

INTEREST-CREATING DEVICE

An interest-creating device makes the reader want to read a paper. Briefly put, it must be interesting and relevant. There are at least four common types of ICDs:

1. The Question

The simplest interest-creating device is to turn the thesis into a question:

Is war a true test of one's courage? Does it really separate the men from the boys? The Red Badge of Courage by Stephen Crane suggests that war is not an adequate testing ground for bravery. **2. The Quotation**

Another common way of opening a paper is to use a quotation. Select a quotation from a piece of literature being discussed in the essay, or use a quotation from reference books such as Bartlett's Familiar Quotations. Do not make up your own quotation:

"There are no atheists in fox holes." William Cummings' statement suggests that, people, when faced with their own death, may become willing to believe in a higher power. In Joseph Conrad's novel Typhoon, the main character, Captain MacWhirr, faces a similar, life-changing situation. Through MacWhirr's challenge, Conrad proves that life-threatening experiences can awaken people to the realization that life has more to offer than they thought it did.

"War is at best barbarism"; its glory is all moonshine. It is only those who have never fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for more blood, more vengeance, more desolation. War is hell." -- William T. Sherman During the American Civil War, General William Tecumseh Sherman ordered his army both to defeat Confederate troops in battle and to demolish Southern land while marching to Atlanta, Georgia. Sherman realized that only such barbaric desolation could end the terrible war by severely weakening the Confederacy. Similarly, Joseph Heller's Catch 22 suggests that war itself, along with its advocates, weakens and destroys all aspects of human life. Leaving cities and military camps in shambles, World War II destabilizes civilization and its morals. Likewise, this bitter struggle hinders people's relationships with their loved ones. Constantly conquering the individual, war engenders madness and paranoia in hopeless soldiers. As people try to escape from the horrific scenes surrounding them, they find little remaining of the world they once knew. **3. The controversial or eye-catching statement**

Generally speaking, one of these simply occurs to you or it does not. It is, therefore, less common than either of the first two devices:

Was General Robert E. Lee blinded by his prejudices against blacks? During the Civil War, Lee had wealth, which he used to suppress blacks. When his forces were close to defeat, he felt that he would rather lose the war than receive aid from the masses of black slaves. The cause for his rash decision was the general's so-called honor, more appropriately named prejudice. In Mark Twain's novel Pudd'nhead Wilson, social injustices cause the downfall of many characters. **4. The anecdote**

Stories are another way to open an essay. They are also the hardest to handle. First, there are no handy reference books in which to look them up. Second, they must be relevant, and third, the student must not get so interested in telling his or her story that he or she forgets to write the essay. Remember that the story is being told only to create interest in the essay:

One summer at camp, a group of girls was allowed to play tennis with boys from the neighboring camp. Since the camp counselors felt that the boys would have an unfair advantage, they required the boys to play left-handed and to serve underhand. They wanted the competition to be more "equal." Perhaps the game was more balanced but it also was not very fun for either team. In his short story "Harrison Bergeron," Kurt Vonnegut points out that forcing "equality" on people can and perhaps negative, results.