

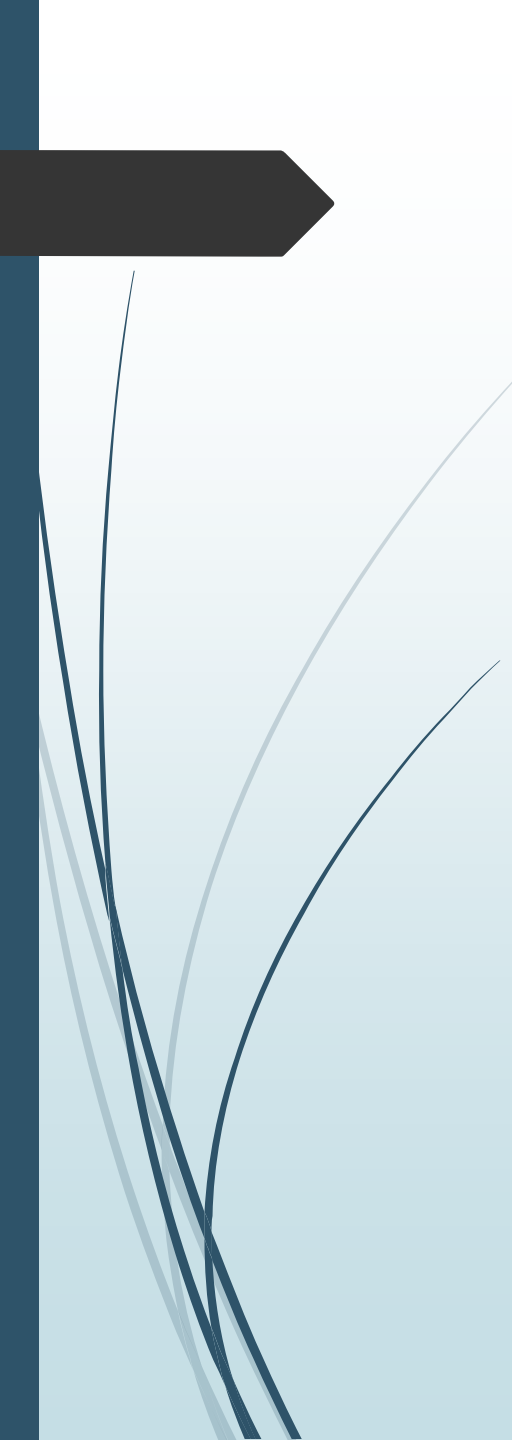


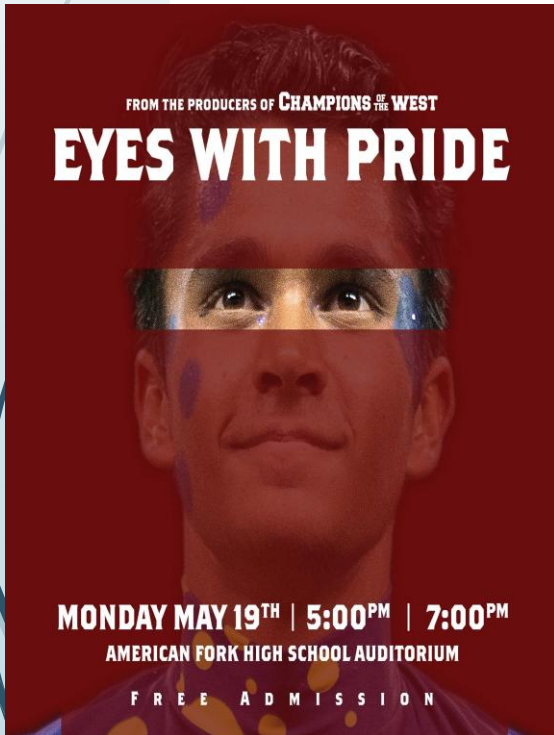
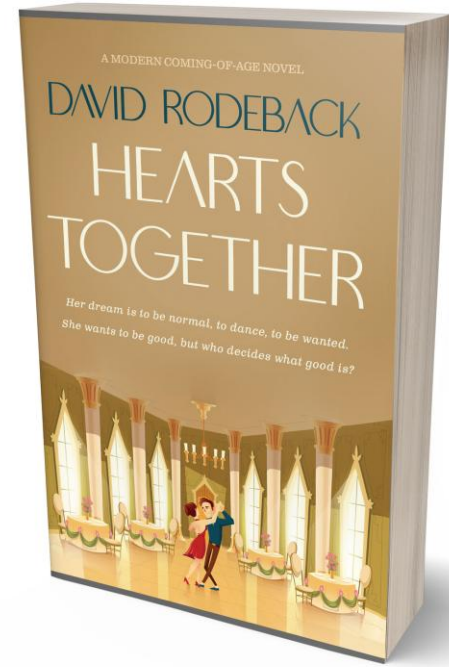
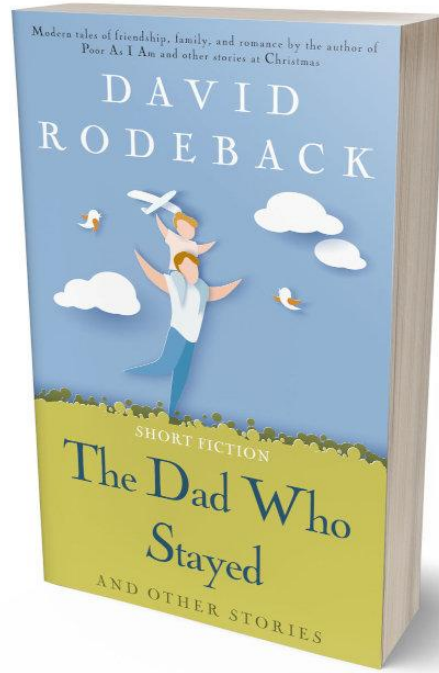
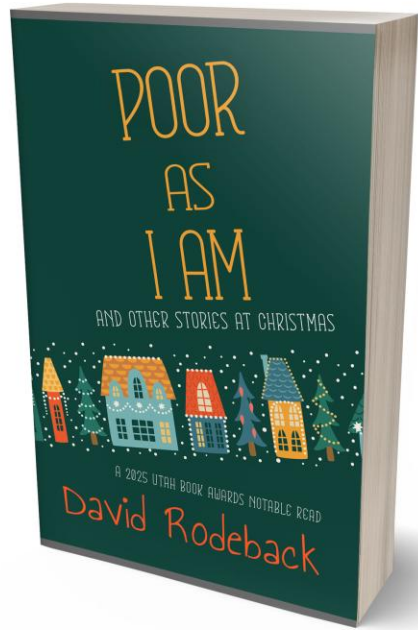
Making Promises and Setting Hooks: Crafting Great Beginnings

for Utah KidLit—April 2026

David Rodeback

author@davidrodeback.com

- 
- Husband of one, parent of four, grandparent of two, uncle of 18
 - CMT0 of a West Valley City manufacturing firm, where I write stuff: C#.Net code, SQL queries, marketing copy, video scripts, company policies, etc.
 - In a former life I taught writing, Russian language, and Russian literature at BYU, Cornell, and elsewhere.
 - On the board of the League of Utah Writers
 - 2025 LUW Writer of the Year
 - Current major project: a (short) book-length biographical essay about a special forces soldier



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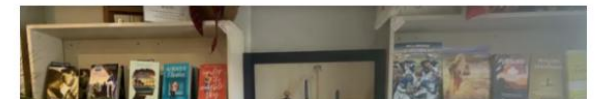
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I love basketball, and I'm a Utah Jazz fan, but I've

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OPINION
OPINION: Poke the algorithms in the eye: Read books in 2025

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By AF Citizen



About the League of Utah Writers

- ▶ The League has 22 chapters around the state and online (some hybrid). They're all different, tailored to meet the needs and interests of their members. You can also join the League without joining a chapter.
- ▶ League membership is only \$30 per year, and \$15 for an additional chapter.
- ▶ You don't have to be a Utah resident. The League has members all over the country and a few international members.
- ▶ Two conferences for members and non-members:
 - ▶ Pre-Quill—one day—April—\$40
 - ▶ Quills—four days—early August—member discount
- ▶ Publication opportunities in two yearly anthologies and a quarterly literary journal.
- ▶ Discounted entry to our spring writing contests—awards announced at Quills—most offer written feedback from professional writers—some offer cash prizes



leagueofutahwriters.com



What do I mean by “beginning”?



