



## Show, Don't Tell

### Telling Writing

- Bores the reader by telling, advising, and judging.
- Tells the reader what to think or how to feel.
- Uses dull words, such as bad, good, fun, cool, and exciting.
- Gives the events as a list.

### Showing Writing

- Engages the reader through description of actions, movements, and appearances.
- Allows the reader to draw his/her own conclusions about events in the story.
- Uses active words, adjectives, expressions, and adverbs.
- Uses sensory words that describe sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell.
- Uses description and dialogue to guide the story.

### Show, don't tell, to establish setting—

Telling:

The man was bored. It was raining. It rained yesterday, and he wanted to go outside.

Showing:

“Lost in his thoughts, he stared out the window at the gray clouds hanging low over the dark water of the bay. It looked like it would rain again today.” ~ Michael Crichton, *Disclosure*

### Show, don't tell, to describe a character—

Telling:

Kevin felt sick. He had a fever and couldn't sleep.

Showing:

“Some hours later, after midnight, Kevin Bourque wakes sweaty in his bed as the snow ticks against the window of his room. He has a fever, one that will last as long as this three-day storm, and he's lightheaded, can't make sense of the cracking, splitting sound of the wind through the woods behind the house.” ~ Graham Hewson, “The Blizzard of 1959.” *The Sun*. June 2002.

### Show, don't tell, to develop plot—

Telling:

I drew a picture of a boat, and the man liked it. He called for his family to see if they liked it too.

Showing:

“He squatted down beside me and . . . asked me what I was doing. I showed him the drawing, and his face lit up. ‘Just like it! Just like the boat!’ He cupped his hands to his mouth and yelled something in the direction of the junk, and right away a family appeared on deck. ‘Let's show it to them!’ he said, and dragged me down to the water.” ~Mark Salzman, *Iron & Silk*