

## **Narrative Openings**

**SNAPSHOT** (or setting) – This opening creates a picture or a “snapshot,” for the reader. Usually the snapshot is a silent photo – one that describes the setting.

**Example:**

*The scent of pine from the tree hung over the living room. Heaps of shredded wrapping paper lay strewn across the Oriental rug. The ornaments and lights on the tree sparkled cheerily, while outside the sky was a dull whitish gray. Through the window we could see the bare trees shivering and bending in the wind outside. Leaning against the wall behind the festive Christmas tree was a long, thin package wrapped in brown paper. It was the last present yet to be opened and scrawled on the brown paper was my name.*

**Another example:**

*I touch the bitter cold knob of Grandma’s front door. I open it and go right to the heart of the house. It’s where Grandma’s heart is, too. I walk in to see the cream-colored walls and dark brown cupboards filled with 10-year old tools. They are not your tools, but the ones that Grandma uses. The ones she uses to fill your stomach, and puts her heart into. They are her cooking tools in the small kitchen. The kitchen is at least 40 years old with its beige Frigidaire and ancient oven. Despite all of the newer appliances she prefers the old ones with character.*

**CHARACTER** – This opening puts the character in focus.

**Example:**

*She’s coming, I thought to myself. Lean, tall, bleached blonde hair, long flawless nails, fluorescent makeup, wild conspicuous cheetah print outfit, pearly white long buckteeth, heavy makeup, and about 160 pounds was walking over to me. Her perfume was so intense that I could taste it.*

**Another example:**

*Grandpa is the king of the sea. He is always relaxed and clam, ready to fish. He may be old, but he’s always ready to pull in that thirty pounder. Grandpa will sit for hours patiently waiting for a bite. I admire those big calloused and scratched hands that have done so much; and the head with not too much hair left on top. Going fishing with Grandpa is always so much fun if you can learn to be patient.*

**SHOCKING OPENING** – In this opening, the writer surprises us, sets up a mystery, and makes us want more.

**Example:**

*The blue tights, the tight blue shirt with a large red “S” on it, the red cuffs at the feet and the large, yellow cape with a large red “S” on it – the “S” stood for Superman. This was my Halloween costume – when I was 13. I can’t really explain why I chose this costume, maybe it*

*was because I remembered when I used to love Superman as a little kid, or maybe it was because I had never had a Superman costume as a kid, but for whatever reason I chose Superman. Little did I know that Superman was not exactly what I should have chosen for that October 31.*

**Another example:**

*Chapman Elementary was the same that morning as I walked up the even cement steps. Rust covered the brown heavy front doors as always. Wax shone throughout the front hall. Mrs. Dougan's first grade classroom looked unchanged, with equations written with white chalk on a green chalkboard. That day everything seemed the same – but me ...*

**DIALOGUE** – In this opening, the writer jumps right into the scene, letting us land in the middle of a movie.

**Example:**

*"I'm bored," I said, rolling my eyes.*  
*"Bored like a 2 x 4," Taylor chuckled, laughing at his own joke.*  
*"Why don't you ask your mom if she can think of anything for us to do," Will said, naively.*  
*"Are you kidding?" Taylor said. "Never ask your mom what to do."*  
*"Yeah, I can hear her now." I put my hands on my hips and began talking in a high-pitched tone of voice like my mom. "You're bored? Well, I can think of something for you to do. Why don't you rake the leaves, mow the lawn, wash the car, and paint the house!"*  
*"Never mind!" Will said, smacking me with a paddle that was lying on the ping-pong table.*  
*"Put that away," I shouted. It goes in the closet over there, the one with all of the board games in it. You might have to move the baseball gloves. Actually, put it on the shelf with the basketballs and footballs, right next to my Game Cube."*  
*"Man, there is nothing to do here," Will whined.*  
*"Why don't we look in the garage," Taylor said with a mischievous look in his eyes.*  
*"Yeah, maybe we can find something to do there," I said.*  
*We headed for the garage.*

**Another example:**

*"Come on Lizzie. It's about to start," said Maddie as we ran up the carpeted stairs and through the double doors.*  
*"I'm coming already, but I still can't believe I forgot my gloves," I said, shaking my head when we got to the ballroom.*  
*"Tough luck for you," I heard Maddie snort.*  
*"Hey! You forgot them last week, so don't laugh," I retorted, getting in line behind Maddie.*  
*"Sorry, but you still have to dance and guys have sweaty hands."*  
*"Don't rub it in," I said, sticking my tongue out at the back of Maddie's blonde head.*