Aristotle sez

“A beginning is that which requires nothing to precede it.”



Caveat

- ▶ Title
- ▶ Front cover
- ▶ Back cover
- ▶ Epigraph
- ▶ Dedication
- ▶ Chapter title



Q. How long is the beginning?

A. How long is the story?

- ▶ In my novel that's just out, I'd say two-to-four chapters.
- ▶ In flash fiction, maybe a paragraph or two.
- ▶ In a short story, a page or two.
- ▶ And so on.

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What we'll do tonight


- ▶ Read and analyze beginnings.
- ▶ Consider: what beginnings **must** do (a short list).
- ▶ Consider: what beginnings **can** do (a long list).
- ▶ Give you some time to analyze a beginning of your own; then we'll discuss insights and questions.

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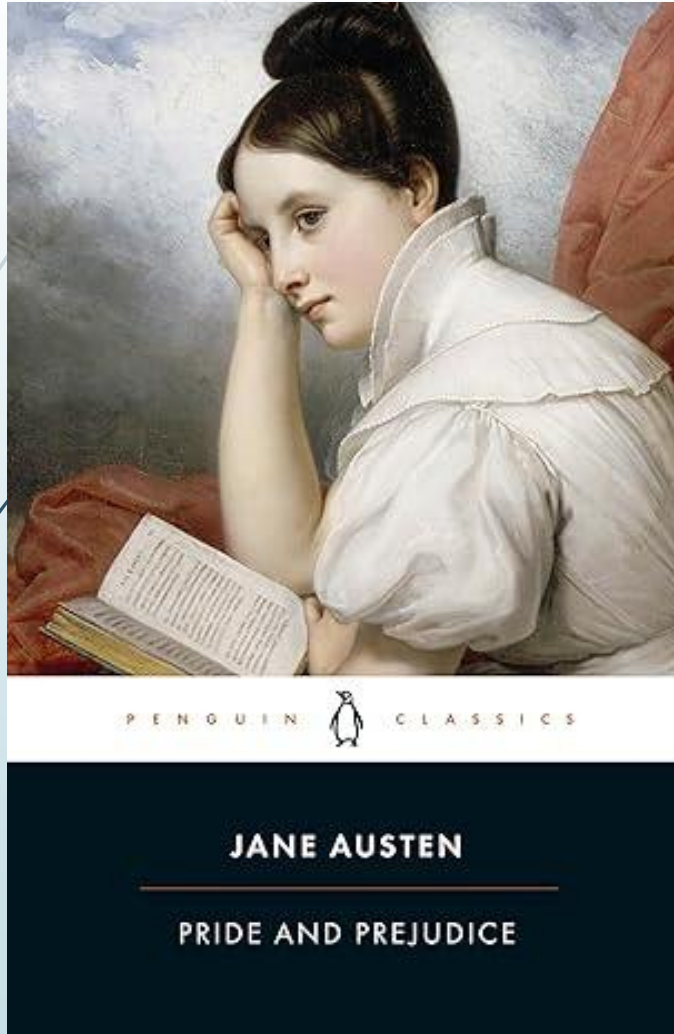
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The beginnings of two British beginnings
to begin our beginning on beginnings

#sorrynotsorry

CHAPTER I



It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

“My dear Mr. Bennet,” said his lady to him one day, “have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?”

Mr. Bennet replied that he had not.

“But it is,” returned she; “for Mrs. Long has just been here, and she told me all about it.”

Mr. Bennet made no answer.

“Do not you want to know who has taken it?” cried his wife impatiently.



A few things a beginning **must** do

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Things beginnings **must** do

- ▶ Keep the reader reading
- ▶ Create expectations
- ▶ Make promises the story will later fulfill (or at least address seriously)

The brevity of this list should be liberating.

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(Did you notice the) Important disclaimer

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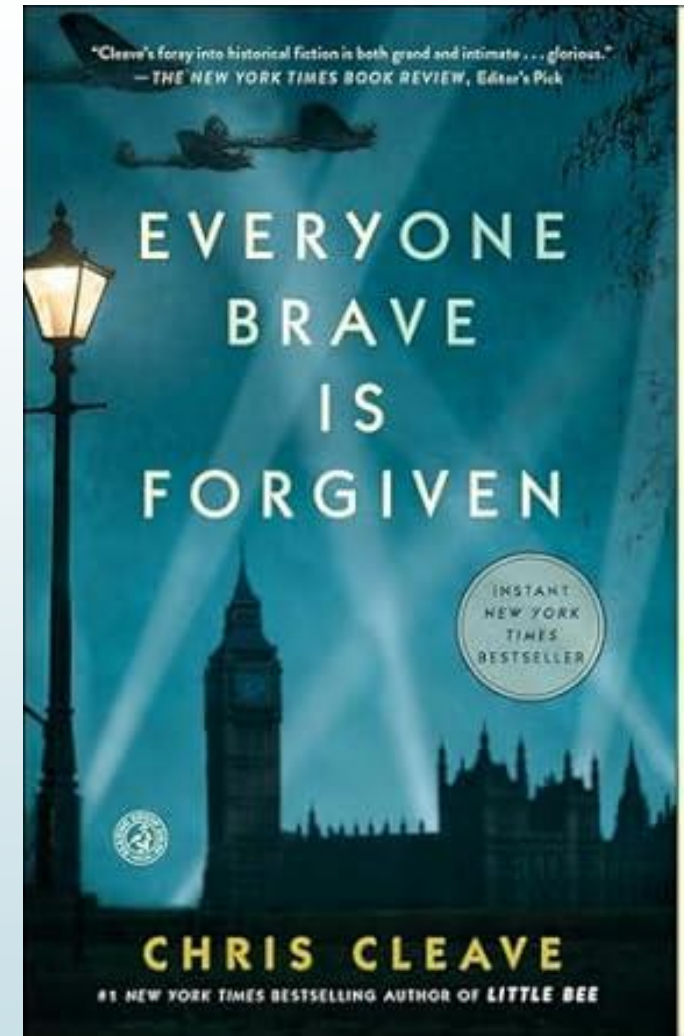
Please remember and correct for this distortion.

War was declared at eleven-fifteen and Mary North signed up at noon. She did it at lunch, before telegrams came, in case her mother said no. She left finishing school unfinished. . . .

Any moment now it would start — this dreaded and wonderful thing — and could never be won without her.

What was war, after all, but morale in helmets and jeeps? And what was morale if not one hundred million little conversations, the sum of which might leave men brave enough to advance? The true heart of war was small talk, in which Mary was wonderfully expert.

