“Mastering the Variations of Show vs. Tell”
Presented by Tessa Emily Hall

“Don't tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass.”
~Anton Chekhov

When a writer TELLS, they narrate the story from a distance.

When a writer SHOWS, they allow the reader to experience the journey along with the main character and walk through the story with them.

Not sure if a phrase is telling or showing? Search for these telling words:

- I felt …
- I hear/heard
- I was afraid that …
- I was sad/happy/confused because …
- I noticed …
- I looked …
- I watched …
- I discovered …
- I smelled/heard/saw/felt/tasted …
- Adverbs and excessive adjectives
- Passive sentences (I was …)
- I wondered …
- I thought …

The many variations of show vs. tell:

1. Telling vs. showing in emotion
2. Telling vs. showing in description
3. Telling vs. showing in dialogue
4. Telling vs. showing in characterization
5. Telling vs. showing in setting

Telling instead of showing in fiction writing screams amateur. Fix this and you’ll increase your chances of publication.

Circle the telling phrases in the following paragraph:

I was walking home from school, exhausted because of my heavy book-bag, when I had a strange feeling come over me—even more so when I heard a noise behind me. There wasn’t anyone there, so I started walking fast. Then, as I was entering my neighborhood, I heard footsteps behind me. I felt as if I couldn’t breathe.

www.tessaemilyhall.com - @TessaEmilyHall – tessaemilyhall@gmail.com