Strategy # 7 : Effective Beginnings (also referred to as leads):

1) The description lead:

When dark night rises, the black curtain embraces my body and soul; I feel a hidden fear deep in my mind. The atmosphere smells like the eve of war with anxiety and restlessness. In this period, usually bad luck curses people and evil power overcomes brightness. Thus a variety of crimes as well as shadow behaviors love darkness. It is a breeding ground for burning despair and ice-cold gloom.

(Joe, section 7)

Leaning against the doorframe edge of the balcony, I am quietly staring at this group of cute creatures pecking the grain in the flowerpot. Almost every morning or early at night I put some grain in the flowerpot for the birds' free-pecking, and this habit has been going on for several years. Always I ask myself whether my only sparrow will be among them, while my thoughts cannot help but fly back to that distant winter.

(Franklin, section 7)

2) The question lead:

How hard is it? How hard is it to admit it is gone, when a relationship has come to an end? How hard is it? You tell yourself accept it, be okay with it, when all those sweet words and promises keep jumping into your ears from out of nowhere, in an empty street or in the middle of a crowd.

(NJ, section 3)

After three days of shipboard life, I never want to go back to another ship. Not even on a luxury cruise ship or private yacht? Never! Life on the waves is not for me.

(Skylar, section 3)

3) The image lead:

There is an artistic slingshot in the pen container which is not only a toy for boys but also an adornment. One of my friends bought it during a journey and gave it to me as a little present. I have received many presents from friends. The slingshot is one of them, but it is different for me, not because of the friend who was the giver, but because of the story between the slingshot and me fifteen years ago.

(Sam, Section 6)

The piano gave forth a pleasant, lingering sound. The wonderful music accompanied me day and night. We all know that every little girl dreams about becoming a princess, so that she can wear a beautiful lace dress, sit at the keyboard, and play music such as Fleur de Leis" and "Songs of Spring," while the audience listens admiringly. I was no exception.

(Nancy, section 3)

4) The dialogue lead:

"The Pentagon was attacked!" one of my classmates shouted as he ran into the classroom. (Allen, section 4)

It was a quiet afternoon. The sun outside shone brightly, but there was only a little light in the room. I didn't want to open the window nor turn on the light. I hesitated and wondered, walked back and forth, and finally I made a phone call.

"Hello." That was his voice, so familiar.

"It's me. May I talk to you for awhile?"

"Yes. What do you want to say?"

"Mmm..could we get together again? I miss you."

"Too late, I just decided to get engaged to another girl."

"When?"

"Next month, I think."

"But we just broke up three months ago. Are you going to marry?"

"Yes. Nobody is irreplaceable. You didn't want to get married, so I found another person. Take care of yourself. Goodbye."

(Anita, section3)

5) The provocative action or advice lead:

I rest my fingers on the mouse, click the left button, sending the email to join a photo competition. In the attachment, two photos showing brilliant smiles and energetic faces are attached. Although all my friends say that I don't stand a chance, I insist on delivering my masterpieces to the man who collects entries. I believe that if there is no "admission ticket," perhaps I can create one and miracles may happen.

( Wendy, Section 6)

When you get a thief or robber in your house, it is important to be unflappable and act prudently.

(Sky, section 3)

6) The quotation lead:

As an old saying goes, "We have a long way to go in our life, but the critical steps are only a few." I think this statement applies when I remember the very important decision in my life after I graduated from junior high school at the age of 16.

(Rose, section 3)

"When spring comes, you should fly a kite as far as possible, and then cut the string, freeing the kite to snatch your bad luck." Telling me the legend about kites, the old man removed the goldfish kite from the shelf and passed it to me.

(Wendy, section 4)

7) The setting lead:

My grandfather lived in a small village deep in the mountains for most of his years. About fifteen years ago, to build a hydroelectric power station, the valley was inundated by the reservoir, forcing the villagers to migrate to the hilltop, now an island, in a tearing hurry. But my grandmother didn't come with them--she had gone to her rest a long time ago. My grandfather, who couldn't live far from her, buckled his soul and will beneath the 'sea' and hill and merely migrated his empty and trancelike eyes to the new village. If the weather permitted, he always sat rooted by the river and gazed at its tranquil abyss for a whole day. While my uncles never ceased complaining about their negligible settlement allowance, he was too old to draw a sigh for the drowned homesteads and fields. He conserved his vitality for the long distance, for him, from his rough house to the new and graceful river.

(Linda Queen, section 4)