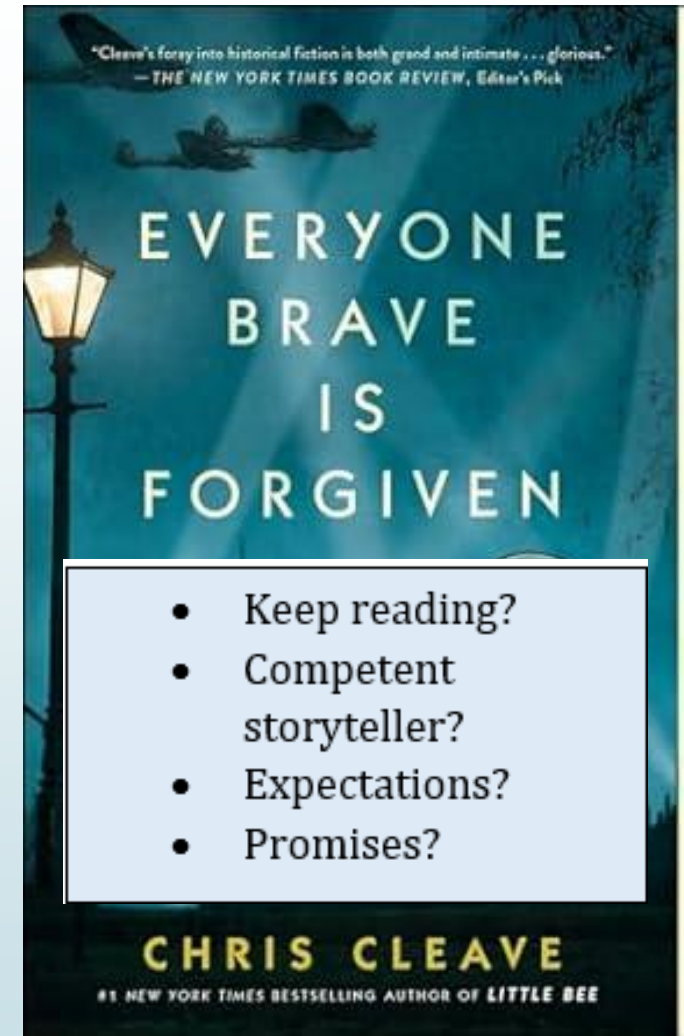
- Keep reading?
- Competent storyteller?
- Expectations?
- Promises?



(They give her an address and tell her to report. She thinks she'll be a spy. When she gives the cabbie the address, he says it's a school.)

Mary opened her mouth to argue, then stopped and tugged at her gloves. Because of course they didn't have a glittering tower, just off Horse Guards, labeled **MINISTRY OF WILD INTRIGUE**. Naturally they would have her report somewhere innocuous.

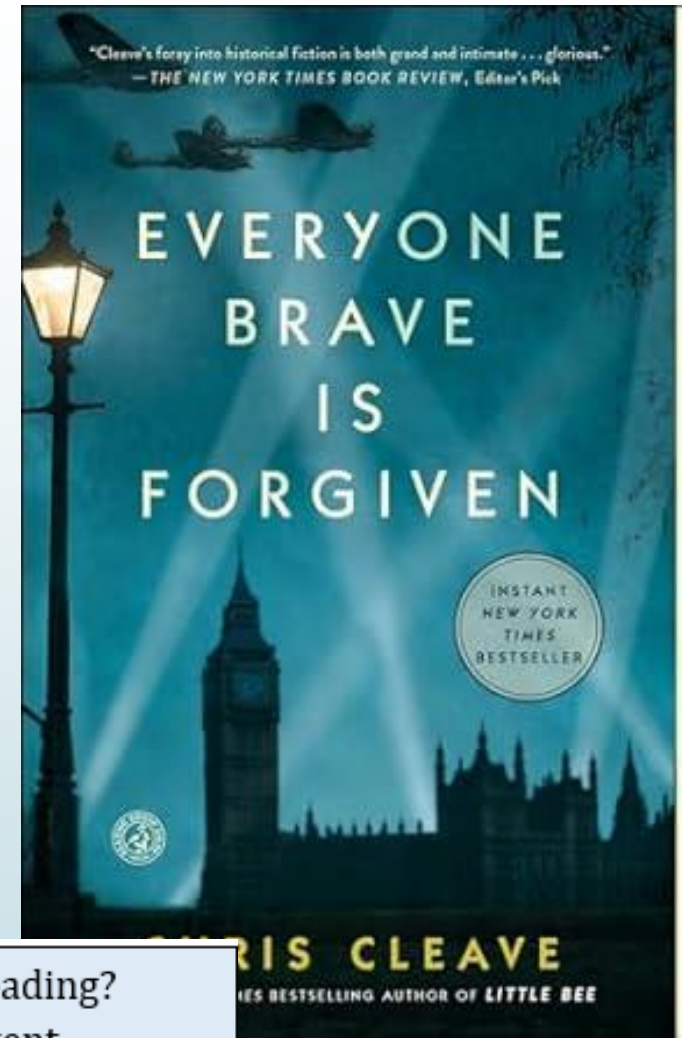
The man drove them to Hawley Street with no more haste than the delivery of one more schoolmistress would merit. Mary was careful to adopt the expression an ordinary young woman might wear—a girl for whom the taxi ride would be an unaccustomed extravagance, and for whom the prospect of work as a schoolteacher would seem a thrill.



She made her face suggest the kind of sincere immersion in the present moment that she imagined dairy animals must also enjoy, or geese.

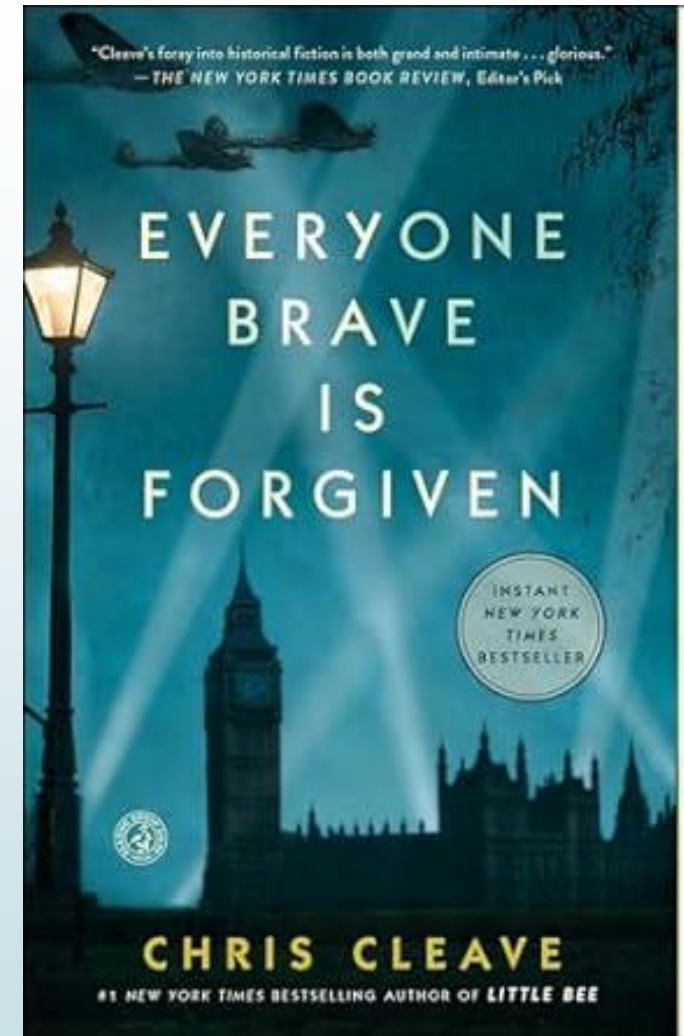
Arriving at the school, she felt observed. In character, she tipped the taxi driver a quarter of what she normally would have given him. This was her first test, after all. She put on the apologetic walk of an ordinary girl presenting for interview. As if the air resented being parted. As if the ground shrieked from the wound of each step.

