

Week Eight: The most important rule of writing: SHOW, DON'T TELL

Reading: <http://wisdomhomeschooling.com/images/courses/creativewriting/description.pdf>

Choose your setting

Where is your story? Choose a memorable setting, one that reveals something about your characters. Think of your setting like a character, interacting with the others. It affects the relationships between your characters and what they do. For example, a father and a son talking in a living room will have a very different conversation from a father and a son talking in a mineshaft.

Include unique details

Your reader has an imagination. He knows what a field, a restaurant, a car, or even a dungeon cell looks like. You don't have to describe every little detail. The details you include should be what makes your specific setting unique—what makes *this* restaurant different from every restaurant you have ever been in? What brings it alive? Just like your characters, every setting has its quirks. The best details to include will reveal something about the setting, something about the characters, and be important to the action of the scene.

Use the senses

Describe your setting using the five senses: sight, taste, touch, smell, sound. You can feel a setting: your feet could trudge through the mire. Or the room could be warm or cool—temperature is a descriptor often overlooked.

Create a mood

Always ask yourself: What is the impression I want to make with this setting? How will it affect my plot? How will it affect my characters? If you set a wedding in a graveyard, that will create a very different mood than if you set a wedding in a cathedral.

Pacing

Don't use too little setting or too much. Readers want scenery, but not so much that it stands in the way of action and dialogue. Don't make the *story* pause to tell us what it looks like: keep your descriptions happening along with the story.

In-class exercise:

Have each student come up with a character and a place. Then write a one-sentence description about the character in this place for each of the five senses (so five sentences total, one each for sight, taste, touch, smell, sound).

Homework

Write the next two pages of your story. Your main character should have begun his "journey."