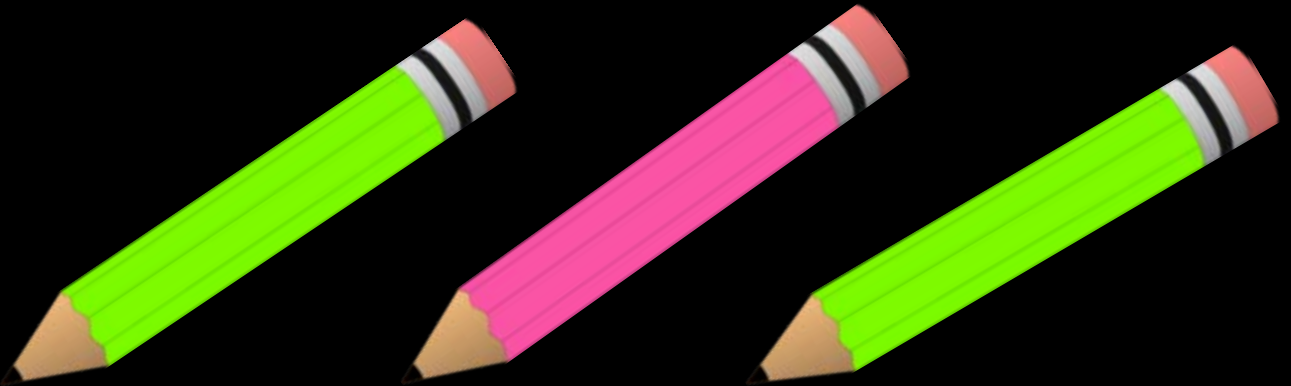


How to Grab a
Reader's Attention

Writing "Grabbers"
or "Leads"



ELA Core Plans

Teacher-Written Standards-Based Lesson Plans

How to Grab a Reader's Attention
Writing "Grabbers" or "Leads"

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ELA Core Plans

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(Except for your own classroom)



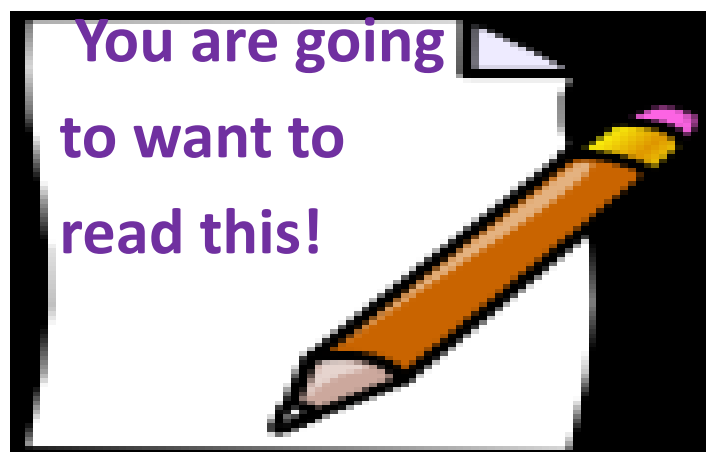
DO NOT POST ONLINE.

What can liven up your writing and make your readers look forward to what you have to say?

A strong lead or grabber!

The question above is in fact a grabber. It is more interesting than simply writing, “What is a lead or grabber?”

In an introduction, the first line or first few lines will be called our “grabber” or our “lead”. These lines should **grab** our readers’ attention.



A Few Types of Grabbers for Expository, Persuasive, Narrative, or Argumentative Writing

- Figurative Language
- Riddle
- Imagine Statement
- Famous Quote or Song Lyric
- Three Questions in a Row
- Startling Fact
- Definition

The Figurative Language Grabber

With this type of lead, begin with either a simile, metaphor, or personification.

Prompt: Explain what time means to you.

Example of Personification in Grabber

Time is continuously packing up and moving away.

Example of Metaphor in Grabber

Time may be a great healer, but it is a lousy beautician.

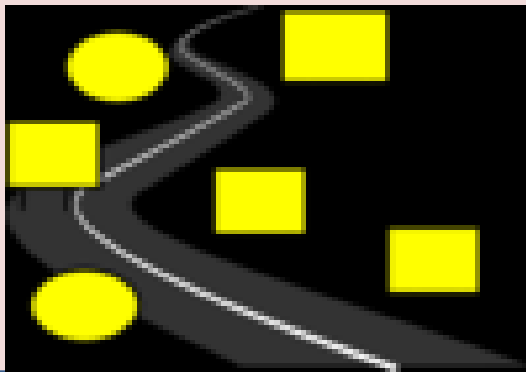
Example of Simile in Grabber

Time is like a thief stealing what is most precious to me.

