

“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.