**AP Literature and Grade 12 English**

The College Essay—the narrative hook

**THE NARRATIVE HOOK**

**What is a hook?**

* The sharp, curved piece of metal at the end of a fishing rod used to bait and catch a fish; a.k.a. your reader
* The first sentence of your essay
* A way to capture your reader’s interest
* A way to engage your reader
* A way to make your reader curious enough to keep reading!

**How do I write one?**

There are several types of hooks. The key is finding one t hat works for your style, topic, and voice.

**Can you give me some examples?**

The following are several different ideas for creating a strong hook:

* **In Media Res**

In media res is latin for “into the middle of things.” Start your essay in the middle or at the end as opposed to in the beginning. Often this is much more dramatic, as it causes the reader to question what could have happened.

* **Vivid Image or Description**

Use descriptive language that activates the five senses to describe a person, place, object, feeling etc. Create an image in the reader’s mind.

* **Quote or Epigraph**

Include a quote or epigraph that articulates or exemplifies your topic. It can be a direct quotation from a book, TV show, movie, or a famous person. It can also be a saying or expression.

* **Question**

When writing a question, try to create a picture in the reader’s mind. Use the words who, what, when, where, why, is, how, or are at the beginning of the sentence.

* **Startling Statistic**

Statistics show relationships with numbers. Find a surprising statistic involving your topic.

* **Dictionary Definition**

Quote the dictionary definition of a word that is pivotal in your essay. Then, explain your own, personal definition, or how your experience has deepened or altered the meaning of this word.

* **Onomatopoeia or Interjection**

Onomatopoeia is a word that makes sounds. Those can be animal sounds, car sounds, or any other sound. Examples include: Bang! SSHHhhhh! Etc. Interjections express emotions. Examples are Aha!, Stop!, Ugh!, Help!, Well!, YOW!, Brrrr! Etc.

* **Dialogue**

Dialogue features two or more people speaking. Start your essay with a little dialogue that will lead into the narrative.