Begin with a metaphor.

Prompt: Have you ever made a change that improved your life or the lives of others? Write an essay to convince someone to make a change for the better.

Metaphor: Change is a journey. Sometimes the road is long and full of crossroads. You may not always have a map, but you will have signs along the way. If you do not give up, you will make it.



What is a metaphor, and why should I use them?

Metaphors call one thing another. They make a comparison of two things without using *like* or *as*.

- Metaphors cause readers to think deeply.
- Metaphors encourage interpretation.
- Metaphors create vivid images in a reader's mind.

Interpret this famous metaphor.

All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances. And one man in his time plays many parts...

- William Shakespeare

Remember These Tips



Metaphors work best when they are simple, unexpected, and concrete.

Surprise your reader by thinking of a fresh comparison, not one that you have heard before.

Think of who will be reading your writing. Make sure your readers will understand your metaphor.

To create a metaphor, you must build a bridge between two unrelated things.

Let's try a metaphor making exercise. In the first column, list some feelings (fear, anger, etc.) In the second column, list some things that you like (anything you like- ice cream, volleyball) In the third column, list some things you dislike (spiders, rumors, etc.)

Feelings	Things I like	Things I dislike

After your chart is complete, see if you can create a metaphor by making a connection between a feeling and something you like or dislike. Remember, a metaphor calls one thing another.

To create a metaphor, you must build a bridge between two unrelated things.

Feelings	Things I like	Things I dislike
fear anger jealousy happiness sadness excitement embarrassment aggravation love	volleyball clean sheets lip gloss sweet tea fall mornings coffee porch swings	bullying green peas sleepless nights blisters heavy traffic math homework pollution

Fear is a blister. It can begin as a small irritant but grow into a debilitating sore.

Anger is pollution contaminating everyone in its path.

How to Create a Metaphor Grabber

First, study your prompt or the topic, and decide what you can write your metaphor about.

Prompt: Should the school day start later?

With this prompt, I could write a metaphor about school, about the importance of sleep, about mornings, about education, or maybe something else.

Let's try sleep. One of my main points to argue that school should start later will be that students need more sleep.

How to Create a Metaphor Grabber

Step 1: Think of everything you can about the word you have decided to use in a metaphor.

Sleep

A necessity!

Dreams

Without it, I am irritable.

I enjoy it.

It's an escape.

Step 2: Look at the things you have listed, and see if you can think of something else that may have one or more of the same qualities that you listed.

Example:

Vacation is an escape, and without it, I could be irritable. I could say, ***Sleep is a vacation from reality.***

Now, I need to tie this into my prompt and finish my introduction. It may read something like the following:

Sleep is a vacation from reality. It is enjoyable, essential, and without it we are all irritable. If school started just two hours later, students could all squeeze in a few more hours of this valuable necessity.

Create your metaphor.

Try your own. Prompt: Should students have homework?

- **1st** What can you write a metaphor about? Choose one of the following words related to the topic or come up with your own.

homework, time, education

- **2nd** In the box below, make a list of everything that comes to mind when you think about that word.

- **3rd** Study the list you just made. Ask yourself the following question: What is something else that has one or more of these same qualities? Create your metaphor and explain it if needed. Remember, a metaphor calls one thing another. Do not use *like* or *as*.

Metaphor:

Sample

Try your own. Prompt: Should students have homework?

- **1st** What can you write a metaphor about? Choose one of the following words related to the topic or come up with your own.

homework

- **2nd** In the box below, make a list of everything that comes to mind when you think about that word.

Nuisance	essential
Heavy load	Sometimes I get “stuck” and can’t do it.
	Time stealer
Laborious	Can’t wait to get it over with

- **3rd** Study the list you just made. Ask yourself the following question: What is something else that has one or more of these same qualities? Create your metaphor and explain it if needed. Remember, a metaphor calls one thing another. Do not use like or as.

mosquitoes- nuisance

thief -steals things

glue- gets stuck

blister – nuisance, steals time

speech- can’t wait to get it over with

Metaphor:

Homework is glue. It holds you down and sometimes leaves you stuck.

Homework is an annoying mosquito.

Homework is a thief, stealing my precious time.