- Keep reading?
- Competent storyteller?
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She made her face suggest the kind of sincere immersion in the present moment that she imagined dairy animals must also enjoy, or geese.

Arriving at the school, she felt observed. In character, she tipped the taxi driver a quarter of what she normally would have given him. This was her first test, after all. She put on the apologetic walk of an ordinary girl presenting for interview. As if the air resented being parted. **As if the ground shrieked from the wound of each step.**



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Ways to keep the reader reading

- Create emotion
- Start with humor
- Pull the reader into the story's world (familiar or exotic)
- Introduce a compelling character (maybe the narrator)
- Make something (not necessarily everything) relatable
- Show readers they're in the hands of a skilled storyteller
 - Not necessarily reliable.
 - Some things must be earned—if not at the beginning, at least before you rely on them.



Creating expectations

- Genre
- Tone
- Style
- Voice
- Pacing
- Plot
- Emotion
- And more

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Making promises

- ▶ Implied promises
 - ▶ From genre
 - ▶ From tone
 - ▶ Other
- ▶ Must be fulfilled or at least treated seriously by the end.

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Things beginnings **can** do (partial list)

- Introduce
 - character(s)
 - situation, conflict (launch the plot)
 - an important setting
 - one or more important themes
- Foreshadow
 - plant enough seeds in reader's mind that twists and ending are plausible, seem organic
 - should be apparent on second reading, not too obvious on first reading
- Engage the senses
- Establish POV (at least *a* POV)

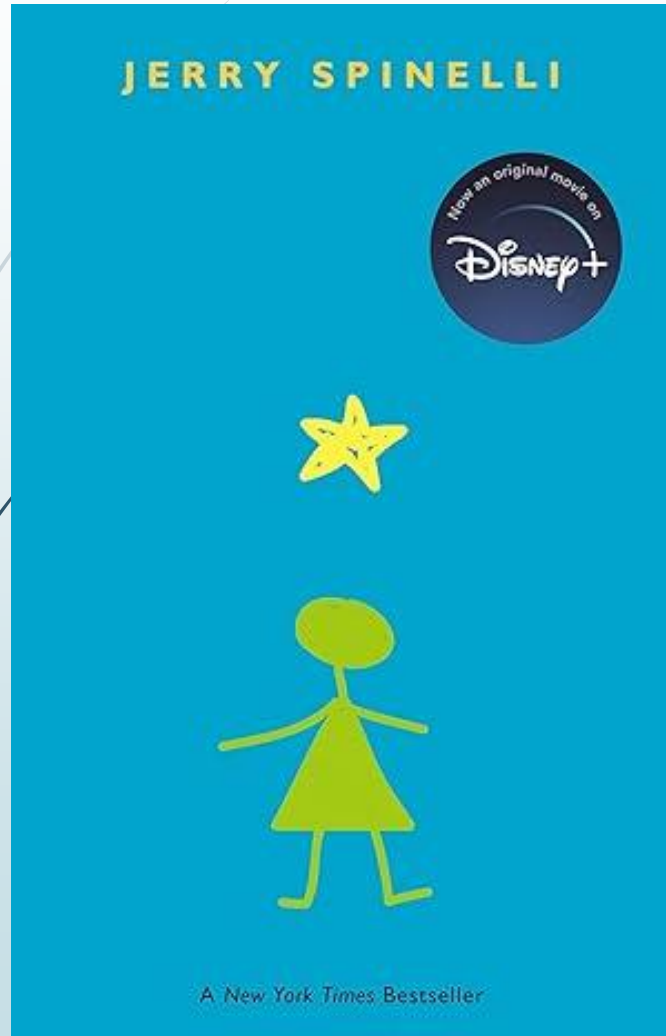
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Key questions to ask as we read beginnings

- ▶ How does it pull us in?
- ▶ If we're hooked, at what point are we hooked?
- ▶ Do you want to keep reading? Why?
- ▶ What do we feel?
- ▶ What senses are engaged?
- ▶ What does it promise?
- ▶ Are we in the hands of a skilled storyteller? Why do we think so?

** The reader's immediate, complete surrender is the ideal.*

- Keep reading?
- Competent storyteller?
- Expectations?
- Promises?



PORCUPINE NECKTIE

When I was little, my uncle Pete had a necktie with a porcupine painted on it. I thought that necktie was just about the neatest thing in the world. Uncle Pete would stand patiently before me while I ran my fingers over the silky surface, half expecting to be stuck by one of the quills. Once, he let me wear it. I kept looking for one of my own, but I could never find one.

I was twelve when we moved from Pennsylvania to Arizona. When Uncle Pete came to say good-bye, he was wearing the tie. I thought he did so to give me one last look at it, and I was grateful. But then, with a dramatic flourish, he whipped off the tie and draped it around my neck. "It's yours," he said. "Going-away present."

I loved that porcupine tie so much that I decided to start a collection. Two years after we settled in Arizona, the number of ties in my collection was still one. Where do you find

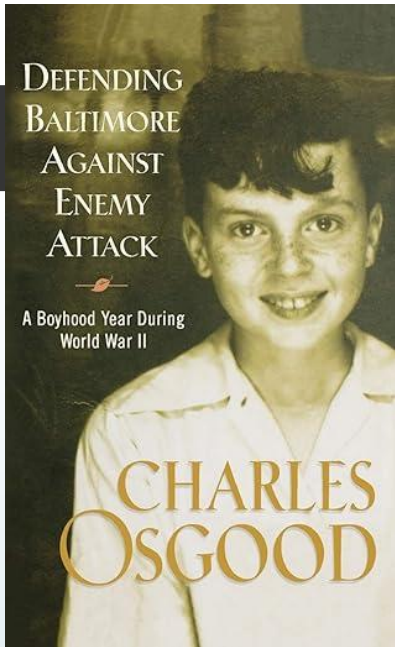
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a porcupine necktie in Mica, Arizona—or anywhere else, for that matter?



Home Front, Sweet Home Front



- Keep reading?
- Competent storyteller?
- Expectations?
- Promises?

14

IN 1942, MCDONALD'S was only a farm in a children's song, but you could get a hamburger at White Castle for a nickel. Your father probably told you it was better to use that nickel to buy another United States War Savings Stamp for your album, which equaled one War Bond: Its \$18.75 would be worth \$25 in ten years. America needed everything you could give to help fight the Mitsubishis, which weren't elegant cars but enemy planes. I used to dream of flying high over the Pacific and shooting down a Mitsubishi 109 that was headed for one of Admiral Halsey's carriers. I dreamed of being a pilot in the Army Air Corps and being an ace instead of a joker.

On my way to school at Our Lady of Lourdes, I sometimes sang "Comin' in on a Wing and a Prayer" or "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition," for it was all right for American Catholics to bless explosives; in fact, Sister Ursula taught us that St. Barbara was the patron saint of artillery. I also sang a song called "Johnny Zero," about a boy who had missed every question on one school test to earn the name of Johnny Zero; then he had gone into the Army Air Corps, where Johnny the pilot continued to get Zeroes, the enemy's best fighters, and his old nickname took on a glorious new meaning.

As a nine-year-old patriot on the home front, I helped to collect scrap rubber, scrap metal, tinfoil, old newspapers, and even cans of fat for the war effort. Some of the tinfoil came from my father's packs of cigarettes, some of it came from my packs of gum, and some of the rubber came from rubber bands that I took home from school. Stealing them wasn't a sin, because I kept hearing that God was on our side. Praise the Lord and pass the school supplies.

