

## Creating a Good Title

1. Short and snappy – Use a short word or phrase that has a very few syllables but carries a heavy emotional connotation.

Examples:     Jaws     Roots     Alive

2. Long and involved – Use a longer phrase or a complete sentence that will intrigue or puzzle the reader.

Examples:     The Undertaker's Gone Bananas  
                  Dr. Strangelove or How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love  
                                  the Bomb  
                  To Kill a Mockingbird  
                  The Day No Pigs Would Die  
                  I Married a Monster from Outer Space

3. Alliteration – Use words that begin with the same consonant sound.

Examples:     “The Vicious Vortex”  
                  The Plain Passage  
                  Of Mice and Men  
                  Nickolas Nickelby

4. Assonance – Use words that repeat the same vowel sound.

Examples:     “The Black Cat”  
                  East of Eden  
                  The Price is Right

5. Rhyme – Use words in the title to form rhymes.

Examples:     The Wild Child”  
                  Helter Skelter

6. Balance – Use words or phrases of approximately equal length on opposite sides of a “fulcrum” word or point.

Examples:     East of Eden  
                  The Lion in Winter

7. Subtitles – Follow the initial (first) title with another one that explains more about the book, article, report, etc.

Example:     Year of the Storms: The Destructive Kansas Weather of 1990  
                  Kansas Storms: Destruction, Tragedy, and Recovery – 1991  
                  TV Trivia: Thirty Years of Television

8. The significant quote – The title may come from a line in a famous book, poem, song, play, or other work of literature.

For example: The Grapes of Wrath, John Steinbeck’s novel about an Oklahoma farm family displaced by the dust storms of the Depression years, takes its title from “The Battle Hymn of the Republic (Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!)” Ray Bradbury’s Something Wicked This Way Comes, a novel about an evil carnival, gets its title from one of the witches’ lines in Macbeth. The title of John Steinbeck’s East of Eden, the saga of an American family in which one brother tries to destroy another brother, comes from a line about Cain in the Bible.

Another type of significant-quote title uses a line from the work itself. Mark Miller picked “the Vicious Vortex” for the title of his research report after initially using that expression in a sentence in the body of his paper.

9. Parody – Parody is defined as humorous imitation. Mad Magazine always contains some parodies of current movies and TV shows.

A parody title takes a well-known title and twists it a little. For example, an essay about an algebra class might be entitled The Apes of Math in a take-off of The Grapes of Wrath.

## Introductions

Introductions: Grab the readers' attention and lead them by the nose into your thesis statement.

**Type 1:** The word picture.

Create a verbal collage, using deliberately incomplete sentences. Present a series of images that relate to the topic at hand, as Jason Schlochtermeyer did in his essay on Wuthering Heights.

Ancient mansions silhouetted against leaden skies . . . storm clouds thundering all over the moors . . . ghosts prowling the earth . . . These are all images from Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights. From the beginning to end, this film is packed with a weird supernatural atmosphere that I found fascinating.

**Type 2:** The Anecdote

Tell a little story to hook your reader's interest. Notice how Newsweek magazine begins an article entitled "Who are the Disabled?" Also look at the opening sentences of another Newsweek article entitled "Wash Hot, Shrink Well." It uses the same anecdotal technique.

"Who are the Disabled?"

Jane Murray was working as a radiation therapist in 1991 when a delirious patient suddenly lunged at her and fractured one of her vertebrae. When Murray recovered, she wanted her job back. But because of the injury, she couldn't lift anything above her head, preventing her from performing tasks like hoisting leading X-ray plates. Her employer, Florida Hospital in Orlando, said she could no longer perform the job, and Murray sued. Her charge? Discrimination against the disabled.

In 1990, Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act, arguably the nation's most sweeping civil-rights law since the mid-'60s.

"Wash Hot, Shrink Well"

When 17-year-old Annie Psaltiras cleaned out her closet recently, she found a T shirt she hadn't worn since she was 9. It was too short and too tight—in other words, a perfect addition to a wardrobe of skimpy skirts, baby barrettes and doll size backpacks. "I just like fitted clothes, and baby T shirts are so cute," Annie said the other day, hours before she graduated from Immaculate Heart High School in Los Angeles. In fact, when Annie's not plumbing the recesses of her closet for anything undersize, she's scouring thrift shops for clothes that other people have outgrown. Get out your scissors. Across the nation this summer, the young and the hip are cutting fashion down to size. Teeny tiny size.