Begin With a Simile

If you would rather use a simile than a metaphor, you can. It is up to you. You can create a simile in the same way you create a metaphor. Just use *like* or *as*.

Sleep is like a vacation.

Fear is as debilitating as a blister.

Anger is like pollution.

Try turning the metaphor you wrote about homework into a simile. Which do you like better, the metaphor or simile?

Begin With Personification

Personification gives human traits to animals, objects, or ideas.

Personification always allows you to say something in a really cool way.

Look at the following two sentences.

The fire spread over the entire forest.

The fire swallowed the entire forest.

When using personification, think of the emotion and meaning that you want to convey.

Why does the following sentence have a completely different meaning?

The fire danced over the entire forest.

Remember these tips when writing personification.

1. Make sure it makes sense.

The toaster oven ran down the road.

Why is this sentence not a good example of personification?

2. Do not use personification that is cliché or overused.

Opportunity knocks.

The camera loves me.

These examples are way overused and therefore do not give readers the freshness that figurative language should.

How to Create Personification

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. What is it?
2. What does it do? List some verbs.
3. How does it do this?
4. What does it look like?
5. How does it move?

Fog
The fog comes
on little cat feet.
It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.
by Carl Sandburg

How to Create a Personification Grabber

First, study your prompt or the topic, and decide what you can personify.

Prompt

The principal of your school is considering conducting random locker searches several times a year without letting students know in advance. What is your position concerning this issue?

With this prompt, I could personify a locker, a school, safety, privacy, or maybe something else. Let's try privacy.

Personify Privacy

What does privacy do? Hmmmm. It keeps me safe, keeps me from being disturbed by others, gives me freedom from interference or worry

How does it do this? Well, it's a boundary. It is a law, and there are different ways of having privacy.

What does privacy look like? It's not a tangible object, but if I imagine how it may look, to me it looks like a security guard.

How does it move? It doesn't move. In fact, it doesn't budge. It stands firm and strong to keep danger out.

Personification: Privacy stands firm and strong. It guards against danger. It protects us from disturbances and without it, we would be distressed, worried, and unsafe. **For students, lockers are a source of privacy, so it would be wrong for the school to conduct random locker searches.**

***The red portion is the topic sentence. It follows the personification grabber.**

Try Your Own Personification Grabber

Prompt: Should students have standardized tests?

- For this prompt, let's personify a test.
- Complete the following brainstorming chart.

What is it?	What does it do? In this case, what do tests do to you?	How does it do this?	How does it move? (A test doesn't move, but if it could, how would it? How would a test walk? Think metaphorically.)	What does it look like? You can list how a test literally looks, but also think about what kind of thing or person a test would resemble.

**Study your list. How can you personify a test?
Write your personification in the following box.**

Sample

Prompt: Should students have standardized tests?

- **For this prompt, let's personify tests.**

What is it?	What does it do? In this case, what do tests do to you?	How does it do this?	How does it move? (Tests don't move, but if they could, how would they? How would a test walk? Think metaphorically.)	What does it look like? You can list how a test literally looks, but also think about what kind of thing or person a test would resemble.
Enemy Priority Thief	Pressures me Keeps me up all night Judges my knowledge Worries me Bullies me Gives me headaches Stresses me out Aggravates me Robs me of time Holds me down Challenges me Stares at me	Pushes questions at me Scans my thoughts	Storms in Marches in Creeps up on me Quickly –tests come all of the time	A judge A bully

Study your list. How can you personify a test?

Write your personification in the following box.

Tests rob students of a valuable education.
Tests stare at students, scan their thoughts, and pressure them to make them feel weak.
Tests march into the classroom and demand that students think.

Riddle Grabber

To understand how this grabber works, let's first take a look at a few real riddles.

- What occurs once in a minute, twice in a moment, and never in a thousand years?
 - What goes up a chimney down, but won't go down a chimney up?
 - What's black and white and red all over?
- Give up? Here are the answers: 1. the letter m 2. an umbrella 3. a zebra wearing too much lipstick
- **Now, with riddle grabbers, the purpose is not necessarily to make the reader laugh, but the purpose is to make the reader guess what you are talking about. That means it involves a question, but it is not just a question.**

Riddle Grabber

The riddle grabber is a fun way to begin a story or essay. With this grabber, the writer opens with a riddle that the reader can solve by reading further. You can either give the answer right away or save it for later.