It has been a long time since the army has needed old inner tubes, and no one ever sings when launching a rocket, but the spirit of the American war effort during World War II was so explosive that it even turned city people into home-front

PROLOGUE to *The Dad Who Stayed* (a novella)

Some dads taught their boys to fish, play basketball, and fix cars. At worst, they taught them to curse when they are angry or to sit around watching television in the evening and on holidays, while the women work.

My dad taught me to run away.

I don't think he knew he was teaching me that, or cared. If it ever crossed his mind, he probably thought that, by leaving Mom two months before I was born, he had avoided affecting me at all.

He was wrong.

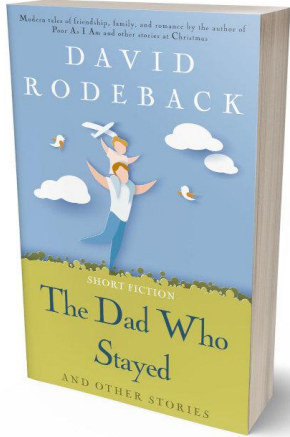
My earliest memory of childhood is asking Mom, when I was three or four, where my daddy was. She shrugged, looked a little sad, and said softly, "You don't have a daddy, Joey."

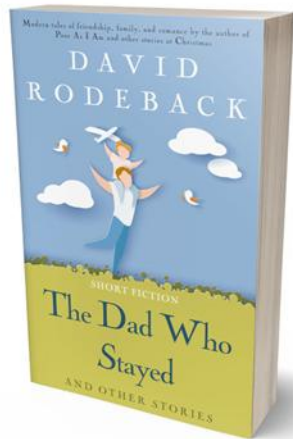
"Oh," I said. I must have been concerned, because I remember asking, "Is that okay?"

"It's okay," she said.

We lived in a small two-story house on Sixth Street. Our apartment was the whole first floor. An overweight, bald man with a beard rented the second floor. He worked nights, so we tried to be quiet during the day. We must have been quiet enough, because I never heard him complain. I hardly ever even saw him.

- Keep reading?
- Competent storyteller?
- Expectations?
- Promises?





It was the early 1970s, and the people in our neighborhood fell roughly into two groups. One was mostly university students. They were busy burning draft cards and women's underwear and experimenting with drugs and free love. I didn't know what "free love" meant, but it didn't sound like a bad thing.

This group spray-painted a word on stop signs around the city. Mom said the word was war, so the signs read, "STOP WAR." I didn't know it meant that the Vietnam War should be ended. I thought it meant, "Stop, there's a war ahead," which, for some reason, there never was.

The second group tried to ignore the first group and scrape out a living.

Mom called the first group "hippies." The second group she called "people like us."

- Keep reading?
- Competent storyteller?
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Interlude: What do you think?



Liza Libes 1d
[Pens and Poison](#)

Two views. Is one of them yours?

The more I learn about what literary agents want in submissions, the more I am convinced that, contrary to what their title suggests, literary agents have never actually read literature.

“

The first pages are not the place for slow build-ups. Make sure you're starting the story where the conflict or emotional tension begins. Place your character in the middle of an action or conversation that reveals something important about them. Your first 10 pages need to introduce compelling characters, hint at conflict and establish the tone and stakes—what the protagonist stands to lose, which will compel the reader to keep turning pages.

Renee Fountain





Liza Libes 1d
Pens and Poison

Two views. Is one of them yours?

Imagine if *The Great Gatsby* started *in medias res* with the car accident or at a Gatsby party instead of Nick's introspective "In my younger and more vulnerable days." Imagine if *Anna Karenina* began with Anna's train accident or affair instead of Tolstoy's meditation on the unhappy family and the exposition on the Oblonsky family. Imagine if Holden Caulfield immediately began his crusade around New York without telling us about "David Copperfield kind of crap."

These slow openings are memorable precisely because they contain no immediate conflict, emotional tension, or stakes. They compel us to *think* rather than to react viscerally. Everything that she doesn't want here not only exists in literature but makes it great!

Slow build-ups are precisely what makes great literature so good. I don't want to be told what the "stakes" are on the first page. I want to be pulled into a world rife with *ideas*. While there is nothing wrong with starting *in medias res*, slow build-ups have been the cornerstone of great literature for centuries, and by forcing writers to introduce an immediate conflict, we are stripping literature of its introspective qualities and uniqueness and forcing all writers into a tiny box.

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Reprise: things beginnings **must** do

- ▶ Keep the reader reading
 - ▶ **Are we in the hands of a competent storyteller?**
- ▶ Create expectations
- ▶ Make promises the story will later fulfill (or at least address seriously)

We Move to Colorado

I NEVER really knew Father very well till we moved to the ranch on the Fort Logan–Morrison road, not far from Denver. That was just after my eighth birthday—right at the end of 1906. When we lived in East Rochester, New Hampshire, he worked in the woolen mill, but it wasn't good for his lungs. He was sick in bed the winter before we moved—the one after Hal was a year old.

Cousin Phil lived in Denver, and came to see us the next spring, right after Father got well enough to go back to work. I liked him a lot. He had a gold front tooth, and wore a derby hat cocked way over on his right ear. And he sold gold-mine stock.

One afternoon when Grace and I got home from school, he and Mother were talking in the parlor. I didn't have much chance to listen, because Mother told Grace and me to take Philip and Muriel outside to play till supertime. But I did hear Cousin Phil say, "Why, Mame, there just isn't any work at all to ranching in Colorado. We have three hundred and sixty-five sunshiny days in a year, and all a man has to do is toss out seed in the spring and harvest his crop in the fall. With my connec-

tions, I could make a deal to put you folks on one of the finest ranches in the country, where you'd have all the milk, butter, and eggs you could eat, and half of all the crops you could raise. Why, in one year Charlie'd be a new man—and make as much money as he'd make here in East Rochester in a lifetime."

I guess Father and Mother believed what he said, because there were letters from him all through the summer and fall. Then, just after Christmas, we had our auction and took the train for Denver—all seven of us: Father and Mother and Grace, Muriel, Philip, Hal, and I. Grace was older than I was, but the rest were younger. All the way out on the train, I kept guessing how big the house and barns on our ranch would be, and how many hundred horses and cows there'd be on it.

It was late when we got to Denver, so we rented a room in a little hotel on Seventeenth Street. The next day, Cousin Phil lent us his rubber-tired buggy and Prince, his sleek little seal-brown driving horse. Father let me go to see our ranch with him and Mother. I didn't really have to ask him to let me go. I guess he just knew how much I wanted to and said to Mother, "Do you think there'd be enough room for you and the baby if we squeezed Ralph in between us?"

We could see our new house from a couple of miles away. We knew it must be ours, because Cousin Phil had told us it was three and a half miles west of Fort Logan—the first house on the Morrison wagon road. From the hill beyond the Fort, it looked like a little dollhouse sitting on the edge of a great big table, with a brown tablecloth smoothed out flat all around it. It was right near the edge of the mesa, where the land started dipping northward into Bear Creek Valley. Away toward the south there were brown, rolling hills, as though the tablecloth had been wrinkled a little. And not far beyond it, toward the west, the hogbacks rose like big loaves of golden-brown bread sitting on the table. High above them the snowcaps of the Rockies glistened in the afternoon sunshine.

As we came nearer, it looked less like a dollhouse and more like just what it was: a little three-room cottage that had been

Ralph Moody's books "should be
read aloud in every family circle in America."
—STERLING NORTH

LITTLE BRITCHES

Father and I Were Ranchers



Ralph Moody

CHAPTER ONE



THE AIR WAS MOIST, THE COMING RAIN telegraphed by plump, gray clouds, and the blue sky fast fading. The 1936 four-door Lincoln Zephyr sedan moved down the winding road at a decent, if unhurried, pace. The car's interior was filled with the inviting aromas of warm sourdough bread, baked chicken, and peach and cinnamon pie from the picnic basket that sat so temptingly between the two children in the backseat.

