

them freedom to pick their clothes, friends and TV shows. They sprang to their children's defense when the kids collided with school authorities, and absolved them of household chores.

- 2 Sitting with the couple were the results of all that dedicated effort—a sullen, arrogant 15-year-old boy and a totally self-absorbed 13-year-old girl. The four of them were the opposite of the strong, loving family the parents believed their attitudes were helping to build.

The Attention-Getter and Background Information

Most essays don't begin immediately with the thesis. Instead, they start gradually by getting the reader ready for the thesis. Background information, like background music in a movie, gets the reader in the mood to read the essay. The introduction almost always begins with an attention-getter and background information about the topic to prepare for the thesis that will come afterward. Essays can begin with a specific fact in order to develop a general idea, or they can start with a generality and develop particular examples.

Attention-getters and background information can take many forms, some of which are listed below. You can use any of these strategies alone or in combination. Remember that the purpose of the introduction is to prepare the reader to read, understand, and agree with the thesis, so it's important to provide whatever information is necessary to get the reader on the same wavelength as the writer. Imagine you were going to read your essay—what would get you interested?

- **A story or anecdote**

A good story is like a picture, and as the old saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words. A story that illustrates the point you plan to make in the essay will get the reader interested and predisposed in favor of your slant on the topic.

Peer Example:

"Flintstone and Kramden," Dan Tribble (page 143)

Professional Examples:

"Why Happy Families Are Different," John E. Obedzinski (page 465)

"Not in Our Town," Edwin Dobb (page 413)

"What's Your Emotional I.Q.?" Daniel Goleman (page 433)

- **History, facts, or information about the topic**

Sometimes a topic is so complex that a review of what has happened legally, socially, medically, or politically with the topic must be reported before the reader can appreciate the significance of the thesis your essay will develop. Facts can also help define the significance and the implications of your topic.

Peer Example:

"Deadbeat Dads," Alicia Martinez (page 158)

Professional Example:

"Friends as Healers," R. Daniel Foster (page 419)