Hooking Your Reader

Writing Personal Narratives

K20 Center, Gage Jeter
Published by *K20 Center*

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 License

Grade Level	9th – 12th Grade	**Time Frame**	2-3 class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	120 minutes
Course	A.P. Language and Composition, A.P. Literature and Composition, Composition, Creative Writing		

Essential Question

How do effective writers include an engaging hook in the introduction of their piece? How do writers craft interesting stories about themselves?

Summary

Through collaborative research, students will locate, evaluate, and create effective, engaging hooks for a variety of texts. Students will also write a personal narrative and share their openings with fellow classmates. While this lesson is currently aligned only to 9th grade standards, it would be appropriate to teach in grades 9 through 12, adjusting standards as needed.

Snapshot

Engage

Students listen to a picture book as a class and jot down notices and wonderings.

Explore

Students collaboratively explore hooks from novels and determine types/categories of hooks.

Explain

Students define and determine the function of hooks before creating a "Great Hooks" flip book through independent and collaborative research.

Extend

Students determine characteristics of - and craft their own - personal narrative.

Evaluate

Students present the hooks of their personal narratives to the class and provide feedback for their peers. Students will also submit their personal narratives for evaluation and reflect on their learning.

Standards

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards - Reading (6-12)

CLR301: Locate simple details at the sentence and paragraph level in somewhat challenging passages
WME301: Analyze how the choice of a specific word or phrase shapes meaning or tone in somewhat challenging passages when the effect is simple

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 9)

9.2.R.2: Identify characteristics of genres and analyze how they enhance comprehension of fiction, poetry, drama, and nonfiction.
9.2.W.1: Routinely and recursively prewrite (e.g., develop and organize ideas).
9.3.W.1: Compose narratives reflecting real or imagined experiences that:

- include engaging plots involving well-developed, complex characters resolving conflicts
- establish narrator(s) that enhance(s) the narrative
- are intentionally sequenced in a way to achieve a specific effect (e.g., create suspense, establish mood, reflect theme)
- provide clear descriptions, using precise language, sensory details, and dialogue
- include varied syntax to enhance readability
- emulate literary elements and/or literary devices from mentor texts

Attachments

- Explore Activity—Hooking Your Reader - Spanish.docx
- Explore Activity—Hooking Your Reader - Spanish.pdf
- Explore Activity—Hooking Your Reader.docx
- Explore Activity—Hooking Your Reader.pdf
- Personal Narrative Rubric—Hooking Your Reader.docx
- Personal Narrative Rubric—Hooking Your Reader.pdf

Materials

- Multicolored paper
- Picture books (or access to YouTube links)
- Access to a school or classroom library
- Writing materials - pencil, pen, paper, etc.
- Computer/Internet access
- Copies of attachments

Engage

To engage students in this lesson, the teacher should either read or play a video of a children's picture book.

Teacher's Note

There are many options from which to choose. Five different picture books with links to YouTube videos are listed below. You can also check out the link under Resources - "Get the Hook" by author Emma Walton Hamilton - for even more options.

- The Dot by Peter H. Reynolds
- Don't Let the Pigeon Stay Up Late by Mo Willems
- Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak
- It's a Book by Lane Smith
- A Sick Day for Amos McGee by Phillip C. Stead

As students read/watch/listen to the picture book, ask them to jot down on a scratch piece of paper what they **notice** and what they **wonder**, using the I Notice, I Wonder instructional strategy.

After reading/watching/listening to the picture book, encourage students to share their observations and questions with a partner. Then, conduct a brief whole-class discussion in which students share out their ideas. Encourage students to think specifically about the first words, line, or sentence of the picture book.

During the whole-class discussion, pose the essential question to the class:

- *How do effective writers include an engaging hook in the introduction of their piece?*

Allow for students to brainstorm ideas independently and collectively. Also encourage students to consider something personal in their life, maybe a memory they have. Some students could share out an introduction to their memory/experience, initiating a class discussion about whose story students want to hear expanded. Classmates can consider how the introductions hooked the listeners.

Inform students that the activities during this lesson are designed to help them answer this essential question.

Explore

Have students investigate opening lines of novels in order to determine how effective writers hook and hold their readers' attention.

