

Little Red Riding Hooks

Ten great alternatives to introductions, hooks and leads for narrative writing.

Once upon time, there lived a little girl with a red, riding hood...

Ugh! Spare me! BOOORRRRING!!

<p>Technique 1: Start with a short, effective sentence (4-5 word minimum)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Her hair shone gold.</p>	<p>Technique 2: Start with an interesting metaphor or simile.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The wolf was a tornado destroying the lives of all who crossed his path.</p>
<p>Technique 3: Start with a subordinate clause or other complex sentence form.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Because she was born with endless confidence, Red skipped through the spooky woods without hesitation.</p>	<p>Technique 4: Fill in the blank. “___ was the kind of ___ who/that___.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Red was the kind of girl who never thought ‘What-if?’</p>
<p>Technique 5: Capture an emotion or feeling.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">You’d be surprised to learn about a little girl who couldn’t recognize her own grandmother.</p>	<p>Technique 6: Use a string of adjectives (3+)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Tall, dark and with an air of confidence the woodsman entered the house.</p>
<p>Technique 7: Start in the middle of action. Use a string of verb phrases.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Red <u>threw</u> on her hood, <u>grabbed</u> her basket, and <u>headed</u> into the forest, <u>ignoring</u> her mother’s warning.</p>	<p>Technique 8: Start with dialogue</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“Mom! You have to trust me and let me go!” Red whined.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“Red, I most certainly trust you,” her mother explained patiently. “It’s the other people in the woods I don’t trust.”</p>
<p>Technique 9: Start with a thought.</p> <p>Red couldn’t believe her mother had been so worried about the woods. She looked around and admired the beauty around her. How could you feel unsafe in such a enchanting place.</p>	<p>Technique 10: Detailed sensory description of setting.</p> <p>The fog rolled in gently through the trees, as the final orange glints of the setting sun danced on the forest floor. The crickets kept beat to Red’s steps through the forest, until the crunching leaves revealed another set of steps in the distance.</p>

Typical leads that 8th graders try to use but are ineffective:

□ **The Eminem/Slim Shady Lead:**

Hi, my name is...

You are not Slim Shady, so don't stand up. Sit down and write a better lead.

□ **The Announcement Lead:**

I am going to tell you about the most embarrassing day of my life.

Um. Wow. I am so intrigued. Can't wait to hear more. YAWN! And don't EVEN think about combining the Eminem with the announcement. (That will land you a drop kick, for sure.)

□ **The Presumptuous, Lame-O Question:**

Have you ever had a bad day? Well, I have.

Due to the overuse and widespread misuse – we are banning questions as effective leads until further notice. Seriously, I can't handle it anymore. *Do you want to see your 8th grade language arts teacher go crazy? Well, I don't.*

□ **The Ke\$ha Lead: “Woke up in the morning...”**

I woke up that morning, feeling really excited. I ate breakfast and got in the car ready for my trip to Kings Island. We drove two hours and listened to music on the way there. (Student proceeds to list their day until they go to bed.)

Ke\$sha was wrong when she told you to “don't stop.” If you start a narrative like this, STOP. DON'T! Ugh.

This handout was inspired by Nancie Atwell's “Narrative Leads” and Dena Harrison's “Little Red Riding Hooks” lesson.