

JEN DODRILL WRITES

SET THAT HOOK!

*Tips and tricks
to write that
first sentence!*



Jen Dodrill
WRITES

How to write the 1st line:

I recently put a Snoopy cartoon on IG. Snoopy is writing his traditional "It was a dark and stormy night," and Linus says, "Good luck with the second sentence."

I got a lot of comments on that one. The general consensus was - it's **HARD** to write that first sentence.

And, I have to ask, why? And how can it be easier? And, what can I do to help?

So, in this little booklet, I'm going to give you some concrete steps to write that first sentence (and maybe the 2nd one too).

Let's get started!!

I teach public speaking and I've discovered that no one writes a speech the same way.

Some people:

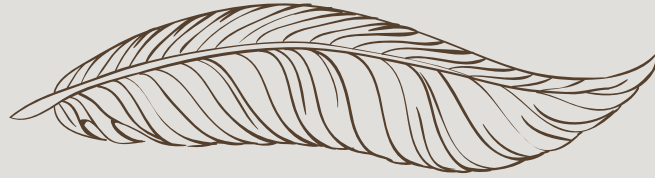
- *outline*
- *write in full sentences*
- *start in the middle*
- *write the conclusion first*
- *write in bullet points*



And what I tell my students is I don't care how they do it, they just have to get it done.

That's what we as writers have to do - just get it done. Whether you write on a blog, write essays, poetry, fiction, or nonfiction, you have to start - and you want to hook your audience.

First things first: figure out what works for you!



Are you a planner/outliner/plotter?

Are you a pantser (fly by the seat of your pants)?

Are you somewhere in between?

Great! Now you know how you write - what's next?

Do that planning! Even if you're a pantser, you'll have to do a little bit. Just like in a speech, there has to be a beginning, middle, and end.

But to get started, you have to write that first line -- that **HOOK!**



A Hook is what we call an attention getter in public speaking.

It's what GRABS your reader and keeps them reading!

And guess what? You want to hook them at the beginning of each chapter -- actually each scene.

You want your reader to stay up late reading your novel!

So, let's brainstorm some hooks! Use the next pages to brainstorm a few hooks for your story. Whether it's the first chapter or the last. Then we'll look at ways to freshen them up.



Set that hook!

Set that hook!

I recently read an article called, "Famous First Words." It cited several famous first lines ("Call me Ishmael"), but what I liked was it shows how to rewrite your hook in different ways. So I took my original first line:

Tires crunched on my gravel driveway and brakes squealed as a rusty red Pinto pulled to a stop. A woman stepped out.

and I rewrote it to be:

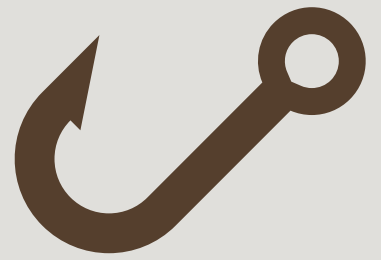
I was enjoying my quiet morning, sipping my coffee, until I heard a car crunching down my gravel driveway, squealing to a stop. I looked out the window and saw a rusty red Pinto. The driver's door opened, and a woman stepped out.

Which do you think is better? I like the new one much more because it does a couple of specific things:

- shows action
- provides setting
- signals change with "until"
- makes you want to know who the woman is

I think it's a good hook! And it's actually 3 sentences and something I can write my whole novel around.

At a writing conference I went to, Bob Hostetler gave a workshop on Hooks. He gave us a list of 20 ways to write them. And then he challenged us to rewrite our hooks in all 20 ways!



Takeaways:

Hooks - capture readers' attention much like hooks capture a fish

Your hook can:

- surprise
- provide a question that begs to be answered
- include dialogue
- drop the reader into the action
- offer a contradiction



I'd love to read 2 or 3 of your hooks! Email them to me at jend@jendodrillwrites.com!