Teacher's Note

Before class, print a few copies of the "Explore Activity Hooks" document. Cut each hook into strips and have on hand for this activity. Note that there are 15 different hooks. You'll want to determine the number of hooks you will need based on the numbers of students in each class. If you have 30 students, you'll use all 15 hooks. If you have less or more, you'll need to take away/add hooks (at least two students will need the same hook).

1. Randomly distribute to each student a slip of paper with a hook on it.
2. Ask the students to individually read the hook and THINK about if and how it catches their attention.
3. Instruct student to PAIR up with a classmate who has the same hook.
4. Pairs should now SHARE their reactions to the hook.
5. After brief conversations, ask students to switch slips of paper with a classmate who has a DIFFERENT hook.
6. Repeat this process with students thinking about the hook, pairing up with another who has the same "new" hook, and having a brief conversation about their reactions. This process can be repeated several times so students read and consider a variety of hooks from various novels.

Once students have engaged in several rounds (or however many you consider appropriate, given the time and students' needs), ask students to return to their desks and individually construct a Two-Minute Paper reflecting on the hooks they read and conversations they had with their classmates. Encourage them to consider different types of hooks they viewed and how they might categorize them.

After two minutes, ask students to share their writing with an elbow partner, and then ask for a few volunteers to share out their ideas with the whole class.

Toward the end of this portion of the lesson, students should have an understanding of different types of hooks and if/how they are effective in catching readers' attention.

Teacher's Note

To extend the engage portion of this lesson, the teacher or students could present a short book talk and read the hook of a particular book he/she is currently reading to see if it is determined to be an effective hook for the reader (or not) and discuss why.

Concerning various types of hooks, possible ideas, reactions, and responses* might include the following:

1. **DROP YOUR READER INTO A SCENE:** Use sensory details to describe a scene, giving your reader an immediate sense of time and place.
2. **ESTABLISH THE MOOD:** Contextual information not directly related to the story can often color our understanding of the coming narrative.
3. **INTRODUCE VOICE:** Stories that begin with a highly unusual voice often withhold other craft elements for a few sentences—a reasonable choice, as the reader may need to adjust to a new form of language before being able to absorb much in the way of content.
4. **TELL AN ANECDOTE:** An anecdote is a short story. It can be a story about your own experience or someone else's experience. Use an anecdote to make a point.
5. **ASK A RHETORICAL QUESTION:** A rhetorical question is a statement in the form of a question. You ask a rhetorical question to make a point, not to get an answer.
6. **STATE A FACT:** The entire weight of the narrative can sometimes be conveyed in a single statement. In many cases, two facts combined are more powerful than either one on its own. Because readers don't read backward, it's possible to bury a key piece of a story in an opening so that, by the time it becomes relevant, the reader has forgotten it.
7. **QUOTE DIRECTLY:** A quote, or quotation, is a passage that you use in your own writing that was originally written or spoken by someone else. You indicate a quote by putting quotation marks.

Teacher's Note

*adapted from **7 WAYS TO START by Jacob M. Appel** and ***http://www.newbremenschools.org/Downloads/Hooks%20Examples.pdf*****.** Initially, encourage students to come up with categories/types of hooks on their own. The goal is not to provide them with these categories right off the bat, but instead to encourage them to think critically and determine some (or all) of these categories (and others) as they participate in the Engage and Explore sections of this lesson.

