Mini-Lesson: Leads & Openings

1. Discuss with the class what a lead or opening is and the importance of strong leads. Stress that strong leads "hook" the reader and focus on the central idea of the piece.

2. Read samples from good literature that demonstrates different types of leads. As you do this, brainstorm with the class the type of lead shown in each example. Try to include the following examples of leads during this lesson:

   * dialogue
   * question
   * visual description
   * descriptive setting
   * action
   * interesting fact
   * unusual image
   * humor

3. Begin development of a chart that includes ideas for good leads and explain that most good writers do not come up with the idea for a lead until after the first draft is completed.

4. Demonstrate several possibilities for strong leads using your piece of writing. Write three or four good leads and ask the class which one they like best and why. Discuss the "fit" of a lead to a piece and assist students in gaining an understanding that the decision on a lead is directly related to what a writer wants the audience to feel.
5. Select the lead you want for your piece and then show students how to insert a lead into a piece of writing. Techniques such as "cutting and pasting", adding to a blank space at the end or in the margin, denoting a symbol to show where to insert, skipping lines, etc. is essential to the discussion of revision.

6. Now have the class work on three or four leads for their piece and share with their partners. They should select one and insert into their piece.