**Show Don’t Tell**

In a narrative piece of writing it is extremely important that you use language to paint a picture for your reader. It is far more powerful for the author to let a reader paint a picture in their mind, than it is for the author to tell the reader what is, or what has, happened. This we call SHOWING NOT TELLING.

A story that is **told** displays a very simple set of ideas.

**TELLING:**

The room was dark and scary. Steve didn’t like it. He wasn’t prepared for the dark. All of a sudden, he started to go crazy.

**SHOWING:**

Steve walked into foyer. It was dark, but the moonlight shone just enough through the ancient curtains to silhouette the jagged corners of the gothic furniture. He stepped into the room and with each step the room grew darker and more threatening. The moans and squeaks the house made steve uneasy. With each step Steve’s heartbeat quickened. “This decrepit deathtrap had sat here for years,” Steve thought “what if the floorboards had rotted? What if the chandelier was about to fall?” His pace quickened, “Or worse,” he panicked, “what if someone was down here, waiting, watching, in the comfortable cloak of the dark.”

The white glow of the full moon had all but disappeared as Steve entered the basement. Sweat dripped from his brow to the floor. His breath was as loud as a jet engine tonight. His panic was palpable. Surface life was not welcome in this abyss. This house was far blacker than any night had managed…

Choose one and Show it don’t tell it.

1. Angela had blonde hair that was really pretty and all the boys liked her for it.
2. The castle was 40 feet tall and could not be climbed
3. Stewie is a baby hell bent on world domination
4. Fourteen Samurai stood ready to cut down any people in their way. Having already killed several retainers, the warriors looked menacing.
5. Steve was an awkward boy. He had a large retainer, pants held up by suspenders and a large cowlick.

Try it yourself…

Voice, show and theme:

Now, for a building block… When you write a story, it must have a theme that is shown and not told. This usually happens over a very long period of the story.

For example, in Lord of the Rings when the theme of undying friendship is displayed by Frodo and Sam’s journey to Mordor.

Or

In Finding Nemo, when the theme of perseverance through adversity is displayed by Nemo overcoming his disability.

Or

In the Batman Begins series, when the viewer finds out the true justice is upheld by knights who live in the darkness.

Here are a few themes that you may recognize:

1. Standing up for what is right can get a person killed.
2. Justice comes in many shapes and sizes
3. Ignorance is a powerful ally in manipulating the population
4. Evil can exist in the most unlikely places
5. Perception can drive men to do crazy things

Write a short story using one of the following themes and showing, not telling, the reader about this theme.

Restrictions:

1. You may not use the words from the theme statement in your story
2. You must include at least three separate voices
3. You must write at least one full page