

Narrative Leads

"Hook" your readers!

A narrative lead, or "hook," is a way to grab a reader's interest or attention.

It can be a sentence, a paragraph or even a few pages long.

A bad or boring hook can make your reader want to throw the book across the room! A good hook makes your reader want to read more.

A narrative lead "hooks" the reader onto your line and doesn't let go, and the story that follows reels him in.

It is worth it to revise your hook until it is perfect.



Below are the first lines of several books.

Which is your favorite? Which one makes you most excited to read the book?

It was one of those super-duper-cold Saturdays. It was so cold that if you were stupid enough to go outside your eyes would automatically blink a thousand times all by themselves, probably so the juice inside of them wouldn't freeze up. It was so cold that if you spit, the slob would be an ice cube before it hit the ground. It was about a zillion degrees below zero.

--Christopher Paul Curtis,
The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963

The school bus wheezes to my corner. The door opens and I step up. I am the first pickup of the day. The driver pulls away from the curb while I stand in the aisle. Where to sit? I've never been a backseat wastecase. If I sit in the middle, a stranger could sit next to me. If I sit in the front, it will make me look like a little kid, but I figure it's the best chance I have to make eye contact with one of my friends, if any of them have decided to talk to me yet.

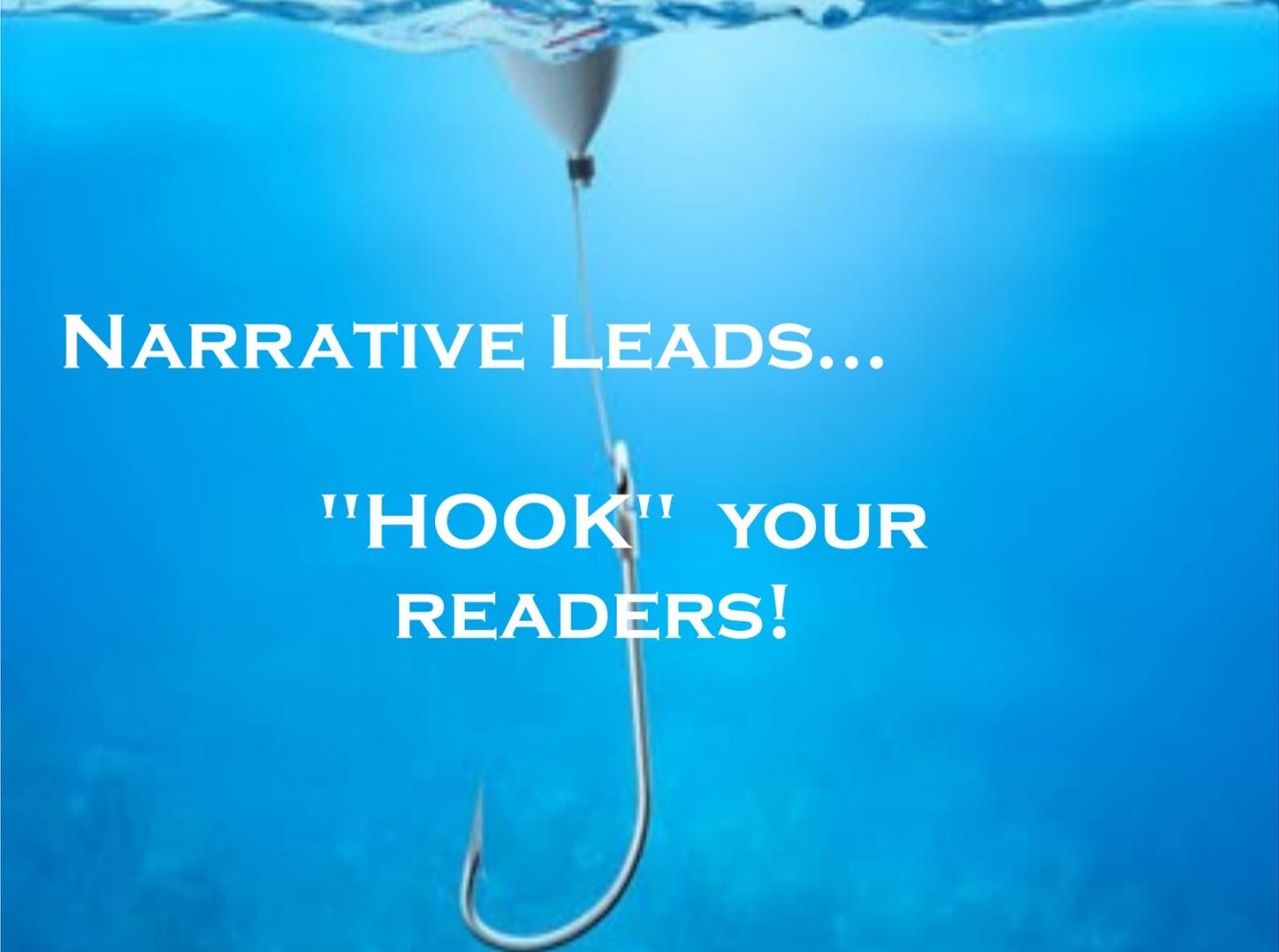
-Laurie Halse Anderson, Speak

I clasp the flask between my hands...My muscles are clenched tight against the cold...I should get up, move around, and work the stiffness from my limbs. But instead, I sit, as motionless as the rock beneath me, while the dawn begins to lighten the woods. I can't fight the sun. I can only watch hopelessly as it drags me into the day that I've been dreading for months.

--Suzanne Collins, Catching Fire

"Where's Papa going with that ax?" said Fern to her mother as they were setting the table for breakfast.

--E.B. White, Charlotte's Web



NARRATIVE LEADS...

**"HOOK" YOUR
READERS!**

Our goals for this lesson:

- Learn the four types of narrative leads
- Draft 2 different leads for our "Slice of Life"
- Edit our leads
- Chose the best lead for our story

Imagery Lead

- A detailed sensory description of the setting.
- The reader can visualize what is happening
- Sight, smell, touch, taste, sound

Example:

The sun glowed through the morning fog, straining to burst free. Mist rose off the lake in the distance. The air was still and damp, with a hint of warmth at the edges. Birds chirped and warbled in the distance, the only sound on this otherwise silent morning. In an instant, this serene scene was shattered by my father's voice as he bellowed from the lake, "Scott! Get down here. You're not going to believe this!"

Action Lead