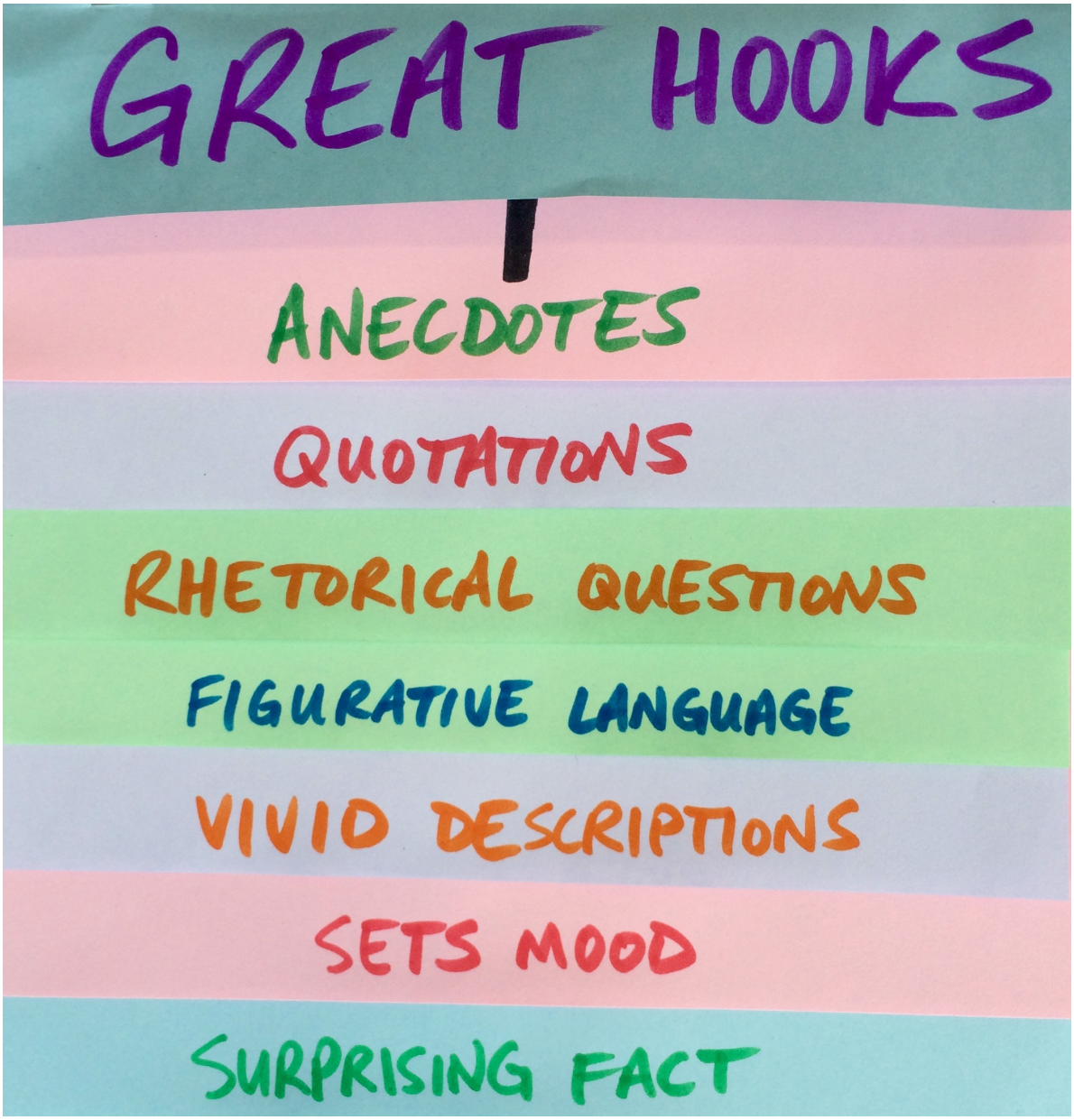
Explain

Now, students will create a "Great Hooks" flip book and label each section as a different type/category of hook. Each student will need the following materials:

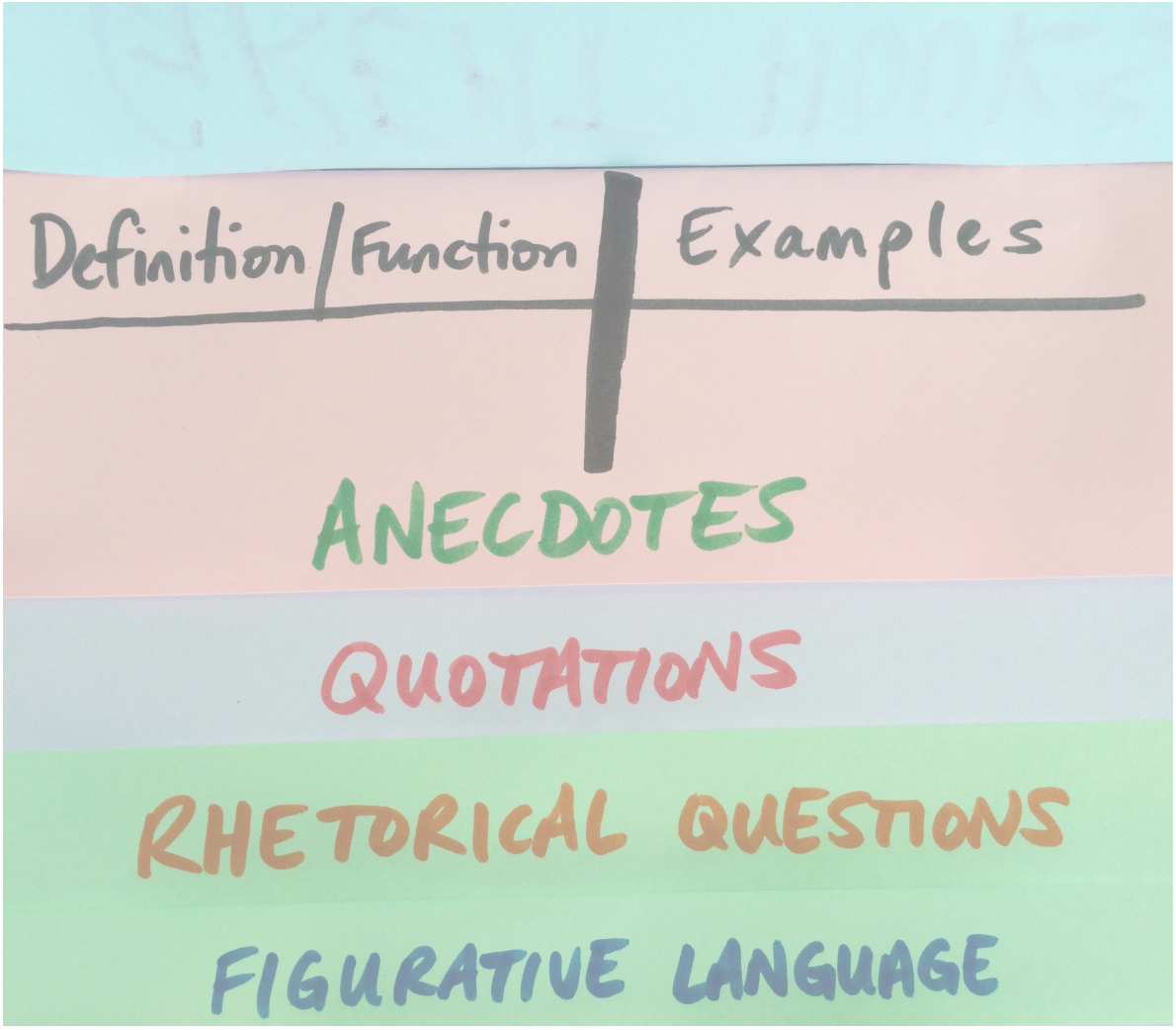
- Four sheets of multicolored paper (in reality, white copy paper will work fine)
- Stapler
- Markers/colored pencils/crayons

Teacher's Note

Check out this instructional video for crafting a flip book. See the picture below for an example.



Great Hooks Flip Book example



Students write the definition/function and locate relevant examples through their research.

Some type/category options might include the following*:

- Vivid description of scene
- Established mood
- Introduction of voice
- Compelling anecdote
- Rhetorical question
- Surprising or interesting fact
- Direct quote

Teacher's Note

*Allow students to create their own categories based on the knowledge constructed during the Engage and Explore sections of this lesson. Those in the example and provided above are meant to be suggestive in nature.

