

Twenty Opening Lines

1. I went to the corner shop when...
2. The other day on the way home from school I met...
3. When I got to the park / hospital / hotel / car park / stadium, I did discovered a wall built around....
4. The government have added an extra storey to my house. It started when...
5. We found an Anderson shelter next to the pond in our garden and when I went inside...
6. The castle stood on the side of a wind-swept hill. I knew they were manufacturing _____ when I heard...
7. I got a text this morning from _____. It changed everything.
8. I was hiding inside a cupboard when I saw...
9. The igloo was surprisingly warm / spacious inside. I sat in one corner and...
10. The alleyway formed a shortcut between Riverstock Road and Argille Street. One damp February morning I _____
11. I arrived at the zoo early because...
12. It took me all evening to paint my placard. It said...
13. I was on the tube the other day when a woman grabbed my arm and said...
14. "This teapot," the old woman said, "was the very first thing I found when..."
15. When the universe came to an end last Thursday, all that remained was...
16. The first time I saw the woman / man who saved my life, s/he sat next to me and said...
17. I slotted the last brick into place and stood back to admire my work. Just then...
18. "Simply the best chocolate cake I have ever tasted." Those words will stay with me forever. Of course...
19. Yes, I know the way to Marshall Crescent. Turn right by that tree up there, then follow the lane until you get to...
20. That morning, I couldn't find my... or: Inside my coat pocket I discovered a...

Teaching Guidelines

Start like this:

Use the list of twenty opening lines as a handout and ask students to pick one of the lines to use to open a story.

OR

Download and print the word document and cut up the list of twenty opening lines so that you can ask students to pull them out of a hat.

Now do this:

1. Students complete the sentence in order to come up with a story idea.
2. Ask students to create at least three characters to populate their stories. They invent a background for them and decide what they want most in life.
3. Share the characters with the rest of the group and ask for suggestions from the hive mind as to how they might develop these characters further.
4. Next students work on the structure of their story – what problems will these characters overcome and how will the story resolve itself?
5. Now students act as editors. Ask students to swap stories with someone else in the room (this can be random or done in pairs). The editor makes suggestions that the writer can choose to incorporate or reject. (You can take this further by asking the partner to write part of their colleague's story.)
6. Students finish their stories and one or two can read them to the class.

To finish do this:

Each student writes their own opening line, and, mimicking those on the handout, must leave out some crucial information. Use these as starting points for the group's next Creative Writing or Drama project or save them to use with another group.

To extend the work, do this:

Put on a reading event. Invite parents or another class to form an audience, provide refreshment, and have the class read their stories out and / or explain the process they went through to put the story together. You could do this to raise money for charity if desired by charging for tickets.