Examples

- **Prompt:** Your school day is seven hours long, yet your teacher may require homework. Does homework help you learn better?
- **Grabber:** What steals your joy, time, and energy? Homework! Homework does not help me learn better. It only drains me.
- **Prompt:** Write about a time you were influenced by peer pressure.
- **Grabber:** What can sneak up on you, influence you greatly, and get you into a lot of trouble? Peer pressure! I will never forget the time I was influenced by my peers to do something I never should have done.

Riddle Grabber

To write a grabber, think in threes. Try to think of three things that are related to the topic about which you are writing a riddle. Keep in mind that the best ones are the ones that are not so obvious. Begin with the word *what*.

Prompt: If you could invent a candy bar, what would it be like?

- First, think. What ingredients would your candy bar have?
- Since we are using our imaginations, would your candy bar be magical? If so, what would happen if you ate one?
- Now, can you think of three things related to this candy bar that you could use in a riddle?
- Begin with the word *what*, and list the three things. For this exercise, answer your riddle right after your question.

Riddle Grabber

To write a grabber, think in threes. Try to think of three things that are related to the topic about which you are writing a riddle. Keep in mind that the best ones are the ones that are not so obvious. Begin with the word *what*.

Prompt: In your opinion, what has been the best invention of all time?

First, think. What do you think has been the best invention ever? Why do you think this is the best?

List at least three qualities, attributes, or features of this invention.

Using this list, write your riddle. For this exercise, answer your riddle right after your question.

Riddle Grabber

To write a grabber, think in threes. Try to think of three things that are related to the topic about which you are writing a riddle. Keep in mind that the best ones are the ones that are not so obvious. Begin with the word *what*.

Prompt: Do you think year-round-school is a good or bad idea?

First, think. What's your stance on this issue? Why? List at least three pros or cons depending on your opinion.

Using this list, write your riddle. For this exercise, answer your riddle right after your question.

Imagine Statement Grabber

One way you can begin a story or essay is with the word *imagine*.

This grabber will allow you to set the scene for your reader and include a great deal of imagery!

Prompt: What could a grocery store do to make shopping more fun for kids?

Imagine laughter filling your ears as you stroll down the isles at your local grocery store. You follow the sound of children laughing and find yourself standing in front of an enormous, bright ball pit. **Children should not be lugged around the store for hours on end. They deserve to have fun, and a ball pit would provide just that!**

*The red portion is the topic sentence. It follows the imagine statement grabber.

Imagine Statement Grabber ~ Try it!

Next, you will use a handout to walk you through the steps to write an imagine statement grabber for the following prompt:

Write a story about spending the night in a haunted house.

Remember to begin with the word *imagine*. Use imagery and strong, vivid verbs.

Also, remember that you are not writing an entire story. You are only writing an introduction, so do not make it too long. With this grabber, you just want to give a quick glimpse into what you will be describing in detail in the body of the paper.

Imagine Statement Grabber

Prompt: Write a story about spending the night in a haunted house.

- First, brainstorm. Think of the senses, and complete the following chart.

Things you would see	Things you would hear	Things you would smell	Things you would feel

Now, circle or highlight the words from the chart that you would like to use in your grabber. Then write one, starting with the word *imagine*. This grabber should invite your readers to read the story that will follow in the body of the paper. Remember, do not write an entire story, just a grabber.

Imagine

Imagine Statement Sample

Prompt: Write a story about spending the night in a haunted house.

- First, brainstorm. Think of the senses, and complete the following chart.

Things you would see	Things you would hear	Things you would smell	Things you would feel
cobwebs dusty furniture an organ pictures on the wall of people whose eyes seem to follow you transparent figures a winding staircase dilapidated porch broken windows shadows dark moonlight	footsteps doors creaking a rocking chair rocking moaning whispers a baby crying organ music strange whimpers thunderstorm	musty dust old furniture	chill spider webs someone watching you

Now, circle or highlight the words from the chart that you would like to use in your grabber. Then write one, starting with the word *imagine* and inviting your readers to read the story that will follow in the body of the paper. Remember, do not write an entire story, just a grabber.

Imagine an ancient three story mansion shrouded in the shadows of moonlight. Even the most brave dare not step foot on the dilapidated porch, but the few who have entered leave with tales of strange whimpers, transparent figures on the winding staircase, and an overwhelming feeling of someone watching them.

Famous Quote or Song Lyric Grabber

The famous quote grabber is an interesting way to begin a story or essay. With this grabber, the writer opens with a well-known or sometimes a not so well-known quote. It can even be the line of a song.