Before moving on, have a brief discussion about the definition and function of hooks in the sense of the literary device. Encourage students to share out, in their own words, what a hook is and what its function might be. So far, students have been looking at examples of hooks but haven't explicitly defined the term. The goal is for students to create a whole-class definition of "hook" and express its functions. The teacher might act as scribe and write down responses on the board. In the end, you will want something similar to the following definition/function of "hook" from literarydevices.net:

Teacher's Note

In the end, you will want something similar to the following definition/function of "hook" from literarydevices.net*****: Some books are magnetic, while some are really boring. One of the reasons could be the narrative hook. Knowing this, authors share an important literary technique to keep their readers engaged in the stories, which is hook or narrative hook that keep readers' interest alive in the book. It appears at the beginning of the story, and may contain several paragraphs of a novel, several pages of a short story, or just could be an opening sentence, or a single line. Authors use hook as a critical component of their writing, as it allows them to demonstrate to the readers how their literary works are worth reading within the first minute. This literary technique hooks the attention of readers and appeals their minds. Readers also get a great sense of entertainment through strong and meaningful opening lines that might stick in their heads forever.

Teacher's Note

*****Remember that students play the active role in defining and determining the function of a hook. While you should facilitate a conversation that allows students to construct this knowledge and understanding, you want to avoid simply providing them with the definition/function.

Students have two responsibilities for each section of the flip book: 1) define/state the function of the particular type of hook and 2) find relevant examples from novels, Internet research, or YouTube videos of picture books.

Working individually or in small groups (3-4 students per group), students will conduct research to determine the effectiveness of hooks.

There are several options for this portion of the lesson:

1. Students can use novels available in the teacher's classroom library or the school library. Perusing various novels, students can check out opening lines and categorize them according to types of hooks, creating new categories along the way.
2. Students can use the Internet to research hooks in a multitude of genres: literature, songs, television shows, autobiographies, movie trailers, etc. This multimodal component allows for students to consider how hooks work outside of traditional texts.
3. Students can watch more of the aforementioned picture books and note opening words, lines, and sentences.

Allow students ample time to explore novels, conduct Internet research, or watch picture book videos. Encourage students to work collaboratively and, before moving on to the Extend portion of the lesson, engage in a whole-class discussion about definitions/functions/examples of hooks. Allow all students to revise their flip books as they converse. In the end, students should end up with a flip book that contains many definitions/functions/examples to be used as a resource later.

Extend

To extend students' learning, have them write an individual short personal narrative—a story that's true and retells an experience that really happened to them. This activity centers on the second essential question, which you should pose to students now: *How do writers craft interesting stories about themselves?* Encourage students to consider this question as they determine the parameters of this writing situation, write their personal narrative, and share excerpts with their classmates.

Allow students to brainstorm ideas for choosing a topic to write for the personal narrative. Encourage students to consider ideas from the beginning of the lesson where they thought of a personal memory. Reiterate that students should focus on one memory/moment and how that impacted their life.

Because an effective personal narrative begins with an effective hook, students should be sure their narrative includes a catchy hook and tells a short version of a memorable event from their life.

In addition to using their hook books as resources for their narrative, Paula Berinstein offers the following techniques for writing great hooks:

- **Foreshadow.** Imply that a change is coming.
- **Raise questions in the reader's mind.** Your first few sentences should cause us to ask questions. What is going on here? How did he get into that situation? Give us enough answers to keep us from getting lost, but keep us guessing.
- **Start in medias res (in the middle of things).** Jump right into the action. Do not start with back story. Assume we know who and what the viewpoint character or narrator is talking about.
- **Add a hint of spice.** Whet our appetites by adding something intriguing, like incongruity, oddity, danger, tension.
- **Provide context.** Hint at the setting and/or the situation so we know what we're dealing with.
- **Get the reader to identify with the character and her predicament ASAP.** Give us an interesting character in a pickle, and make sure the stakes are high so we'll feel her pain.

Teacher's Note

The types of hooks discussed in the Explore section, the definition and function of hooks, and these techniques for writing great hooks can be useful resources for students, but remember the purpose of the Engage, Explore, and Explain sections is for students to construct their own knowledge and understanding of hooks. As the teacher, you will act as a facilitator along the way.

You and your students have freedom to create the parameters of the personal narrative. It is a good idea to come up with some guidelines or non-negotiables as a class before students begin writing. Allow students to play an active role in determining the intricacies of this personal narrative. If students have little prior experience with personal narratives, be sure to facilitate a conversation concerning the features of personal narratives. Some ideas include:

- Title
- Attention-grabbing hook
- First person
- Appropriate pacing
- A particular, focused time
- Theme
- Dialogue
- Descriptive language/Sensory details

While the hook is a focus of this lesson and the evaluation, assess students on the elements of personal narrative writing decided upon by the class.

