



Start writing essays

Writing your introduction

Jane Van Hool:

Why is a good introduction so important? John Humphrys.

John Humphrys:

You've got to grab their attention. If they don't read it, there's no point in having written it. That's the most obvious point to make, but a lot of people kind of think they can drift into the piece, and sometimes you do that. I usually try to find something out of my own experience, doesn't always work obviously, that, that I can stick at the top, I mean I, I wrote a piece the other day, about nuclear warfare and the spread of nuclear weapons, and wondered how on Earth I could get into it and, and, and what I did was used an experience that I'd had the first time I'd reported a foreign war and found myself under fire. And, and I wrote a piece about that which, not too many words, that's the temptation, of course, you use up too many words before you get into the argument, but I think it made a reasonably interesting top to the piece.

Jane Van Hool:

John Pilger.

John Pilger:

If you're writing a feature article, the introductory paragraph, the job it has to do is to get the reader's attention. It doesn't mean to say it has to be done by shouting or crudely, or by using something gratuitous, it can be done subtly, but still powerfully. Often the most effective way is to use an illustration that will lead you in, then onto the wider canvas of what you're writing about.

Jane Van Hool:

Brian Walden.

Brian Walden:

Think of Dickens' start of *A Tale of Two Cities*: 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times'. There's an interesting juxtaposition there, you see, you want to read on. If you say, for instance, let's take an obvious subject - Adolf Hitler. Most people will know something about Adolf Hitler, Everyone knows that he was a monster. So, if you began an article on Adolf Hitler, with a perfectly true statement, which ran: 'Adolf Hitler, for a time, was probably the most popular leader Germany has ever had.' Now that, I suggest, takes people's attention, in a way that a condemnation of Hitler would not.