

Writing Skills: Starting with an Attention Grabber

Level: Middle School

To grab your readers' attention, you need to interest them in what you have to say. If you start your essay or paragraph with something that piques their interest, they're more likely to want to read more. One way to accomplish this is to ask a question -- something that makes them wonder. Another is to use descriptive language that helps readers feel like they are part of the scene.

Read the attention grabbers for specific topics below. Then, circle the questions which fit best with the topics. There may be more than one answer.

1. It is about the size of a 30-passenger school bus, but it has journeyed more than 800,000 miles.
 - a. What could possibly travel 800,000 miles?
 - b. What is the size of a bus and can travel so far?
 - c. Is it on earth or in space?
 - d. What color is it?

2. If the word "brown dwarf" brings to mind a short, stocky man who is Snow White's roommate, you'll have to get your mind out of the forest and into space.
 - a. Who is Snow White?
 - b. What elements in space fit the description "brown dwarf"?
 - c. Can I name all seven dwarfs?
 - d. What is a "brown dwarf" if it's not from the fairy tale?

3. A holiday celebrated by burning someone in effigy sounds like the stuff of the Middle Ages, but the English still celebrate one holiday this way every November 5th.
 - a. What does it mean to burn someone in effigy?
 - b. What holidays do the English and the Americans both celebrate?
 - c. When were the Middle Ages?
 - d. Whose image is burned on November 5th?

Writing Skills: Starting with an Attention Grabber (continued)

- 4. Insects have been snacks for thousands of years in many cultures, but who would have guessed that today they're also models?**
 - a. How can we reduce the insect population?**
 - b. Who eats insects?!?!**
 - c. What are they models for?**
 - d. Why can't we kill all of the insects?**

- 5. One of these animals was given to Henry III in the 1200s by the Norwegian king, Haakon, and was kept on a long leash so it could fish in the Thames.**
 - a. What animal likes to eat fish and could be kept on a leash?**
 - b. What was it like in the world in the 1200s?**
 - c. Why would a Norwegian king want to give such an unusual gift to a British king?**
 - d. Why would anyone want to eat fish?**



Writing Skills: Starting with an Attention Grabber Answer Sheet

1. a, b, c
2. b, d
3. a, d
4. b, c
5. a, c