

Nelson English Usage

Digital resources for the Australian Curriculum

Write the first paragraph to your own favourite novel

Part Five

Task 9: Writing your new favourite novel

After analysing and synthesising a number of other opening paragraphs, you will have developed ideas about the role that a first paragraph in a book plays. You may have found that the older the novel, the more descriptive the first paragraph – scenes are set, locations described, and generally, things progress more slowly. Novels written today do not have that luxury. The author needs to engage the reader from page 1, so you might find newer stories jump right into the action, and that a first paragraph asks more questions than it answers.

You might also have found that the opening paragraphs differed very much between young adult books, literary fiction, and genre fiction, such as science-fiction, fantasy or romance. Some might have been in first person and some in third – though very few would be in second person.

You, the author, must engage your reader or perish. Not only are you writing your ideal opening paragraph to a book that you would want to read, and would want to have as your favourite, but also you are writing this paragraph as a stranger would – the audience of people who like the things you read too, but are not writing them.

It will help you to start planning your first paragraph with other things in mind.

What will you name your novel?					
Literature	Science fiction or fantasy	Supernatural, paranormal or horror	Romance or Chick Lit	Action-adventure or graphic novel	Humour, parody or satire
Describe your intended plot in brief					

How many characters? Who are your main characters?	
Will the hero/heroine triumph in the end?	
Whose perspective will it be written from?	
What year and location is it set in?	
Will it have a happy or sad ending?	
Is there anything you really, really want to avoid?	

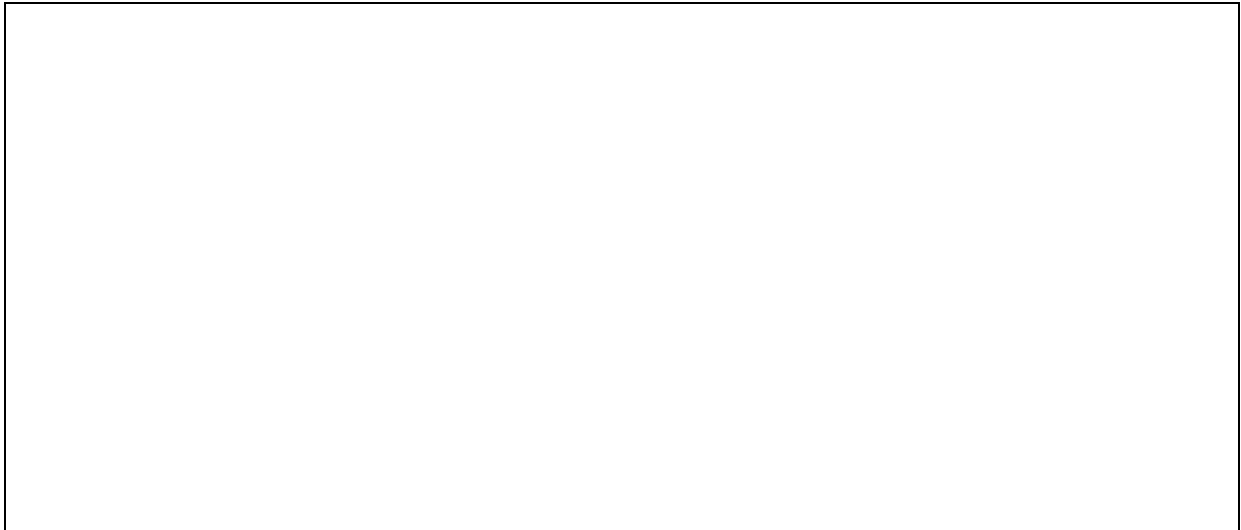
Tips and guidelines

- Your opening paragraph should be less than 200 words – it can be slightly longer if you want it to include dialogue.
- You may find it useful to return to [Dr Wicked's Write or Die](#) if you struggle to keep writing.
- You may also find it useful to run the paragraph through the [Edit Minion](#) editing tool a few times.
- If you cannot think of character names, you might want to visit a baby names website.
- You should make sure you submit every draft of your opening paragraph to your teacher as well as the finished product.


Draft #1



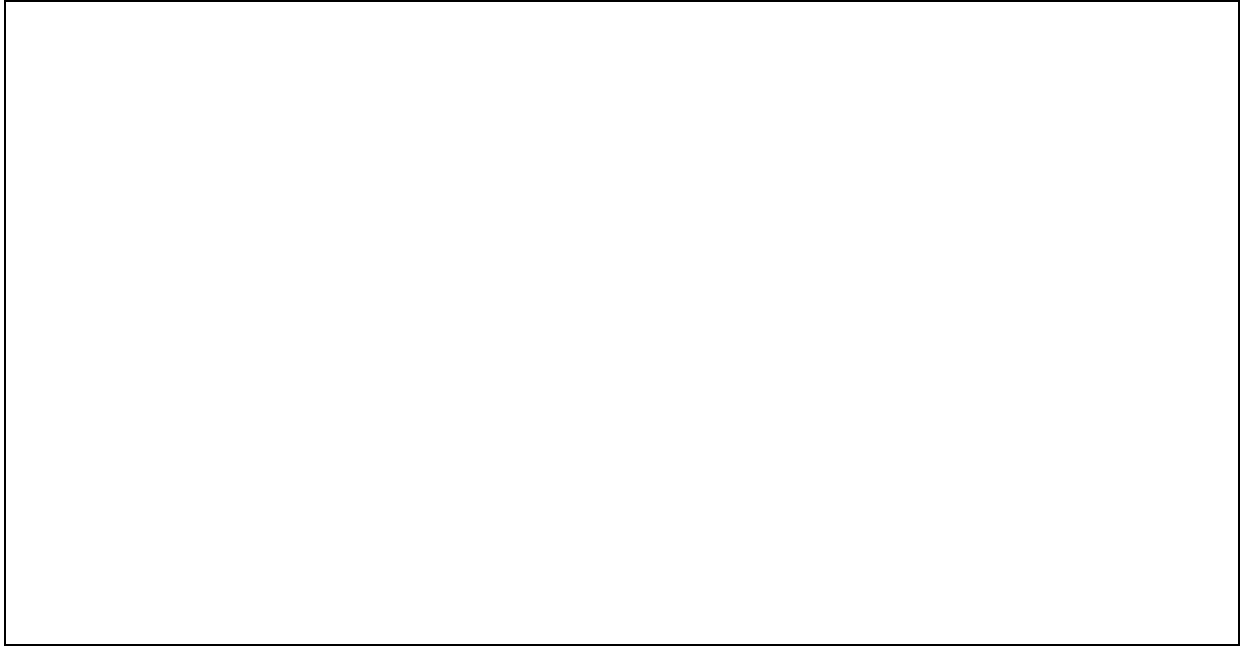
Draft #2



Draft #3



Finished paragraph



Teacher's comments