Examples

- **Prompt:** Why should students have free time at school?
- **Grabber:** “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” We have all heard this famous saying, and it makes a lot of sense. Without free time during school, students become very dull.

- **Prompt:** Pretend you are the last surviving member of the human race. What do you do?
- **Grabber:** “I will survive. Oh, as long as I know how to love, I know I’ll stay alive.” These famous lyrics would describe me if I were the last surviving member of the human race.

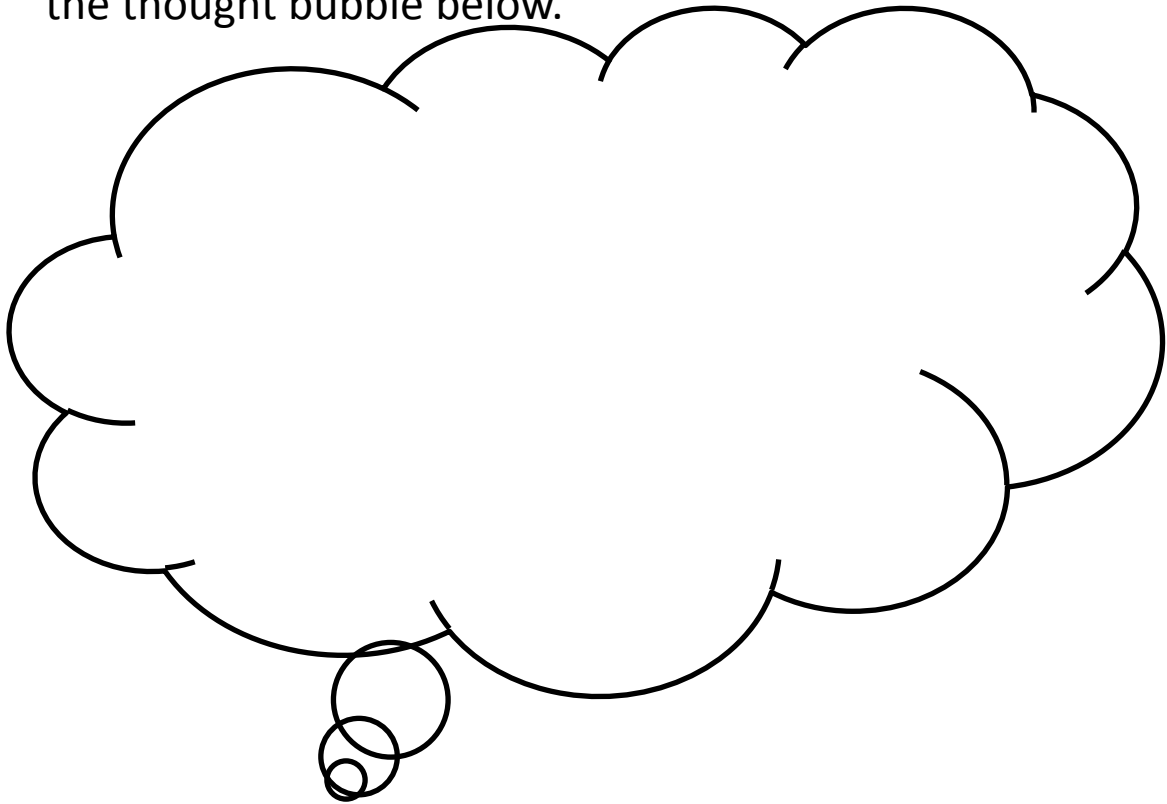
- **Prompt:** Would you eat a bowl of live roaches for \$50,000? Explain why or why not.
- **Grabber:** “To be or not to be? That is the question.” For me, it would not be possible to eat live roaches for any amount of money!

Famous Quote or Song Lyric Grabber Sample

Prompt: You just found out that the world will end in three days. How would you spend the remainder of your time on earth?

First, brainstorm. What would you do with your last three days?

Now, think of songs with lyrics that are either about something you wrote in the box or something about the prompt. Or, do some research if needed to find a quote that would fit this prompt. Write the lyrics or quote in the thought bubble below.



Famous Quote or Song Lyric Grabber **Sample**

Prompt: You just found out that the world will end in three days. How would you spend the remainder of your time on earth?

First, brainstorm. What would you do with your last three days?

I would spend my last three days doing things that made me happy. I would spend time with friends and family, go swimming, eat lots of candy, etc.