### **Type 3: The Interesting Tidbit**

Provide a fascinating fact to pique your reader's attention. The following introduction is from a college paper on A Midsummer Night's Dream:

During the past several years, more and more stagings of A Midsummer Night's Dream have popped up. The review sections of The Shakespeare Quarterly are loaded with accounts of current productions. With this many versions of the comedy presented each year, there are bound to be a number of unusual, "creative," even bizarre renderings of this tale of confused love in the Athenian woods. For example, a Seattle productions company in the spring of 1980 reset the play in a late '50s high school. Hermia and Helena appeared in pony tails and poodle skirts. The king of Athens, the Queen of the Amazons, and the attendants of the royal court were played as school administrators and members of the faculty. The country bumpkins who put on the Fool's Play wore janitors' uniforms. Sporting the ducktailed hairstyle of a motorcycle hood, Oberon King of the Elves) roared onstage astride a Harley-Davidson.

### **Type 4: The Rhetorical Question**

Ask the reader a question that you intend to answer in the course of the essay, as the author of this article; "Target—Earth!" does in the book Stranger than Science:

Is the earth headed for destruction? Is there, somewhere in the void of outer space a gigantic mass of iron which may one day intercept us in one blinding flash? Always a possibility, of course, but is it probable.

### **Type 5: Historical Background**

Provide your readers with a little history to ease them into the thesis statement, as this example does:

In the 1920s, incomes were soaring in Independence, Kansas. Oil rigs pumped night and day. Mansions sprang up all along Penn Avenue, the town's main thoroughfare. Bootleg bourbons flowed at the local country club. Plain folks played the stock market. And William Inge, a lonely, troubled kid, looked on. Thirty years later he would write a screenplay about that time and win an Academy Award. Inge deserved his Oscar. His script for Splendor in the Grass in the best piece of literature to come out of this state.

### **Type 6: The Pertinent Quotation**

Notice the way Susannah McCorkle opens "The Mother of Us All," her article about Ethel Walters, a singer / dancer / actress / evangelist.

"The greatest nostalgia of all is that which we feel for what we have never known," an elderly English journalist told me when I wondered aloud why I, a 1960s rock 'n' roll child, had become obsessed with 1930s jazz.

### **Type 7: The Definition**

Another way to lead into your thesis is to begin with a definition and develop the thesis from it.

Note this following paragraph:

The definition of chivalry found in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary reads as follows, ". . . the dignity or system of knighthood; the spirit, usage, or manners of knighthood." The chivalrous knight possesses characteristics of bravery, loyalty, a high regard for women, and consideration for others. In Sir Thomas Malory's Morte d' Arthur, Sir Lancelot, a knight loyal to King Arthur possesses these chivalrous characteristics that boost him to the pinnacle of knighthood, or in twentieth century times, to manhood. Young men of the twentieth century do not generally maintain these high standards, however, that Sir Lancelot held in the land of Camelot.

### **Type 8: The Provocative Statement**

Open with a statement designed to provoke outrage, shock, disagreement, disbelief, amusement, etc.

Jack Kroll does in his Newsweek review of The Flintstones:

The Flintstones should really be reviewed by an 8-year-old. But Newsweek's 8-year-old movie critic took early retirement last year. If you think that gag is bad, wait till you take your 8-year-old to see The Flintstones.

The Introduction is typically a minimum of 4 sentences.

1. Broad Statement (This typically does not include the words I, me, my, mine, we, and ours.)
2. Narrowing Sentence (This is taking the broader subject and narrowing it down with more specifics.)
3. Narrowing Sentence (This is taking the broader subject and narrowing it down with more specifics.)
4. Thesis Statement (The most important sentence—It tells the reader what is to come) This should be information from the topic sentences.

Body Paragraphs: There are typically 3 body paragraphs

1. Topic Sentence (This tells the reader what the paragraph is about)
2. Supporting Detail (This is evidence that supports the topic sentence)
3. Explaining Sentence (This is evidence that further explains the supporting detail)
4. Supporting Detail (This is evidence that supports the topic sentence)
5. Explaining Sentence (This is evidence that further explains the supporting detail)
6. Supporting Detail (This is evidence that supports the topic sentence)
7. Explaining Sentence (This is evidence that further explains the supporting detail)
8. Supporting Detail (This is evidence that supports the topic sentence)
9. Explaining Sentence (This is evidence that further explains the supporting detail)
10. Supporting Detail ((This is evidence that supports the topic sentence)
11. Explaining Sentence (This is evidence that further explains the supporting detail)
12. Concluding sentence (This sentence sums up the entire paragraph.

Conclusion—This should be 3 sentences or a little more.

1. The first sentence needs to restate the thesis (Last sentence of the intro)
2. Hit any high points (students will reemphasize anything that needs it)
3. Hit any high points (students will reemphasize anything that needs it)
4. End with a punch (This is the student's last opportunity to capture your attention. Typically students will end with a call to action saying someone needs to do something.)