Louisa Mae Cardinal, twelve years old, tall and rangy, her hair the color of sun-dappled straw and her eyes blue, was known simply as Lou. She was a pretty girl who would almost certainly grow into a beautiful woman. But Lou would fight tea parties, pigtails, and frilly dresses to the death. And somehow win. It was just her nature.

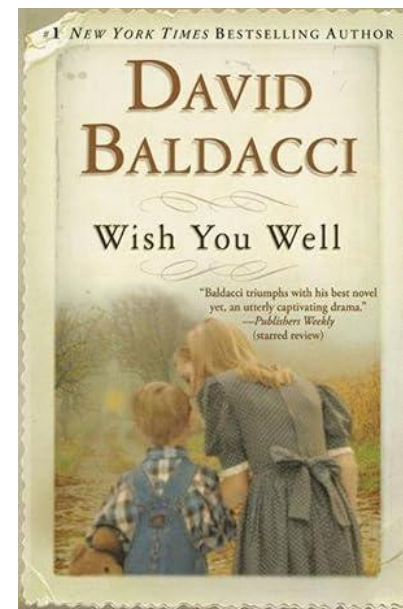
The notebook was open on her lap, and Lou was filling the blank pages with writings of importance to her,

as a fisherman does his net. And from the girl's pleased look, she was landing fat cod with every pitch and catch. As always, she was very intent on her writing. Lou came by that trait honestly, as her father had such fever to an even greater degree than his daughter.

On the other side of the picnic basket was Lou's brother, Oz. The name was a contraction of his given one, Oscar. He was seven, small for his age, though there was the promise of height in his long feet. He did not possess the lanky limbs and athletic grace of his sister. Oz also lacked the confidence that so plainly burned in Lou's eyes. And yet he held his worn stuffed bear with the unbreakable clench of a wrestler, and he had a way about him that naturally warmed others' souls. After meeting Oz Cardinal, one came away convinced that he was a little boy with a heart as big and giving as God could bestow on lowly, conflicted mortals.

Jack Cardinal was driving. He seemed unaware of the approaching storm, or even the car's other occupants. His slender fingers drummed on the steering wheel. The tips of his fingers were callused from years of punching the typewriter keys, and there was a permanent groove in the middle finger of his right hand where the pen pressed against it. Badges of honor, he often said.

As a writer, Jack assembled vivid landscapes densely populated with flawed characters who, with each turn of the page, seemed more real than one's family. Readers would often weep as a beloved character perished under the writer's nib, yet the distinct beauty of the language never overshadowed the blunt force of the story,





(In case we have time for)
One more interlude



All New (Heart Shut Tight)

I dreamed this dream
That's not how I ought to start a song, but tag along
Sometimes the tried clichés are true
And there were you, all mysterious and smooth
Wrapped in riddles, worth a little scar or two
...

The Avocado Song

Dedicated to someone whom this song will outlast

Well I had a good time sweetheart, that's for sure
Well I wanna thank you for all your trouble
But if you lose my number now I won't complain
'Cause you're my avocado baby—only only good for one day
'Cause you're my sushi baby—only only good for one day
...



Dear Mister Darcy

On unsent letters and strong silent types

They drank all the pilsner and ate all the oranges
And she thought as the rotten and rusty door hinges
Squealed as he left, how remarkably deftly
How utterly thoroughly he'd failed to confess
He'd evaded the point and eluded the mood
She meant to convey when she laid out the food
Even put up her hair, but the boy wouldn't bite
And it was almost sexy, but not quite.

...

The Liberal Arts Degree Waltz

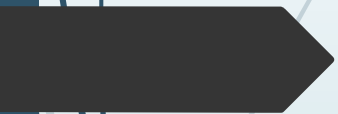
If there had been Twitter when I was sixteen,
through retweets and research I might have foreseen
a dual major in Classics and art history,
though enriching and inspiring, would pauperize me.

We who sought knowledge for knowledge's sake,
who swooned over Tolstoy and Brontë and Blake,
who argued philosophy into the night—
there's a tune we all know, and it haunts us like so:

...

mariancall.com
Album: Fun Singles in Your Area





(the end of that beginnings interlude)

#stillnotsorry

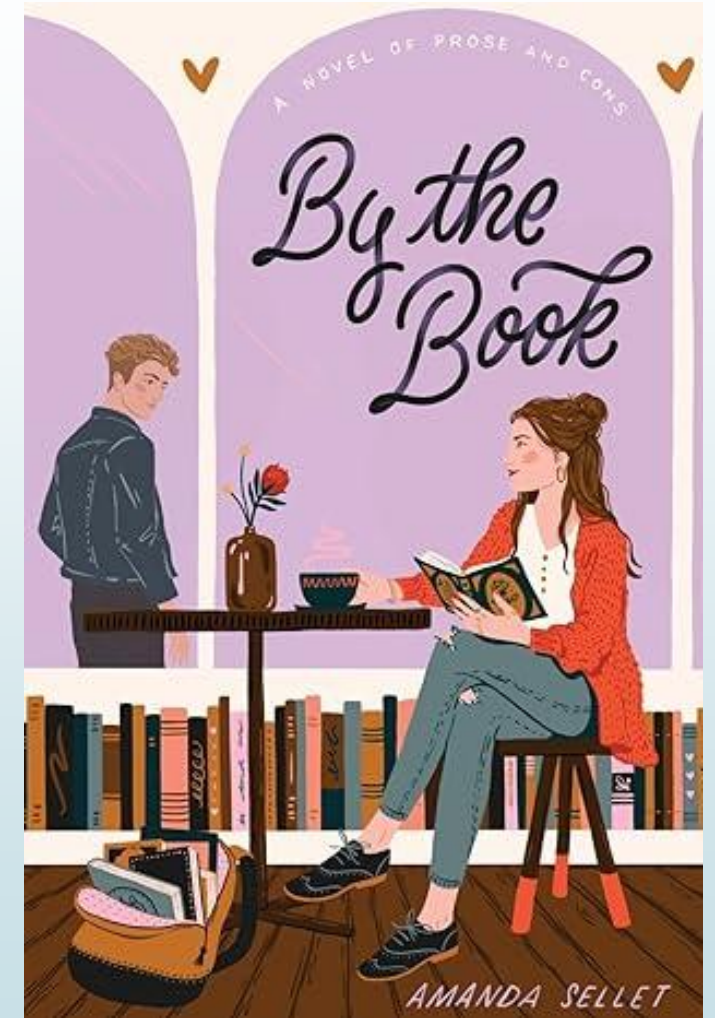
CHAPTER 1

The beginning of the upending of my life took place on a sweltering August afternoon, the summer before my sophomore year of high school. I was lying on the couch, immersed in the story of a genteel family with too many daughters and not enough property. The slow rotation of the ceiling fan ruffled the pages of my book. If I held perfectly still, it was possible not to sweat.

“Mary,” said my mother’s voice, summoning me back to the present. “Can I see you in my office?”

There was no clap of thunder or eerie howling in the distance. The sun continued to blaze down from a cloudless sky—or so I imagined, not having been outside. Apart from the mild annoyance of being interrupted in the middle of a crucial scene, I had no presentiment of doom. After fumbling for my bookmark, which had slipped between cushions, I levered myself upright.

