

Improving Coherence with Paragraph Hooks

Paragraph hooks are simple, concrete techniques that writers can employ to improve the connections between paragraphs and thus improve the overall coherence of a text. Below are two sample paragraphs which we will use to illustrate the different kinds of hooks:

Mark Twain is established in the minds of most Americans as a kindly humorist, a gentle and delightful "funny man." No doubt his photographs have helped promote this image. Everybody is familiar with the Twain face. He looks like every child's ideal grandfather, a dear old white-thatched gentleman who embodies the very spirit of loving kindness.

But Twain wrote some of the most savage satire ever produced in America

1. **Paragraph Hook:** the simplest kind of hook. The last word of the first paragraph is "hooked" into the first sentence of the second paragraph and used as a point of departure for introducing another idea:

This loving kindness begins to look a little doubtful in view of some of his writing. For Twain wrote some of the most savage satire ever produced in America

2. **Deeper Hook:** going further back in the last sentence of the first paragraph for the hook:

The dear old white-thatched gentleman happens to be the author of some of most savage satire ever produced in America.

3. **Multiple Hook:** going back past the last sentence of the first paragraph for the hook, but including an additional hook from the last sentence for "insurance":

To accept such an image is to betray greater familiarity with the spirit of the photograph than that of the writing. For Twain wrote some of the most savage satire ever produced in America

4. **Idea Hook:** same principle, but instead of repeating an exact word or words from the previous paragraph, refer to the idea just expressed, compressing it into a single phrase.

Such a view of Twain would probably have been a source of high amusement to the author himself. Twain wrote some of the most savage satire ever produced in America

OR

Any resemblance between this popular portrait and the man who reveals himself in his writing is purely imaginary. For Twain wrote some of the most savage satire ever produced in America

5. **Combinations of Standard Transitional Words and Paragraph Hooks:** a very effective way of linking paragraphs.

This loving kindness begins to look a little doubtful, however, in view of Twain's writing, for he wrote some of the most savage satire ever produced in America

Yet this dear old white-thatched gentleman wrote some of the most savage satire ever produced in America

But to accept such an image . . .

Nevertheless, such of view of Twain would probably . . .

=====

Adapted, with permission, from materials by Stephen Reid and Beverly Atchison of Colorado State University.