

Creative Writing  
Lesson: Thurs., April 9

**Learning Target:**

Students will learn about and practice writing short story openings.

**Let's Get Started:**

Listen: [Moby Dick](#) (0:00-1:30)

# Practice:

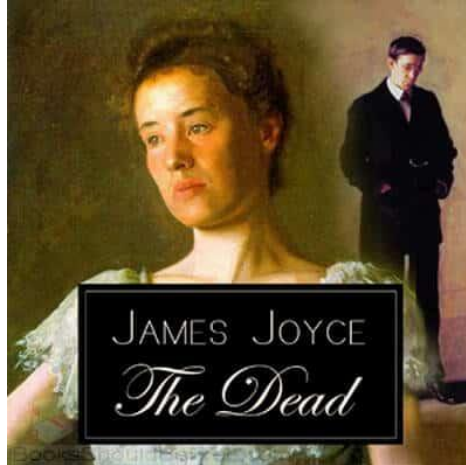
1. The first line (if not the first paragraph) of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* is maybe the most famous in all literature. Why? He tells us his name (maybe!), creating the first mystery of the book, then moves outward to explain something universal (maybe!) about *all* men and their desire to “see the watery part of the world.” In this paragraph, we learn so much about the first-person narrator as well as many of the themes in the book. It's a classic for a reason.
2. Take a look at these [other famous openings](#). Choose one and reflect on what makes it work so well. What are the qualities of language that are enticing? What other ways does the author “hook” the reader?
3. Choose one and, borrowing the techniques of the writer--syntax, voice, language--write the beginning of your own short story.

## What does good beginning do?

- hooks the reader
- establishes character (motivation)
  - sets up theme

# Model from James Joyce's "The Dead":

Billy, the undertaker's son, was literally buried in work. Hardly had he finished the day's bookkeeping in the little office behind the main parlor when the doorbell rang and in his haste to climb down from the stool knocked the papers from the ledger, which showered down on the heap of his shape on the floor. It was well for him that he was unable to answer, anyway. Mr. Olsen and Mr. Longfellow were there, gossiping and quarrelling no doubt, peering through the curtains toward the unfinished pine boxes and speculating how their next inhabitant had inherited it and why.



# **Additional Practice/Resources:**

Click on the links below for additional resources.

[53 of the Best Opening Sentences in Literature](#)

[Top 10 Opening Scenes in Books](#)