

*'The first thing you should learn is that you never, ever tell the reader about your characters, you let him see them in action. If you wish your reader to intensely dislike Jacob Gronk, don't bother to give your reasons – just show Jacob Gronk stomping along the street, then stopping briefly to kick a kitten over the wall.'* Roy Lomax

### **Read the following story 'beginnings' and answer the related questions.**

1. *The loud speaker boomed, 'Three minutes. Competitors please take your places.'*

*Malad stood up, lifted his sword, looked along the blade again and moved towards the starting gate. He tried to breathe deeply and slowly, attempting to inhibit the flow of adrenaline until he really needed it. Joana still sat cross-legged, meditating. Her eyes were closed and her muscles relaxed. Her lips moved soundlessly and Malad realised that she was praying. He considered doing the same, but dismissed it as useless.*

- What do you think is about to happen?
- Can you tell where the story is set from the beginning of it?

2. *'Who the hell are you?'*

*James turned to see Mike, a boy of his own age, sneering at him. Mike was leaning against a B.M.X. Two others, Jack and Tom, also aged about fourteen, stood nearby.*

*'You new here, or something?'* Mike snarled.

*'Yes,'* came the reply.

*All he was doing was standing innocently in the café of a small country town, and yet, James was scared.*

- Where is the story set?
- How old is James?
- Do you think this is an interesting beginning for a story? Give reasons.

3. *Janine rubbed the sleep from her eyes. Pleasant dreams had been shattered by the high-pitched reality of the alarm clock. Not wanting to know whom she would find in the kitchen this morning, she remained in bed. Often Brian didn't get up until whoever it was was gone, and so Janine would have to try to make polite conversation with a stranger over breakfast.*

- At what time of the day does the story begin?
- Who are the main characters in the story?
- What do you think the story will be about?

4. *Martha knew that the end was near. She was only thirty-five, but disease took no notice of age. She'd only found out the day before, and she hadn't even told Bob, her husband. What would he say when he found that they only had three more weeks together?*

- What information do you find out from this beginning?
- What effect does the rhetorical question have?

### **Task:**

Write your own story beginning. Make it gripping and include hints of what might happen later in the story.