To begin your personal narrative, you will need a beginning paragraph that will HOOK the reader’s attention. It starts the story in an unique manner. It may provide information about the conflict, characters, or setting. Some provide insight into the theme of the story.

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| “Hair” by Malcolm X  Shorty soon decided that my hair was finally long enough to be conked. He had promised to school me in how to beat the barbershops’ three- and four-dollar price by making up congolene and then conking ourselves.  I took the little list of ingredients he had printed out for me and went to a grocery store, where I got a can of Red Devil lye, two eggs, and two medium-sized white potatoes. Then at a drugstore near the poolroom, I asked for a large jar of Vaseline, a large bar of soap, a large-toothed comb and a fine-toothed comb, one of those rubber hoses with a metal sprayhead, a rubber apron, and a pair of gloves.  “Going to lay on that first conk?” the drugstore man asked me.  I proudly told him, grinning,“Right!” | How does Malcolm X establish interest in the character by introducing the story through his actions and a small piece of dialogue? |
| Flying Colors by Tim Lefens  When you get to the top of the hill there are two ways to go: straight, which will take you into the woods, and left, which will take you to the hospital.  I had been told it was a school. The car slows to a crawl past the fancy wooden sign. It seemed like a nice enough thing, an abstract painter being invited to a school, but I, like you, am not anxious to go into a hospital, no matter what the reason. | How does Tim Lefens create interest in his narrative by introducing the setting?  What could you predict will relate to his conflict? |
| “The Climb” by Amy  I have this fear. It causes my legs to shake. I break out in a cold sweat. I start jabbering to anyone who is nearby. As thoughts of certain death run through my mind, the world appears a precious, treasured place. I imagine my own funeral, then shrink back at the implications of where my thoughts are taking me. My stomach feels strange. My palms are clammy. I am terrified of heights.Of course, it’s not really a fear of being in a high place. Rather, it is the view of a long way to fall, of rocks far below me and no firm wall between me and the edge. My sense of security is screamingly absent. There are no guardrails, flimsy though I picture them, or other safety devices. I can rely only on my own surefootedness—or lack thereof. | How does Amy establish her conflict? What does she do to hook her readers into her story?  Why does the author use “..or other safety devices” and “-or lack thereof” at the end of the paragraph? How does it impact the conflict? |
| “The Sacred Grove of Oshogbo” by Jeffrey Taylor  As I passed through the gates I heard a squeaky voice. A diminutive middle-aged man came out from behind the trees — the caretaker. He worked a toothbrush-sized stick around in his mouth, digging into the crevices between algae'd stubs of teeth. He was barefoot; he wore a blue batik shirt known as a buba, baggy purple trousers, and an embroidered skullcap. I asked him if he would show me around the shrine. Motioning me to follow, he spat out the results of his stick work and set off down the trail. | How does the characterization interest the reader at the beginning of the narrative? |
| “How Wilma Rudolph became the World’s Fastest Woman” by Kathleen Krull  No one expected such a tiny girl to have a first birthday. In Clarksville, Tenn., in 1940, life for a baby who weighed just over four pounds at birth was sure to be limited.  But most babies didn't have 19 older brothers and sisters to watch over them. Most babies didn't have a mother who knew home remedies and a father who worked several jobs.  Most babies weren’t Wilma Rudolph. | Why does the author list the facts at the beginning of the narrative?  How does it relate to the conflict?  Why does the hook end with the last sentence “Most babies weren’t Wilma Rudolph”? |
| Charlotte’s Web by E.B. White  “Where’s papa going with that ax?” said Fern to her mother as they were setting the table for breakfast.  “Out to the hoghouse,” replied Mrs. Arable. “Some pigs were born last night.”  “I don’t see why he needs an ax,” continued Fern, who was only eight. | How does E. B. White hook the reader’s attention?  How does the father’s action conflict with the setting (when/where)?  What can you foreshadow the conflict will be and why do you believe this? |
| My introduction. You DO NOT need to write the introduction here. However, answer the questions using the introduction of your personal narrative draft.  First, identify your hook in your personal narrative. It usually consists of the first couple of paragraphs. | How do you capture the reader’s attention?  What words or phrases do you use to capture the reader’s attention? How do they relate to characterization, setting, conflict, and/or theme? |

For homework, create two different beginnings to your personal narrative. If you use dialogue, use a beginning that begins in the middle of the action, describes the setting and/or character, or starts with a reflection related to the theme. Reflect on the three different hooks, then decide which will be the most effective. Why will the hook you choose be more effective and grab your reader’s attention? Use text evidence to explain why.