Show, Don’t Tell Activity

from the

ESSAY APPRENTICE WRITING SYSTEM
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ESSAY APPRENTICE
WRITING SYSTEM

by Kristen Bowers
for Secondary Solutions®

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Show, Don’t Tell!

In order to make your writing great, it is important to learn the skill of showing, rather than telling. By **telling** about a story or incident, details are limited, and word choice is vague and uninteresting. Abstract nouns like *love, joy, anger, fear,* and *courage* tell, rather than show. By **showing** the details of a story or incident by using vivid verbs, dialogue, emotions, and powerful vocabulary, your readers will feel as if they are part of the action.

Read the following examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tell</th>
<th>Show</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cynthia was angry at her younger brother.</td>
<td>Cynthia shrieked, pulled wildly at her hair, and slammed the door, leaving her little brother alone and confused in the hallway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I watched the ocean waves.</td>
<td>I stood mesmerized as the white caps of the ocean waves dug into the sand as if grasping for one more breath of life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The author described Jim as dull and boring.</td>
<td>Author Jay Vance described the protagonist, Jim, as “a lonely, isolated human being...neither the life of the party, nor the wallflower.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I love pizza.</td>
<td>As I took my first bite of the hot slice, piled high with melted provolone and thick pepperoni, I knew I had found a small “slice” of heaven.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Directions:** Make improvements to the following sentences to show rather than tell, as shown in the examples above. Don’t be afraid to use figurative language, dialogue, and vivid verbs to improve the sentences.

1. **Telling:** Suri’s family is rich.
   
   **Showing:** ____________________________________________
   
   ____________________________________________

2. **Telling:** It is really cold outside today.
   
   **Showing:** ____________________________________________
   
   ____________________________________________

3. **Telling:** We watched as the sun set.
   
   **Showing:** ____________________________________________
   
   ____________________________________________
4. Telling: I had a bad day today.
   Showing: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

5. Telling: Monica is really bossy.
   Showing: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

6. Telling: Our group worked well together.
   Showing: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

Directions: Answer the following, using enough specific details to show your readers, rather than just tell them.

7. What is your idea of a perfect day?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

8. Describe your best friend.
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

9. What are the characteristics of the smartest person you have ever met?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

10. Describe the loneliest place in the world.
    __________________________________________
        __________________________________________
        __________________________________________