

6+1 Writing Traits

Types of Endings

No matter what you call them, they are designed to leave the reader with a sense of resolution and a lasting impression — and the feeling that the time spent reading your words was a good investment. Depending on the specific piece of writing, it may even mean that the reader comes away with a desire to take some kind of action. Please note, however, that “a sense of resolution” does not mean the problem or issue itself has been solved. Here is a list of lead types drawn from a number of sources.

Non-Fiction Endings

Summary: rounds up the piece’s main points

Call-back: refers back to the lead as a reminder of the main point stated at the beginning

Thematic Reprise: reflects on the piece’s meaning and provides the take-away message

Encouraging Message: concludes with a “pep talk,” making the reader feel optimistic

Quotation: concludes with a direct statement that sums up the piece’s main message or theme

Ta-da! uses a grand statement that provides the reader with closure: licks the envelope

Challenge: challenges the reader to take action

Cause and Effect: state how the reader is affected

Fiction Endings

Epiphany: wraps up the story with a sudden insight by the character

Moral: reveals a lesson for the reader

Image: provides a visual connection to a key point in the story

Irony: notes the incongruity between what the character says and does and how the story turns out

Tragedy: ends on a dark note, prompting the reader to consider how the final events reveal the theme

Surprise: ends with an unexpected turn of events

Hollywood Ending: provides the perfect ending, in which everything works out just fine

A Few More

Profound Thought: based on common knowledge taken to a new level

Question or Open-ended Statement: leaves the reader unsure, unsettled

Literary Device: such as a metaphor that has been built up in the story

Laugh: leave the reader smiling

Emotional Statement: provoke the reader to react emotionally

And, yes, it is possible to combine the characteristics of two or three endings to create something even more interesting. The point is this: Get creative — do not be afraid to experiment. Edison failed more than a thousand times before he invented the light bulb!