Evaluate

Have each student present their hook (whether that be a line, sentence, or paragraph) to the whole class.

Ask audience members to provide verbal feedback regarding the essential question in consideration of each student's hook: *How do effective writers hook and hold their readers?*

Teacher's Note

If time allows, volunteers could sit in the Author's Chair (where student writers read their work aloud) and read their narrative as a whole. This would allow for discussion about the second essential question: *How do writers craft interesting stories about themselves?*

Have students submit their personal narratives for evaluation. Additionally or alternatively, ask them to engage in a self and/or peer review of the personal narratives. The attached rubric ("Personal Narrative Rubric") is useful for the teacher and for the students if self/peer review occurs.

Teacher's Note

Remember the focus of this lesson is on exploring, defining, and creating hooks. While the extension activity is a personal narrative, the evaluation should not rely too heavily on personal narrative aspects not discussed in this lesson (unless students have had prior experience/knowledge writing personal narratives in class). The brief personal narrative could serve as a starting point for a future piece that might go through the various stages of the writing process. In turn, the rubric should serve more as a self/peer review instead of a summative assessment. With that said, part of the essential question includes the idea of writers **holding** their readers' attention after hooking them in, so the personal narrative in its entirety does relate to the essential question and this lesson as a whole.

Teacher's Note

The attached rubric is based on the Six Traits of Writing model. Feel free to edit/revise this rubric as necessary. For example, in this lesson the Conventions trait might not be a focus due to time constraints. Instead, the personal narrative might be a draft at this point. For more information about the Six Traits, visit this website.

As an Exit Ticket, ask students to reflect on their learning. Encourage them to consider the processes for comping the personal narrative, especially the hook. It might be beneficial to pose the second essential question: *How do writers craft interesting stories about themselves?* Students can rely on their own writing processes, their classmates' stories, or previous activities during this lesson. Students can write on a scratch piece of paper, index card, or even put their response on a sticky note and add to the class Parking Lot.

Resources

- 16 Of The Best Opening Lines From Children's Books. (2013, July 23). HarperCollins. https://www.buzzfeed.com/harpercollins/16-of-the-best-opening-lines-from-childrens-books-9npd?utm_term=.rtPnJOPzVQ#.giMOMp76Xd
- Berinstein, P. (2012, October 14). Six tips for engaging readers within two seconds: The hook in fiction and memoir. https://kobowritinglife.com/2012/10/14/six-tips-for-engaging-readers-within-two-seconds-the-hook-in-fiction-and-memoir/
- Definition/function of hooks. (2016). Literary Devices. http://literarydevices.net/hook/
- Hamilton, E. W. (2016). Get the hook! http://emmawaltonhamilton.com/get-the-hook/
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Parking lot. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/131
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Bell ringers and exit tickets. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/125
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Think-Pair-Share. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/139
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Two-minute paper. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/152
- K20 Center. (n.d.). I notice, I wonder. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/180
- Pearl, N. (2007, June 25). Great opening lines to hook young readers. NPR Morning Edition. http://www.npr.org/2007/06/25/11260800/great-opening-lines-to-hook-young-readers
- Petit, Z. (2013, January 18). Famous first lines reveal how to start a novel. http://www.writersdigest.com/editor-blogs/there-are-no-rules/famous-first-lines-learn-how-to-start-a-novel
- Reed, J. (2012, September 1). Elements of plot flipbook (Part I) for Mr. Reed's 7th grade ELA class. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ryrBsO0JdFY
- Reynolds, P. (2010, January 4).The dot. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5mGeR4AQdM
- Sendak, M. (1963). Where the wild things are. Harper and Row. [Video].YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bptuYPvfgk
- Six traits of writing. (2014). Education Northwest. http://educationnorthwest.org/traits/trait-definitions
- Smith, L. (2010). It's a book. Roaring Brook Press.[Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YvMFLf0K3k
- Stead, P. C. (2010). A sick day for Amos McGee. Roaring Brook Press. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgZ1IPNAgRg
- Willems, M. (2015). Don't let the pigeon stay up late. Wernick & Pratt Agency. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LG-zxLiokQU