Now, think of songs with lyrics that are either about something you wrote in the box or something about the prompt. Or, do some research if needed to find a quote that would fit this prompt. Write the lyrics or quote in the thought bubble below.

Aristotle once said, "Happiness depends upon ourselves."

Three Questions in a Row

This grabber is easy to write but also effective.

When using this lead in an essay, you must write three questions in a row. One or two will not be as effective.

Prompt: Are huge corporations like Walmart hurting small businesses?

Grabber: Is it true that bigger is always better? Could it be that society's desire for more is in many ways giving people less? Are small Mom and Pop businesses suffering in today's business world? Huge corporations like Walmart are killing small businesses and in turn hurting our economy.

Prompt: Should students be forced to wear uniforms to school?

Grabber: Is individuality wrong? Do you think that it is ok for everyone to look the same? Should students be robbed of the privilege of expressing themselves? Forcing students to wear school uniforms is wrong.

Three Questions in a Row~ You try it!

Write three questions in a row as a grabber for one of the following prompts. Write your topic sentence after the questions.

What are the qualities of a good leader?



Should schools group classes by gender- all boys in a class together and all girls in a class together?



Three Questions in a Row~ Sample

Write three questions in a row as a grabber for one of the following prompts. Write your topic sentence after the questions.

What are the qualities of a good leader?

What makes a person a good leader? Do you think people are born to be leaders or that anyone can learn to become one? When you think of a leader, what comes to your mind? All good leaders must possess the qualities of honesty, commitment, and a good sense of humor.

Should schools group classes by gender- all boys in a class together and all girls in a class together?

Should learning experiences in the classroom resemble real-world life experiences? Should students learn to respect gender differences while they are in school? Do you think grouping students by gender is a good idea? Schools should not be grouped by gender.

Startling Fact Grabber



Begin your essay with a startling fact or statistic that captures the curiosity of your reader.

Prompt: Should animal skins be used to create products?

Grabber: Did you know that from just one cow hide you can get twelve basketballs or 144 baseballs, or twenty footballs, or eighteen volleyballs, or eighteen soccer balls? If you like sports, using animal skins can't be wrong!

Prompt: What do you want to be when you grow up? Consider what it takes to have a good career.

Grabber: Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, could spend one million dollars per day, every day, seven days a week and would not run out of money! Most would agree that he has reached a point of financial security. In fact, it would be almost impossible to figure out how one could spend one million dollars per day. For most Americans, figuring out what you want to be when you grow up does not involve thinking in terms of making this much money.

Startling Fact Grabber

~ You try it!

Write a startling fact as a grabber for one of the following prompts.

Should kids have pets?

Should teachers allow students to use phones and other electronic devices in class?

Startling Fact Grabber

~ **Sample!**

Write a startling fact as a grabber for one of the following prompts.

Should kids have pets?

Over 71 million American households have a pet, and according to research, companion animals may help ease anxiety in children.

Should teachers allow students to use phones and other electronic devices in class?

Did you know that 91% of all American adults have their mobile phones within arm's reach every hour of every day?

Definition Grabber

You could begin an essay with a definition. It may be a word from the prompt that you define, or it may be a word that is related to something that you will discuss or cover in your essay or story.

Prompt: Tell about a time you were afraid.

Grabber: According to the dictionary, fear is an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat. I certainly agreed with this definition one October night when I was home alone.

Definition Grabber ~

You try it!

Write a definition as a grabber for one of the following prompts.

Tell about a time you got in trouble and learned something from the experience.

First, decide what you will define. Then use a dictionary to write the definition.

Why should kids receive an allowance?

First, decide what you will define. Then use a dictionary to write the definition.

Definition Grabber ~

Sample

Write a definition as a grabber for one of the following prompts.

Tell about a time you got in trouble and learned something from the experience.

First, decide what you will define. Then use a dictionary to write the definition.

According to the dictionary, the definition of trouble is a difficult, dangerous, or upsetting situation. Let me tell you about a time I found myself in a predicament that was definitely upsetting.

Why should kids receive an allowance?

First, decide what you will define. Then use a dictionary to write the definition.

According to the dictionary, the definition of the word mature is behaving in a sensible, adult way. An allowance would help children mature.

Types of Grabbers

Review

Figurative language grabber

- Simile
- Metaphor
- Personification

Riddle Grabber

Imagine Statement

Famous Quote or Song Lyric
Grabber

Three Questions in a Row Grabber

Startling Fact Grabber

Definition Grabber