When I hobbled into the office on limbs stiff from too many hours in the same position, I was surprised to see my



September 3, 2009
 Bentham Literary Residency Program
 P.O. Box 1572
 Bentham, ME 04976

Dear Committee Members,

Over the past twenty-odd years I've recommended god only knows how many talented candidates for the Bentham January residency—that enviable literary oasis in the woods south of Skowhegan: the solitude, the pristine cabins, the artistic camaraderie, and those exquisite hand-delivered satchels of apples and cheese . . . Well, you can scratch all prior nominees and pretenders from your mailing lists, because none is as provocative or as promising as Darren Browles.

Mr. Browles is my advisee; he's taken two of my workshops, and his novel-in-progress, a retelling of Melville's "Bartleby" (but in which the eponymous character is hired to keep the books at a brothel, circa 1960, just outside Las Vegas), is both tender satire and blistering adaptation/homage. In brief: this tour de force is witty, incisive, original, brutally sophisticated, erotic. You don't need me to summarize it—you'll have received his two opening chapters. My agent, Ken Doyle, is apprised of the project and is gnashing his pearly incisors in the hope of receiving the completed manuscript soon. Any additional perks or

funding you can provide for Browles during the residency will be appreciated; he's likely to be wooed by editors all over New York.

A personal aside: I was very sorry to hear of Mike's death. He was a terrific director, and I always enjoyed talking to him in the row of blue rocking chairs out on the porch during the occasions (too rare!) when I was able to escape my academic duties here in the Midwest and accept his invitations to Bentham. He'll be terribly hard to replace. Whoever tries to step into them will find he wore sizeable, generous shoes.

In sadness but looking to the future,
 Jason T. Fitger
 Professor of Creative Writing and English
 Department of English
 Payne University

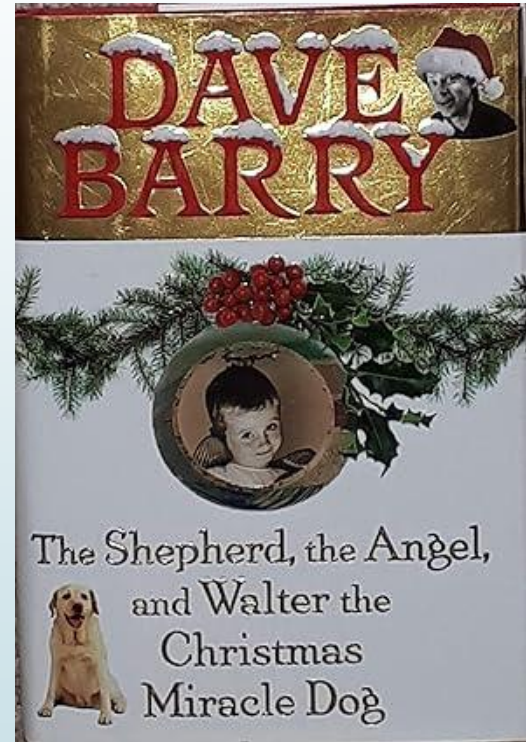


My name's Doug Barnes, and this stuff happened on Christmas Eve in my town, which is Asquont, New York. According to Mr. Purcell, who's my Social Studies teacher, Asquont is an Indian name that means some Indian thing like "Hunting Place in the Green Forest," but sometimes I think it was just a joke by the Indians to get white people to say "Asquont."

Anyway, there's no Indians here now, not in 1960. Also, this wouldn't be a good place to hunt anymore, unless you wanted to shoot somebody's station wagon. Asquont is only thirty miles from New York City, which is where a lot of the dads work. In the morning they drive to North White Plains and take the train to New York, and at night they come home smelling like cigarettes. In between, they work and smoke.



My dad is one of them. He works for an advertising agency, which according to my mom means that he drinks martinis in the daytime. He does the commercials for Oldsmobile. We'll be watching TV, and when an Oldsmobile commercial comes on he'll go, "SHH!" and we all have to shut up and watch the commercial, like it was this great movie instead of a commercial with actors pretending to be a family, smiling like maniacs because they're so excited to be in their Oldsmobile.





That was the lecture. This is the lab.

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Consider your own beginning

1. First, consider what your first page (or two at most) establishes, and how:

- Setting
- Character
- Genre
- Point of view (maybe just one of multiple POVs)
- Voice
- More



CHAPTER ONE

ANYA WAS NOT a good goatherd. The sun had barely broken over the trees as she pulled Zvezda back to the barn by his horns for the third time. The stupid goat had broken his leg two weeks earlier, and Anya's grandfather wanted him to stay in the barn and rest for at least a month. But the goat had chewed off his splint and, apparently bored with the comfort of the barn, pushed through the doors and followed Anya out to the onion fields.

Her grandfather, Dyedka, sat in the barn on a stool and milked a goat. When Anya pulled the door

open, all the goats swiveled their heads toward her, and Dyedka said, "Back already?"

She shoved Zvezda inside. "Can you make him stay?"

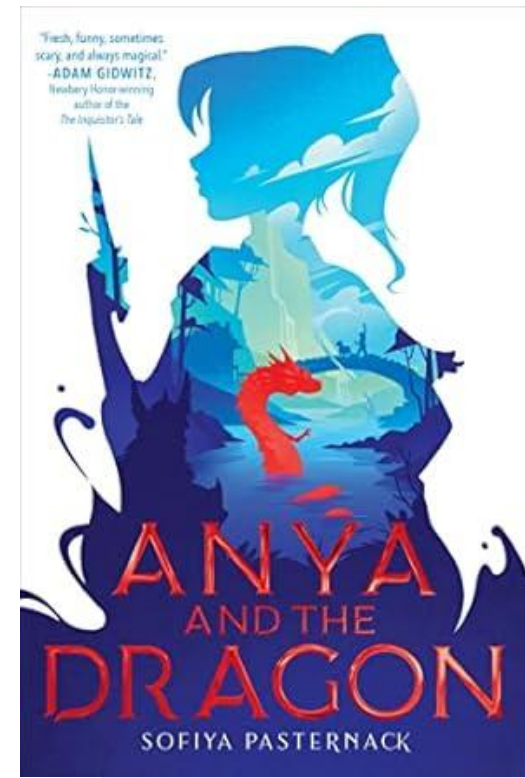
Dyedka shrugged. "He's not my goat."

"They're all your goats," Anya said.

He shook his head. "That one's yours. He doesn't listen to me, either."

"But you have animal magic, Dyedka." Zvezda nibbled on her dress, and she pushed him away. "You're a bad goat!"

Dyedka patted the goat he was done milking on her rump, and she walked away. He turned his head to Anya so he could study her with his good eye. He had lost his other eye, plus both of his legs at the knee, in a past war against the tree people—who Anya was disappointed to find out weren't actually people made of trees but just people who lived in the forest—before she had been born. He had wooden legs that he got around on with the help of his walking stick, which leaned against the wall nearby.





