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Hooks, Lines & Sinkers

By Sue Kendrick

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by: **Sue Kendrick**

Hands up if the title to this article made you think that you'd strayed into a fishing feature?

Perhaps you didn't quite go that far, but hopefully you were puzzled or curious enough to wonder what on earth those three angling associated words have to do with writing. The answer of course is nothing at all if you are thinking of metal barbs, yards of tangled nylon and blobs of lead weights.

Think, however, of the good opening lines used to begin most successful short stories, novels and articles then the "hook" in our title takes on a whole new range of meanings and equates very well with the world of creative writing.

What most beginners fail to understand when they first begin writing, and this applies as much to articles as it does to short stories and novels, is that when they submit their work to an editor, competition judge or publisher there is only a brief moment to impress which is why a lot of attention needs to be paid to that first opening sentence.

Hooking your reader with a good beginning isn't a guarantee to success, but it will serve to focus attention and make the judge, publisher or editor take more notice of the rest of the article, story etc. If nothing else, it presses an subconscious alert button in the reader's mind that marks up the writer as a professional who knows his or her craft.

This in turn builds expectation and again focuses attention. As long as the rest of the piece lives up to its early promise, you can be sure that your effort will at the very least receive close inspection and hopefully much more!

So, just how do you come up with a good hook? It would be nice if I could say that there was some magic formula available but unfortunately I haven't found it even if it does exist! Still there are several things that you can do to get things moving.

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First of all don't sit staring at your screen trying to think of a good opening line when you have a mind boiling with ideas struggling to spread themselves over the page! All this will do is make you tense up with frustration and dam your creativity.

Instead, start hitting the keys and slap those ideas across the screen! Once you have the basic outline down then you can start the editing process, including the opening sentence. If at this stage you are still stuck, try leaving the work for a few days, there's a good chance you'll come up with something when you're mind is focused on something else and the first flush of enthusiasm has cleared from your brain.

Analogy, such as I've used to the fishing world, often provides a good hook. In the case of this article I used it in the title but hooks are used just as often or more so in the opening sentence. My actual opening "hook" made use of a question, which again is a very good way to start, as questions by their

very nature demand a response from the reader, even if it is only to read to the end of the sentence!

I took this a step further by demanding physical action, "hands up", which of course is a ridiculous thing to expect a reader to do when there is no way of knowing whether they have complied or not! It is this stupidity that hopefully grabs attention and carries on from where the title left off. PR writers are well aware of this process and often mis-spell words to create a similar effect .

Quotations and deliberate mis-quotations also make good hooks either from songs, proverbs or other literary works, but also try putting together unusual combinations of words.

For instance, you wouldn't think that brussel sprouts could possibly have any effect on good or evil and I'm sure they haven't! One of my son's however has different ideas and his annual grumble during our recent Christmas meal gave me a marvellous opening line, or hook, for what will be a festive article taking a close look at this, in my opinion, much maligned vegetable!

What was it? Oh yes, when faced with a heap of those shiny green gems he muttered murderously, "If it wasn't for brussel sprouts there'd be no evil in the world ..." now is that a hook or what?

Which brings me on to another point. Hooks, I've found seem to have a power in their own right and often serve as a catalyst to the story or article itself which is why you should be on the alert for when they occur.

The brussel sprout incident is a prime example. Writing in any shape or form was the furthest thing from my mind, but the startled looks and laughter from the rest of the family were enough to confirm what I'd immediately thought, here was a hook begging for exploitation and with a enough power of its own to begin generating several lines of thought.

Being aware of hooks and the power they have on the reader is something every writer has to get to grips with if they want to achieve success so it is a good idea to train yourself to both generate hooks and be on the alert for them by listening to what other people say.

