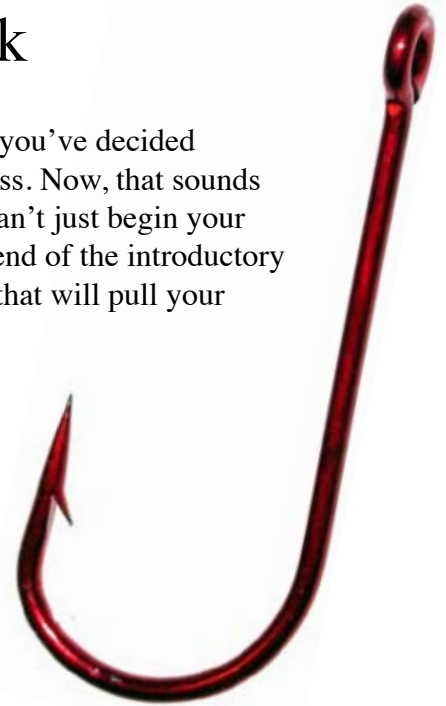


Start Strong – The Power of the Hook

Let's pretend you're writing a literary analysis essay on a short story and you've decided the writer's theme is that failure is a more valuable experience than success. Now, that sounds like a solid, arguable point upon which to build an essay. However, you can't just begin your introductory paragraph with your thesis. Oh no, the thesis belongs at the end of the introductory paragraph. Instead, you'll need to start with a hook, an attention-grabber that will pull your reader into the heart of your essay.

After the hook (which could be one to several sentences), you'll need to include a bridge phrase before your brief story summary. Check out the hook + bridge combos below. Use something like this on your essay and I'll be smiling, not frowning, as I begin to grade your paper. That's what you want, right?



Hook Ideas:

1. Use an analogy or metaphor:

Forest fires are terrifying, destructive forces. Flames devour ancient groves of trees and force defenseless animals to flee from their burrows. Yet, much good comes from the blackened earth such fires leave behind. Nutrients are cycled back into the old soil, new species of flora sprout seemingly overnight, and the wrecked remains of the tree stumps become homes for numerous grateful species. In the short story, "ABC," author XYZ reveals the surprising truth that nature knows but man forgets; success often begins with the ashes of a failure...

2. Famous quote:

"Failure is the tuition you pay for success," the famed author Walter Brunell once wrote. Indeed, the reader finds the truthfulness of this statement illustrated in XYZ's short story, "ABC."

3. Turn a cliché on its head:

Politicians, athletes, and scholars would be wise to embrace the sweet smell of failure. This surprising truth is argued by XYZ, as his short story, "ABC," presents...

4. A shocking statement:

Losing the big game, failing a tough class, or having a broken heart might be the best thing to ever happen to a person. Author XYZ certainly thinks so, as he presents the character Sally in his well-known short story, "ABC."

5. And **never, ever, ever begin with a question:**

What can people gain from their failures? (Ugh.)

What is it about failure that actually leads to success? (Yawn.)

Why are you torturing the poor, exhausted essay reader? (Please stop. Please.)