Riffing on famous first lines can help jumpstart your own writing. Send me some of your favorites via my website.

It is easy to see the beginnings of things, and harder to see the ends.
--Joan Didion, “Goodbye to All That”

It happened every year, was almost a ritual.
--Stieg Larsson, The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo

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

Catastrophism, a geological theory championed by zoologist Georges Cuvier, holds that time lurches forward in sudden disasters.
--Lauren Redniss, Radioactive: Marie & Pierre Curie

I am not at all sure whether I should be telling you this.
--Alexander McCall Smith, “Intimate Accounts” (a short story)

When I was three, I decided not to have children.
--Molly Peacock, Paradise Piece by Piece

When I was thirteen years old, a knock came on my door.
--Pat Schneider, Wake Up Laughing

At the age of 80 my mother had her last bad fall, and after that her mind wandered free through time.
-- Russell Baker, Growing Up

After eight months spent in the obscurity of our mother’s womb, my brother, Shiva, and I came into the world in the late afternoon of the twentieth of September in the year of grace 1954.
-- Abraham Verghese, Cutting for Stone

First Lieutenant Jimmy Cross carried letters from a girl named Martha, a junior at Mount Sebastian College in New Jersey.
-- Tim O’Brien, The Things They Carried

I arrived in the Alice at five a.m. with a dog, six dollars and a small suitcase full of inappropriate clothes.
-- Robyn Davidson, Tracks

The first time I saw Brenda she asked me to hold her glasses.
-- Philip Roth, Goodbye, Columbus

Henry got hit about six a.m.
-- Janet Burroway, Opening Nights

The two women were alone in the London flat.
-- Doris Lessing, The Golden Notebook