



Toolkit Focus: Openings and endings

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

EYFS	Year 1 & Year 2	Year 3 & Year 4	Year 5 & Year 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn a <i>'Once upon a time'</i> opening • Establish a character in a setting by using, <i>Once upon a time there was a... who lived... e.g. Once upon a time, there was a pirate who lived on an island.</i> • Learn to end a story with <i>'Finally'</i> or <i>'In the end,'</i> plus <i>'happily ever after.'</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about how the character feels/what the character wants before the story starts • Add more ways to start a story, using the 'time' starter 'one', <i>e.g. One day... One morning... One afternoon... One night...</i> • Add in 'early' or 'late', <i>e.g. Late one night... Early one morning...</i> • Use 'place' starters, <i>e.g. In a distant land... Far, far away... On the other side of the mountain... etc.</i> • Use more time starters, <i>e.g. 'Once, not twice... Many moons ago... Long, long ago...</i> • End by stating how the character has changed or what has been learned, <i>e.g. He would never steal again.'</i> Or take your characters home. 	<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' plus 'weather' and 'what' (is happening) to orientate the reader • Start with the name of your character, <i>e.g. '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>e.g. Bill glared at his teacher.</i> • Use dramatic speech, <i>e.g. "How do we escape now?"</i> (Try warnings, worries, dares, secrets.) • Start with questions or exclamations to hook the reader's interests, <i>e.g. "Run!" they yelled. / "What is it?" she muttered.</i> • End by showing how the character has changed, <i>'Bill grinned.'</i> Or what has been learned, <i>e.g. a moral</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Hook' the reader, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Usually</u>, Tim enjoyed playing in the park but... ○ 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>e.g. 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>e.g. Tim had never believed in ghosts.</i> ○ Create mood, <i>e.g. The fog shrouded</i> ○ Use a 'trigger' to catch the reader's interest, <i>e.g. someone wants something; is warned not to do something; has to go somewhere; is threatened; has lost something; a mysterious parcel arrives.</i> • Use flashback or forwards • End by showing what the main character has learned or how they have changed. Make a link back to the beginning. Have the author comment on events.



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Useful teaching ideas:

Useful ideas for teaching openings and endings – always co-construct the toolkit with the class

Model all aspects of the toolkit and display possible openings and endings on the washing line or working wall

N/R	Y1/2 As in N/R plus:	Y3/4 As in Y1/2 plus:	Y5/6 As in Y3/4 plus:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice and use common openings and endings from well-loved picture books • Repeat common storytelling openings/ endings such as 'Once upon a time' or 'Finally, they ...' in storytelling • Emphasise in storytelling the importance of the main character and where they lived • Use banks of familiar characters and settings to develop familiar opening patterns such as 'Once upon a time there was a ... who lived ...' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hot seat, in role, as a main character at the start of a story – <i>what do they feel/ desire, where do they live/ where are they going/ what are they doing</i> – then turn into oral telling of the opening or shared writing • Repeat hot seating of the main character to develop the ending, focusing on how the character has changed or what has been learned • Notice, collect and try using openings from picture books and oral stories • Build up a bank of cards with time starters, characters, settings so that children can choose different ways to open/ end stories • Use objects, pictures, film clips, trips, visitors to trigger story beginnings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use drama to develop 'show not tell' to deepen openings and endings • Use role-play to develop possible 'speech' openings and translate with shared writing • Collect and categorise openings from story books, e.g. ones that start with speech, a character's name, the setting, a question, a dilemma, etc. • Discuss which openings hook the reader and what techniques are being used • Work on planning with a character, in a <i>place, the time of day</i> and <i>weather</i>. Then add in 'why the character is there' and 'how the character feels' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect adverbials to hook the reader, e.g. 'Usually', 'amazingly', 'suddenly' • Work from objects, images, experiences • Model how to tease the reader by leaving gaps and a back-history, e.g. 'Mrs Jenkins was not going to be fooled again.' • Compare different openings/ endings by quality writers and discuss which is most powerful and why. Then contrast the openings with their endings; look for links • Use shared and guided writing to model effective openings that hook the reader and endings that draw a story together. Reflect what has changed/ been learned • Experiment by writing various openings, thinking about the desired effect on the reader, e.g. to make them laugh, feel sad, want to read on, etc.