

“Show, Don’t Tell” Mentor Texts to inform Student Writing
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Does this kind of writing show up in your students’ writing?

Maria was a pretty girl and very nice.
Maria’s room was messy. Very messy. Very very messy.
Now Maria was really mad!

Show-Don’t-Tell to the rescue! Use mentor texts to show how powerful writing...

1) pulls the reader inside a character by showing (not describing) emotion;

“I’m a howling, prowling, scowling wolverine!” *Rain Romp* (word picture)

“I drew myself up to my full height of four feet nine inches.” *Lanie* (actions)

“I will be your sister,” Abena says, “whether we live in Ghana or in America or in tricky Anansi’s village or at the top of a wawa tree. Now go to sleep.” *In the Small, Small Night* (dialogue)

“Scolding, frowning, puzzling, smiling, laughing. Hey!” *Rain Romp* (expressions)

2) engages readers by showing (not describing) character traits (or by showing AND giving back-up examples);

“Smooth Barnum Brown was a charming, dapper guy. He went climbing over rocks in a topcoat and a tie. He loved ballroom dancing....” *Mr. Bones: Dinosaur Hunter*

“Zebra wades near the lumpy log with hooded eyes.” *Water Hole Waiting*

“The turtle walked along muddy paths far below the eagle. ‘Hand come,’ the turtle would whisper as she moved her right leg. ‘Hand go,’ the turtle would whisper as she moved her left leg. ‘Hand come, hand go.’” *In the Small, Small Night*

3) pulls the reader inside a scene by using the five senses and other vivid details.

“Abena closes her own eyes. In her mind she can see the huge moon hanging over her old home. An insect whistles. Fireflies flicker on-off-on-off and fried fish and nutmeg spice the air. Now she hears the storyteller’s voice ringing through the village. “Anansi is a cheat!” The cousins dance out of their round house and run toward the fire calling, ‘Come and say what you know.’” *In the Small, Small Night*

“Morning slinks onto the savanna and licks up the night shadows one by one. Crickets stop chirping. A frog plops softly into the water hole.” *Water Hole Waiting*