

prose piece). Then again, you might also want to combine this or the next two exercises with other exercises in the book: 400 words

- A. He saw her from the bottom of the stairs before she saw him.
- B. What I am saying now is a lie.
- C. One hot evening in Padua they carried him up onto the roof and he could look out over the top of the town. (Ernest Hemingway)
- D. Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure.
- E. There was a man she loved with a violent love, and she spent much of her time thinking about his wife. (Joyce Carol Oates)
- F. Like all men of —, I have been a leader; like all, I have been a slave. (Jorge Luis Borges)
- G. Truth, like morality, is a relative affair: There are no facts, only interpretations. )
- I. Every morning there's a halo hanging on the corner of my girlfriend's four-post bed. (Sugar Ray)
- J. She said, I know what it's like to be dead. (John Lennon and Paul McCartney)
- K. They shoot the white girl first. (Toni Morrison)

This is one of the most commonly used exercises in this book. Why is it so appealing? Perhaps the first sentence acts as a shove in the back of the writer: Get going—it's all downhill from the first sentence. Writing teachers and handbooks discuss great opening sentences, and I know from my own experience as a young writer that this was depressing. I wanted to be able to create a great opening sentence, but I couldn't, and it didn't seem worth it to go on. This exercise gives you the great opening sentence and then everything else you do is your own stuff, which is surprisingly liberating.

L: telely, Brian, The 3 A.M. Epiphany,  
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**BEGINNINGS.** Write a story with one of the following as your *opening* sentence (or choose a sentence from a favorite writer). You should not let anything but this sentence influence you, however you wish to be influenced (I won't say, for instance, that the style of the sentence should be continued, or that the information contained in the sentence should act as a key to your