

Opening the Front Door: The Lead

When you open the front door of a house and step inside, you can sense immediately if you're comfortable or even if you want to stay awhile. With just a quick glance around, you can get a feel for the people who live in the house.

Similarly, the lead or beginning of a piece of writing is the "front door." You want your guests or readers to feel compelled to stay and linger. The following are a few examples of front doors, or suggestions for leads:

- **A Question:** Many writers begin with a question. What's more compelling than a question that begs to be answered?
"And how's my girl?" -*Granpa* by John Burningham (1991)
"Where's Papa going with that ax?" said Fern -*Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White (1952)
- **An Image:** An image paints an immediate picture and creates a world that the reader can step into:
On a summer evening
I looked up from dinner,
through the open window of the backyard
-*Fireflies!* by Julie Brinckloe (1986)
- **An Action:** When the readers walks through this door, she is forced to engage in the story because she's stepping right into the middle of the action. The reader has to run to catch up with the story. An action can be a sound, lights, dialogue, and so on.
Ba-room, ba-room, ba-room, baripity, baripity, baripity, baripity – Good.
His dad had the pickup going. He could get up now." -*Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson (1977)
- **A Surprise:** You might want to surprise your reader when she first opens the door. This is a sure way to capture the reader's attention.
One day last spring, Louis, a butcher, turned into a fish. Silvery scales. Big lips. A tail. A salmon.
-*Louis the Fish* by Arthur Yorinks (1986)