

FAMOUS FIRST LINES IN NOVELS, WITH ATTRIBUTIONS

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Call me Ishmael. Some years ago – never mind how long precisely – having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. —Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (1851)

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife. —Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)

Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. —Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina* (1877)

It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen. —George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949)

All children, except one, grow up. —J. M. Barrie, *Peter Pan* (1911)

All this happened, more or less. —Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969)

We were somewhere around Barstow on the edge of the desert when the drugs began to take hold.
—Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1971)

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair. —Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859)

In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since.
“Whenever you feel like criticizing any one,” he told me, “just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had.” — F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925)

Someone must have slandered Josef K., for one morning, without having done anything truly wrong, he was arrested. —Franz Kafka, *The Trial* (1925)

If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth. —J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)

Stately, plump Buck Mulligan came from the stairhead, bearing a bowl of lather on which a mirror and a razor lay crossed. —James Joyce, *Ulysses* (1922)

The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel. —William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (1984)

They shoot the white girl first. —Toni Morrison, *Paradise* (1998)

It was love at first sight. —Joseph Heller, *Catch-22* (1961)

It was a queer, sultry summer, the summer they electrocuted the Rosenbergs, and I didn't know what I was doing in New York. —Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (1963)

In the late summer of that year we lived in a house in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountains. —Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929)

The cold passed reluctantly from the earth, and the retiring fogs revealed an army stretched out on the hills, resting. —Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895)

It was a dark and stormy night; the rain fell in torrents, except at occasional intervals, when it was checked by a violent gust of wind which swept up the streets (for it is in London that our scene lies), rattling along the house-tops, and fiercely agitating the scanty flame of the lamps that struggled against the darkness. —Edward George Bulwer-Lytton, *Paul Clifford* (1830)

Mother died today. —Albert Camus, *The Stranger*

Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself. —Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925)