ what the character wants before the story starts Use different ways to start a story <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use more ‘time’ openers: <i>There once was ...; Once, not twice, ...; Long ago, ...; Many moons ago, ...</i> Use ‘place’ openers: <i>In a distant land, ...; Far, far away, ...; On the other side of the mountain, ... etc.</i> Add in ‘early’ or ‘late’ to the ‘time’ opener: <i>Late one night, ... Early one morning, ...</i> Develop the ways to show the reader that the story is ending: <i>In the end; Just in the nick of time</i> End by stating how the character has changed or what has been learned: <i>He would never steal again.</i> 	<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>) plus ‘who’, ‘where’, ‘when’, ‘weather’ and ‘what’ is happening to orientate the reader Start with the name of your character: <i>‘Bill stared out of the window.’</i> Think about how the character feels (or personality, e.g. bossy) and show this at the start: <i>Bill glared at his teacher.</i> Use dramatic speech: try warnings, worries, dares, secrets: <i>“How do we escape now?”</i> Hook the reader’s interest with questions or exclamations: <i>“Run!” they yelled. “What is it?” she muttered.</i> End by showing how the character has changed or what has been learned, e.g. a moral 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ‘Hook’ the reader: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Usually, 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: <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’: <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: <i>someone wants something; is warned not to do something; must go somewhere; is threatened; loses something; finds something</i> Use a flashback or forwards End the story on a cliffhanger or by setting up a sequel: <i>The journey was over, for now.</i> End with an author’s comment on the events: <i>From that day onwards, Tim never looked at the graveyard in the same way.</i>