- A **description** of a **character** doing something
- Uses many **action** verbs and **suspense**

Example:

I gulped my milk, pushed away from the table and bolted out of the kitchen, slamming the broken screen door behind me. I ran down to our dock as fast as my legs could carry me. My feet pounded on the old wood, hurrying me toward my dad's voice.

"Scott!" he bellowed again.

"Coming, Dad!" I gasped. I couldn't see him yet—just the sails of the boats that had already put out into the lake for the day.

Inner Thoughts Lead

- A character **thinking** or **wondering** about something
- Uses **inner thoughts**

Example:

I couldn't imagine why my father was hollering for me at 7:00 in the morning. I thought fast about what I might have done to get him so riled. Had he found out about the way I snapped at my mother the night before, when we got to camp and she asked me to unpack the car? Did he discover the fishing reel I broke last week? Before I could consider a third possibility, Dad's voice shattered my thoughts as he bellowed for me to hurry.

Dialogue Lead

- Characters **speaking** to each other
- Tells **part** of a conversation using **correct** punctuation

“Scott! Get down here on the double!” Dad bellowed. His voice sounded far away.

“Dad?” I hollered. “Where are you?” I squinted through the screen door but I couldn’t see him.

“I’m down on the dock. Move it! You’re not going to believe this,” his voice sounded urgent.

“I’m coming!” I yelled, bolting out the door and sprinting toward the lake.

"Slice of Life" Narrative Lead: Action

Action Lead:

I sat in the salon chair, my knees shaking like leaves. That's what happens when I get anxious or nervous. I knew I was behind schedule, again. As soon as she finished my beautiful up-do, I raced out the door, rushing to my car at lightning speed. I sped home, screeching through traffic as my mom begged me to, "Slow down!" I quickly pulled into my driveway, leaving the car engine running, and sprinted to my room. Once I was in the comfort of my childhood bedroom and saw the stunning blue dress hanging from my closet door, I instantly took a deep breath. I slipped on the dress, careful not to ruin my hair, and looked in the mirror. What am I missing? I immediately strapped on my high heels, snatched my camera, grabbed my purse, gave myself one last look in the mirror and bolted out the door toward my date's house. I was finally ready for prom.

Slice of Life

Narrative Lead: Inner Thoughts

Inner Thoughts Lead:

As I looked at myself in the mirror, I couldn't help but feel my heart pound like a drum in my chest. I was so excited I could barely breathe! Do I look OK? Will my date be handsome? Will I have as much fun as I think I will? What am I missing? I need my shoes, my purse, my camera, and I'm ready to go. Tonight will be absolutely perfect, I thought. I had no way of knowing that I was about to experience the most embarrassing moment of my entire life!