

Practical Strategy for Collaborative Writing

Use the first lines (see examples below) of famous novels for:

- Group writing. Each student is given a blank sheet of paper with one of the first lines on it. They have 1-2 minutes to continue the story (time length depends on age of students). The story is then passed to the next student to continue for 1-2 minutes and so on, until the teacher decides on an appropriate point to conclude. The teacher should also write with the class. Once the story has been completed, they are returned to the original writer who then may read it to the class; edit it or reshape it into another form for publication. The strategy is an enjoyable activity, emphasising the concept of a 'community of writers'. It develops awareness of voice, audience, purpose, tense, narrative structure, dialogue, narration, plot, climax, resolution, sequencing and character.
 - The first lines may be used as exemplars for students' developing understanding of crafting openings to their own stories. First lines can be used for analysis of, for instance, language; audience; engagement; point of view; tone; and narrative style.
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Famous First Lines*

Novel	Author	First Line
<i>A Tale of Two Cities</i>	Charles Dickens	It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity,..
<i>Brave New World</i>	Aldous Huxley	A squat grey building of only thirty-four storeys. Over the main entrance the words, Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre, and, in a shield, the World State's Motto, Community, Identity, Stability.
<i>Catch-22</i>	Joseph Heller	It was love at first sight. The first time Yossarian saw the chaplain he fell madly in love with him. Yossarian was in the hospital with a pain in his liver that fell just short of being jaundice.
<i>Crime and Punishment</i>	Fyodor Dostoyevsky	At the beginning of July, during a spell of exceptionally hot weather, towards evening, a certain young man came down on to the street from the little room he rented from some tenants in S--- Lane and slowly, almost hesitantly, set off towards K---n Bridge.
<i>Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone</i>	J.K. Rowling	Mr and Mrs Dursley, of number four Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much.
<i>Heart of Darkness</i>	Joseph Conrad	The Nellie, a cruising yawl, swung to her anchor without a flutter of the sails, and was at rest.
<i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i>	George Orwell	It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen.
<i>Northern Lights</i>	Philip Pullman	Lyra and her daemon moved through the darkening Hall, taking care to keep to one side, out of sight of the kitchen.
<i>The Awakening</i>	Kate Chopin	A green and yellow parrot, which hung in a cage outside the door, kept repeating over and over: "Allez vous-en! Allez vous-en!"
<i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</i>	Ken Kesey	It was a dark and stormy night.
<i>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</i>	James Joyce	Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo...
<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	Jane Austen	It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.
<i>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time</i>	Mark Haddon	It was 7 minutes after midnight. The dog was lying on the grass in the middle of the lawn in front of Mrs Shears' house. Its eyes were closed.
<i>The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy</i>	Douglas Adams	Far out in the uncharted backwaters of the unfashionable end of the western spiral of the Galaxy lies a small unregarded yellow sun.

*There are many websites that provide similar resources. For example:

<http://americanbookreview.org/100bestlines.asp>

<http://www.buzzfeed.com/sarahgalo/it-was-a-queer-sultry-summer#.qqZ7d6xyX>