

KQED Perspectives Unit Curriculum

By Ruth Corley, The San Francisco School

DRAFTING

Lesson 5: The Hook

Objective:

- Students will be able to identify and write strong essay leads.

Estimate time: One or Two 50-minute class periods

Recommended Perspective models:

- The San Francisco School: “I Hate Video Games” by Eytan, “Jealous or Not, Here He Comes” by Nahrie, and “The Little Stranger” by Sam at <http://www.kqed.org/radio/programs/perspectives/sfschoolproject.jsp>
- Youth Radio: “An A & F Girl, For Now” by Claire McCartney at <http://www.kqed.org/epArchive/R408050737> and “Phatty Girl” by Emily Schmookler at <http://www.kqed.org/epArchive/R507210737>. *Note: this Perspective works better for more mature classes.*

Steps:

1. I start this lesson by writing “The Hook” on the board and asking students what they think I mean by “the hook” of an essay. I explain that good writers grab their audience’s attention right from the start. I pull a few books from the library with strong hooks (you can also use the terms “leads” or “openings”) and read them aloud. (For examples and categories of strong leads, I use the book [Craft Lessons](#) by Ralph Fletcher and Joann Portalupi.) I also recommend listening to the hooks of a few Perspective essays. Ask students to share what “hooked” them, or made them want to hear more.
2. Students then do their own search for hooks or strong leads in our classroom library. When students find a beginning that they think is strong, they write it on a big on a slip of paper, along with the book title and author.
3. After about 15 minutes of searching for strong leads, we regroup and start to categorize the leads. Students take turns placing their leads on a bulletin board or a designated section of a wall. Display the leads for at least several days, if not for the remainder of the unit.

As students share their leads, point out similarities between them and begin to group the leads under category headings. Some categories that may arise are:

- Starting in the middle of the action
 - Startling statement
 - Dialogue
 - Question
 - Humor
 - Vivid description
 - Flashback
 - Opinion
4. Students then draft the leads of their Perspectives. When a student has a strong lead, they write it, as well as their name and Perspective title, on a slip of paper and add it to the chart in the correct category. It's exciting for them to see their names and writing up on the wall next to those of published writers. Every five minutes or so, throughout the rest of the writing period, I'll have students read aloud their hooks to help inspire other writers.