

LESSON 1: SHOW VS. TELL



TELL

- Obvious and generic
- Weak verbs and overuse of adverbs
- Leaves no room for the reader

SHOW

- Specific and interesting
- Strong verbs
- Invites the reader into the story

Examples:

David was arrogant

- ↳ David sauntered through the cafeteria as if he were a King visiting the local peasant village.

Jason felt sick

- ↳ Beads of sweat formed on Jason's brow. He felt his stomach lurch and his face go pale.

Andrea was deathly afraid of the dark

- ↳ Andrea huddled next to the dim night light, gripping her blanket with shaking hands.

Tips for showing:

- Set the scene by giving examples. Ask, “What does that look like?”
- Use your five senses: touch, taste, smell, hearing, sight
- Let your audience pick out the clues
- Use strong verbs and descriptive words

Instead of “walked”

↳ strode, sauntered

Instead of “nice”

↳ amiable, well mannered, pleasant, generous

- Avoid overusing adverbs

He messily wrote his name on the paper

VS.

He scribbled his name on the paper

- The verb “scribbled” is much stronger and more descriptive than “wrote,” and also implies “messy,” without having to say it.



CHALLENGE:

Pick a room in your house. Write a paragraph describing the space without telling us which room it is (living room, bedroom, kitchen, etc.). Remember to invite the reader into the space and use strong verbs and sensory examples.

Email your challenge to laurelnakai@gmail.com by Feb. 8