Consider your own beginning

2. Second, how and how well does your beginning hook the reader? Some possible hooks include:

- Voice
- Senses
- Humor
- Setting
- Character
- Conflict
- Language



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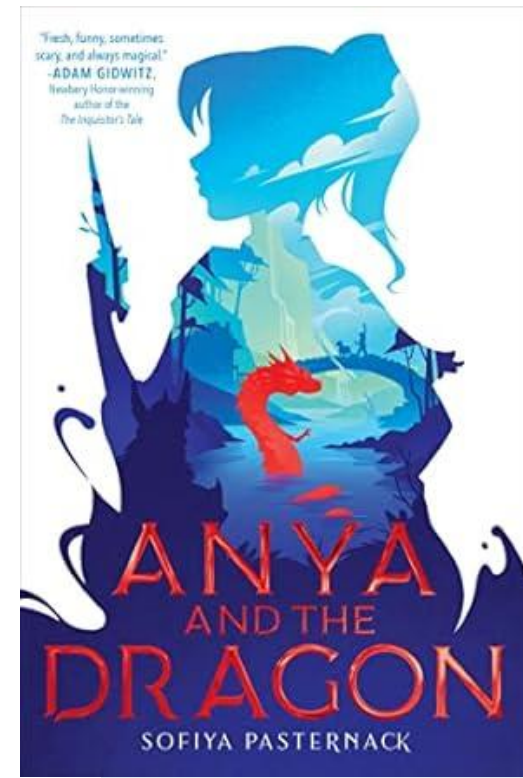
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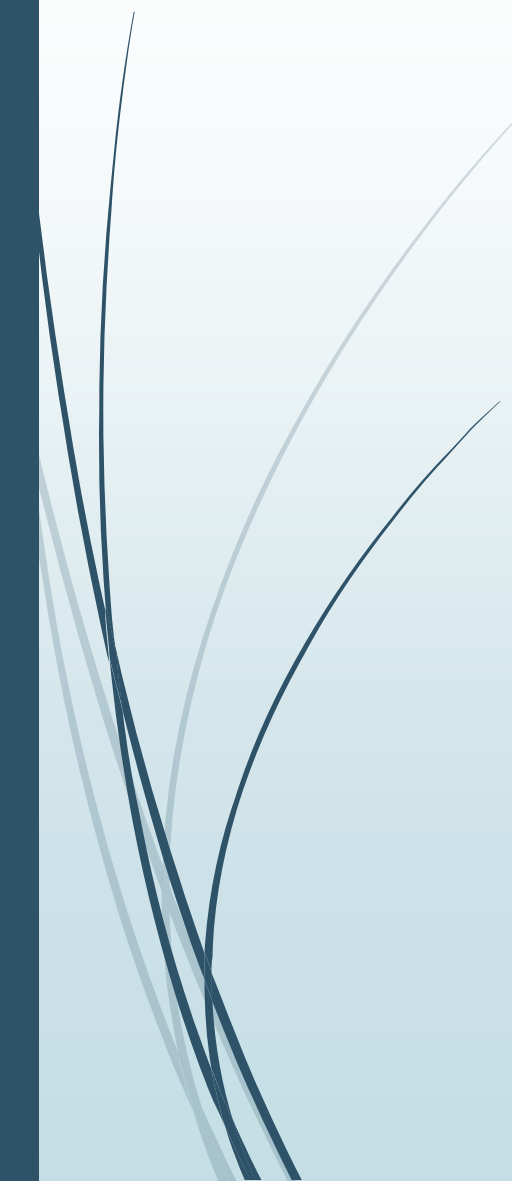
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Consider your own beginning

3. Finally, what expectations have you created What promises have you made? Do you fulfill them (or at least address them conscientiously) later?
- 



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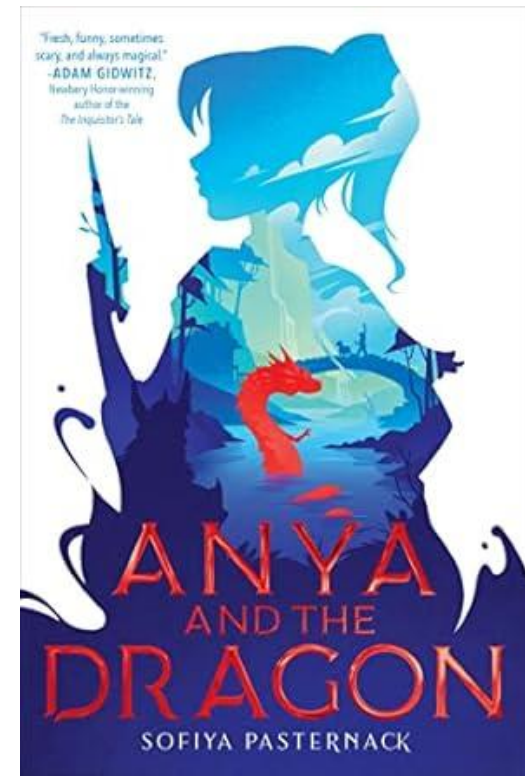
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Some housekeeping

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When should you write the beginning?

- ▶ Start there, if you can.
- ▶ If you can't, write it later.
- ▶ You'll probably rewrite it anyway. (More revisions than any other part of the story?)
- ▶ You—or your editor—might decide your real beginning is Chapter 3.



How should you write the beginning?

(Or rewrite the beginning)

How should I know? You're the author.

Here's what I know . . .

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Once more: things beginnings **must** do

- ▶ Keep the reader reading
 - ▶ **Are we in the hands of a competent storyteller?**
- ▶ Create expectations
- ▶ Make promises the story will later fulfill (or at least address seriously)



Where is the beginning?
(Aristotle gave us a tool.)

“A beginning is that which requires nothing to precede it.”

Where to begin your story?

Cut off a piece, see what you get.

Cut off another.

What does reader need to know/feel before the inciting incident?

Opposite: Tolstoy, *War and Peace*



Not necessarily the beginning: the inciting incident

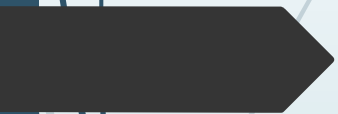
- ▶ Sets the story in motion, disrupts the status quo, protagonist can't simply continue normal life.
- ▶ Leaves the protagonist scrambling—doesn't know how or have the tools to proceed.
- ▶ Allows the protagonist to take the first step toward the quest. (Likely doesn't define the quest or the next step.)
- ▶ Introduces obstacles (may hint at antagonist).
- ▶ Usually in the first 10% of the book.

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Why mention the inciting incident here?

What does the reader need to know, understand, and feel to set up the inciting incident?

This is work for your beginning, even if the inciting incident comes slightly later.



I ASK YOU SOMETHING



“The reader’s immediate, complete surrender is the ideal.”

What book’s beginning has caused your complete surrender as a reader?

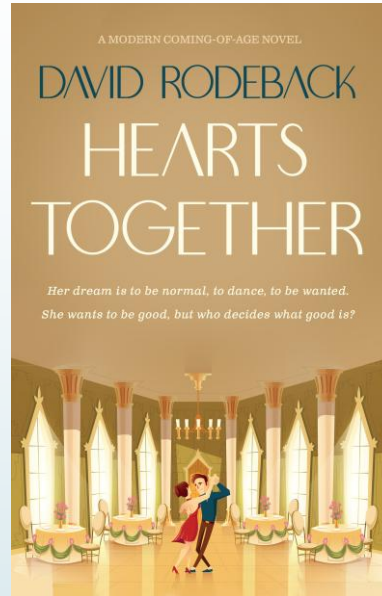
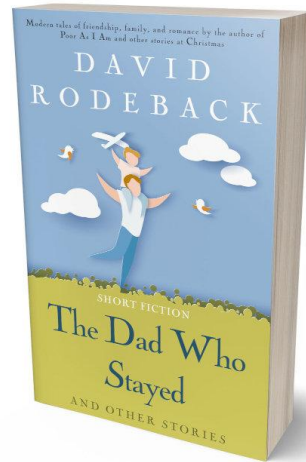
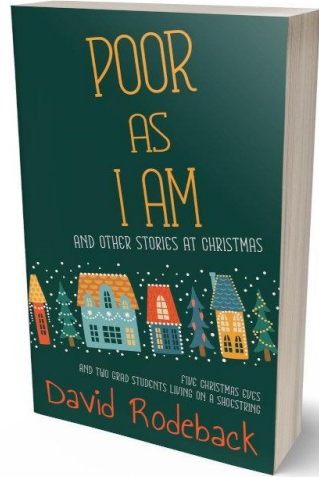


Q&A ASK ME **ANYTHING**



Thank you!

Where to find me and my books



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