Narratives often begin in familiar ways: “Once upon a time…” or “Did you hear the one about…?” or “There once was a….” Narratives must begin in a way that grabs the reader’s attention and interests him or her enough to continue reading. *Kira-Kira* and “My Superpowers” both begin in ways that effectively engage or hook their readers.

The openings of both narratives are reproduced here for you to examine more closely. Read them again, looking for the choices the writer made to hook readers. Then, answer the questions after reading the texts.

*From Kira-Kira*

*by Cynthia Kadohata*

My sister, Lynn, taught me my first word: *kira-kira*. I pronounced it *ka-a-ahhh*, but she knew what I meant. *Kira-kira* means “glittering” in Japanese. Lynn told me that when I was a baby, she used to take me onto our empty road at night, where we would lie on our backs and look at the stars while she said over and over, “Katie, say *’kira-kira, kira-kira.*” I loved that word! When I grew older, I used *kira-kira* to describe everything I liked: the beautiful blue sky, puppies, kittens, butterflies, colored Kleenex.

My mother said we were misusing the word; you could not call a Kleenex *kira-kira*. She was dismayed over how un-Japanese we were and vowed to send us to Japan one day. I didn’t care where she sent me, so long as Lynn came along.

I was born in Iowa in 1951. I know a lot about when I was a little girl, because my sister used to keep a diary. Today I keep her diary in a drawer next to my bed.
by Dan Greenburg

Do you ever wish you had superpowers?

When I was a kid, growing up on the North Side of Chicago and being picked on by bullies, I prayed for superpowers. Like Superman, I wanted to be able to fly faster than speeding bullets, to be more powerful than locomotives, to leap tall buildings at a single bound. Mainly, I wanted to punch bullies in the stomach so hard that my fist came out of their backs.

Winters in Chicago are so cold that frost forms leafy patterns on your bedroom window and stays there for months. The wind howls off Lake Michigan, and a thick shell of pitted black ice covers the streets and sidewalks from December to April. To keep warm in winter, I wore a heavy wool coat, a wool muffler, wool mittens, furry earmuffs and—one of my most treasured possessions—a Chicago Cubs baseball cap autographed by a player named Big Bill Nicholson.

On the coldest days of winter, three bullies waited for me after school, just for the fun of terrorizing me. The biggest one was a fat ugly kid named Vernon Manteuffel. Vernon and his two buddies would pull off my Cubs cap and tease me with it. They’d pretend to give it back, then toss it around in a game of keep-away.
Notice that neither writer begins with the central incident of the narrative, but rather leads up to it with one of the techniques described in the acronym AQQS, designed to hook readers.

**Anecdote:** a short sketch or account of a biographical incident

**Question:** a question that focuses the reader’s attention on the subject of the writing

**Quote:** a line of dialogue or a famous quotation that points to the idea of the narrative

**Statement of intrigue:** a statement designed to capture the reader’s interest and compel him or her to read more.

Answer the following questions about the openings written by Greenburg and Kadokata.

1. Which technique does Dan Greenburg use to begin his narrative?

2. Which writer uses an anecdote to start the narrative? What is the anecdote?

3. Which writer uses a statement of intrigue in the first paragraph? What is that statement?

4. Which opening do you believe is more effective? Why?