Hook- The first line, lines or paragraph of an essay meant to grab the reader’s attention

For most people, a night out at the movies includes sitting through the coming attractions. We watch these short bursts of scenes that scare us, intrigue us, make us laugh, and sometimes nearly bring us to tears. No matter the preview, though, if it looks good, we want to go see the movie. An effective “hook” in an essay works the same way: you want to grab your reader right away and compel them to continue reading. Here are some common strategies for creating a hook:

- **Anecdote:** My hands shook and beads of sweat rolled down my face. I double-checked the directions before assembling my tools and turning up the heat. Making lasagna shouldn’t have been this stressful, but in my grandmother’s kitchen, the stakes were a little higher.

- **Direct quote:** “The scariest moment is always just before you start.” Stephen King gives this advice about the craft of writing, but I find that it applies to most areas of my life.

- **General statement or truth:** Every child, no matter how sheltered or well-adjusted, will experience fear. Whether they are scared of the monster under the bed or the neighbor’s barking dog, children experience fear as a normal and healthy part of childhood.

- **History:** Under the cover of night, over 300 soldiers rode into the small town. They looted the stores and banks, set fire to the buildings, and killed most of the male population, nearly 200 unarmed men and boys. Known as the Lawrence Massacre, this raid on a small Kansas town stands as one of the bloodiest chapters of the Civil War.

- **Metaphor:** Stretched out in a sunbeam, my cat may seem timid, but really, she’s a lion. She will stealthily stalk her prey, attack without mercy, and leave a trail of blood and guts in her wake. Afterward, as she grooms her luxurious mane, she shows no remorse.

- **Scene or illustration:** Shadows stretch across the pavement as jack-o-lanterns flicker in windows. Little trick-or-treaters scamper from porch to porch, filling their bags with various forms of sugar. It is the day dentists dread most: Halloween.

- **Sensory description:** The stale smell of cigarettes engulfed me as I stepped into the dim, silent apartment. The heat had been turned off, so I could see my breath fog in front of me as I carefully stepped over the old pizza boxes, overturned cups, and random pieces of paper strewn across the floor.

- **Startling statistic or statement:** Teenage drivers crash their cars at nearly ten times the rate of older drivers.