

MARCH 2019 BEHIND THE CURTAIN JOURNAL

RATE MY “FIRST 50ish WORDS” DRAFTS

BY CHILDREN’S AUTHOR JENNIFER PHILLIPS

Over and over, editors, agents and authors discuss the need for a strong opening to your story. This is obvious, of course, but often easier said than done.

I recently listened to a webinar where children’s author Marcie Colleen discussed how she picked winning manuscripts in a kindergarten picture book contest. The image of her sifting through a large volume of manuscripts and only the strongest of openings leaping out for her stuck with me.

The timing was good—Seattle was in the middle of a nasty series of snowstorms. I used some of the house-bound time to do a “first 50ish words” exercise on some of my manuscripts.

It’s been a valuable exercise. It revealed weaknesses in some of the stories I felt were nearing the end of the revision stage. And it helped me focus others that were in an earlier draft stage.

Will You Be My Fresh Eyes in March?

I’m trying a little crowd sourcing experiment this month.

The ask: Read the seven story openings I’ve posted and give them a thumbs rating. It should take only a few minutes at most. And definitely feel free to read them to any little ones in your lives to see what grabs their attention.

The give: You’ll have my extreme gratitude for providing feedback to improve my stories, of course. And I’ll sweeten that with a prize drawing. You can decide when you submit your input whether to include your contact info. Those who do will be entered in an April drawing for your choice of a \$25 Amazon gift card or a critique by yours truly of a piece of writing (up to 20 pages). You could even get feedback on a bunch of your story openings!

I’ll report back in the spring on what I learned from this.

**[Click Here to Read the Short Openings
and React by March 31.](#)**

A Ginormous Thank You!!!!

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