Having a small notebook handy makes a lot of sense, but reading what other people have done before you will also pay dividends. Try this quiz of opening lines to famous novels. It's not easy, but don't worry about your score, the real benefit of the quiz is seeing what worked for the author. The scent of slaughter, some believe, can linger in a place for years. When Mr Bilbo Baggins of Bag End announced that he would shortly be celebrating his eleventy-first birthday ... In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ... Scarlett O'Hara was not beautiful, but men seldom realized it when caught by her charm as the Tarleton twins were. The stranger came early in February one wintry day, through a biting wind and a driving snow ... "The marvellous thing is that it's painless," he said. "That's how you know when it starts." Last night I dreamed of Mandalay ... A wide plain, where the broadening Floss hurries on between its green banks to the sea, and the loving tide rushing to meet it ... Mr Jones, of the Manor Farm, had locked the hen-house for the night, but was too drunk to remember to shut the pop-holes. "Tom!"

Well, what did you think? Some were definitely intriguing but others in my opinion left a lot to be desired which just goes to show that the proof of the pudding is in the eat... er reading so don't fall into the trap of thinking that the beginning is the be all and end all!

Oh and before you ask, I haven't forgotten the lines and sinkers either, call those plots and twist

endings and to find out more sign up for the WriteLink Short Story Writing Workshop, it's free!
www.writebytes.co.uk

ANSWERS: The Loop by Nicholas Evans The Lord of the Rings by J R R Tolkein The Bible Gone with the Wind by Margaret Mitchell The Invisible Man by H G Wells The Snows of Kilimanjaro by Ernest Hemingway Rebecca by Daphne De Maurier The Mill on the Floss by George Elliot Animal Farm by George Orwell The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain

Sue Kendrick is a freelance writer and graphic designer living in the English Midlands. She writes regular news items for her regional newspaper, has had many articles published in special interest magazines and won prizes in several short story contests. She is now the editor and publisher of www.writelink.co.uk one of the UK's premier writing websites and monthly newsletter. She has written several ebooks including READ ALL ABOUT IT! The WriteLink to Newspaper Writing www.writelink.dabsol.co.uk/Newspaper_Book/newspaper_book.html and Poetry For Profit, four reports on how to make money from writing poetry. www.writelink.dabsol.co.uk/Poetry_for_profit/poetry_for_profit.html

Sue's personal website can be seen here:

Choosing A Variety Of Seashell Shower Curtain

By Beverly Kane

A lot depends on the kind of shower curtain hooks that you choose for your bathroom. For one, it lends a characteristic appeal and adds that extra beauty to one of the most important rooms in the

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house. Though the easiest way out would be to choose a simple round silver or gold ring, there are many options available to day.

For instance seashell shower curtain hooks. They are appealing and useful, yet add that typical tropical aura to your bathroom.

So where do you find the seashell shower curtain hooks ? its fairly easy actually. Most large departmental stores carry a large variety of accessories and fittings for the bathroom, including hooks and rings. You can easily buy the hooks from these shops. And while you are at it, you could pick up some other accessories as well - like, a soap dish or a toothbrush holder.

Once you find a shop which sells seashell shower curtain hooks, you can see for yourself, the large selection available. They come in lots of colors and designs. Choose the ones which go best with the color scheme of your bathroom.

Over and above the variety of colors and designs, seashell shower curtain hooks are available in various sizes and shapes. Small and dainty ones for those who believe in "small is beautiful" and big ones for those who would not mind giving a bold look to their bathroom.

The bathroom is one of those places in the house which holds the maximum amount of humidity. This factor must be taken into consideration when buying curtain hooks for the bathroom, since there are materials which desist moisture more than others.

Seashell shower curtain hooks are generally made with a silver or gold base. Not only do these look attractive but they are also affordable and versatile in use. But these can rust as well, depending on the type of material they are made from. Rusting can cause immovable stains and when this happens, the curtain has to be discarded because the stains are difficult to hide.

Resin is a good material to go for, when buying seashell shower curtain hooks. Resin can withstand moisture for long periods of time without looking drab and rusty. Convenient to install, resin hooks are easily maintained and hassle-free to use.

There are plenty of variety available on line for seashell shower curtain hooks. Retailers from across the world make these available on line at very affordable rates. Pictures are on display of these hooks, on the websites, making it easier for the customer to choose from.

Beverly Kane is a staff writer at

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