

Show Me, Don't Just Tell Me

Adapted from *6+1 Traits of Writing: Complete Guide for Grades 3 and Up*

LESSON

1

GRADES 3–5

As you know, details can make all the difference. Writers need to give readers the specifics not only by adding details, but by knowing which details to add and how to include them. In this activity, students will take a statement that is nonspecific, a “telling statement,” and turn it into a detailed and unique statement, a “showing statement.”

MATERIALS:

Notepaper, pencils, markers, **Worksheet 1**, Studenttreasures Publishing Kit

WHAT TO DO:

1. Order your free Studenttreasures Publishing Kit. As you complete these lessons, your kit will be mailed to you and arrive when your students are ready to start publishing their writing.
2. Write the following list of telling statements where students can see it:
 - The Internet is amazing.
 - Frogs are interesting.
 - My friends are nice.
 - Energy is important.
 - The roller coaster was scary.
3. In pairs or small groups, have students select one of the telling statements or make up one of their own. Encourage the groups to brainstorm and write down as many details as they can about this general idea.
4. Ask the students to rewrite the general statement (telling) into one that is much more focused, interesting, and detailed (showing).

Telling Statement: The roller coaster was scary.

Showing Statement: Oh my goodness the newest and most scariest roller coaster ever! I just had to try it out! Then I got on the roller coaster. I pulled the seat belt over me and buckled myself up first. It started out as deliberate as a turtle. It go a little bit faster. Ahhhh it's really fast. I feel like my appendix is about to explode. I think my heart is about to come out of my mouth. The ride is almost over. Now we're slowing down. It's over now. And thank goodness I unbuckled the seat belt and got out of the roller coaster.

—Ryan, third grade

5. Share the pieces as a whole group. Students will be astounded by the impact of elaboration. Intensifying an idea with details can make a huge difference in the quality of their writing.
6. Tell students that they are going to take an observation walk to gather interesting details that can be used in stories. Distribute **Worksheet 1**. Ask students to observe their surroundings during an outdoor activity. You may choose to have students complete the chart over the weekend as homework or you may choose to organize a class walk. Explain that they should take a moment while they are hiking in a park, having a snack in the playground, or enjoying a day at the beach to record their observations on their worksheets. Tell them to be sure they sit long enough to observe details—small creatures scurrying by or clouds high above, for instance. Encourage them to look all around and to close their eyes to listen for sounds. Students should dig deep and use their senses. When they have completed their charts, ask them to report to their classmates the things that were most interesting, most important, and most unusual.

With guidance, students can distinguish between writing that has a clear, central focus and writing that just sits idly on the surface, going nowhere interesting.

After completing all three lessons, gather your students' work into a hardcover book using the free **Studenttreasures Publishing Program**. Now your students will have the wonderful experience of seeing their words in print. For more about publishing, please visit studenttreasures.com or call 888-393-6528.

PUBLISH IT!

Observation Chart

WORKSHEET

1

GRADES 3-5

What I	Interesting	Important	Unusual
Saw			
Heard			
Felt			
Smelled			
Tasted			

Learning to Hear Voice in Literature

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LESSON

2

GRADES 3–5

MATERIALS:

Overhead projector/board, literary passages that demonstrate a strong or distinctive voice, **Worksheet 2**

WHAT TO DO:

1. Distribute **Worksheet 2**. On the worksheet, have students write a brief paragraph about something that happened to them this week. Ask them to put their paragraphs to the side.

2. Collect short passages that exemplify a strong or distinctive voice, post or project them for students to see, and read them aloud. Build from the following examples to create your own collection:

"My father started to cry then. . . This was one of those tragedies that needed a family that knew what it was doing. Like the Kennedys or the Queen of England and her whole bunch. Not a family like ours that comes unglued if someone doesn't follow the morning bathroom schedule."

—Barbara Park, *Mick Harte Was Here*

"A whizzpopper!" cried the BFG, beaming at her. 'Us giants is making whizzpoppers all the time! Whizzpopping is a sign of happiness. . . You surely is not telling me that a little whizzpopping is forbidden among human beans?'

'It is considered extremely rude,' Sophie replied.

'Redunculous!' said the BFG."

—Roald Dahl, *The BFG*

"Ronald stared at the line of shapes he longed to know how to read; they seemed to him as magical as the fairy-tale pictures in his book. Words and trees—and knights and dragons—were what Ronald wanted."

—Anne E. Neimark, *Myth Maker: J. R. R. Tolkien*

"But this was Cookie. I should have known. Cookie was not like other dogs. She was easily the most strong-willed person—and I mean person—I had ever met. Stubborn, immensely strong-willed and powerful, and completely, totally dedicated, this wasn't just another dog, it was Cookie."

—Gary Paulsen, *Puppies, Dogs, and Blue Northerners*

"Wilbur never forgot Charlotte. Although he loved her children and grandchildren dearly, none of the new spiders ever. . . took her place in his heart. She was in a class by herself. It is not often that someone comes along who is a true friend and a good writer. Charlotte was both."

—E. B. White, *Charlotte's Web*

3. Stop reading occasionally to ask students what kind of voice they hear. Have them describe the person behind the voice—or even name the author if they can figure out from the writing who it is. The idea is to get a picture of the writer in their minds. Is it a man or a woman? Is the writer young or old? Where is the person from? What words describe the tone? Funny, sarcastic, thoughtful, reflective, bitter, or charming?

4. Use the following list of voice descriptors to help your students get started. Post the list where everyone in the classroom can see it. Feel free to add new words as they occur to you and your students.

A Starter List of Voice Descriptors

happy	ridiculous	bereaved	bizarre	pleasing
concerned	tentative	dismal	horrifying	earnest
rude	introspective	mistrustful	warm	flat
sarcastic	thoughtful	revealing	passionate	mean
caring	frightened	subtle	detached	unctuous
critical	entertaining	caring	delightful	thrilled
funny	self-deprecating	timid	curt	riveting
naive	way out there	gracious	clever	courageous
childlike	superficial	scholarly	profound	

5. When you finish, talk about the inferences students make about each writer through his or her use of voice. Then ask, "What might readers learn about you through your writing?"

6. Have students pull out **Worksheet 2**. Now that they have studied voice, challenge them to rewrite their paragraphs using a particular voice.

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PUBLISH IT!

Voice Experiment

WORKSHEET

2

GRADES 3-5

Write a paragraph about something that happened to you this week.

Now rewrite the paragraph using a particular voice.

What kind of voice will you use?

Preparing for Publication

Adapted from *6+1 Traits of Writing: Complete Guide for Grades 3 and Up*

LESSON

3

GRADES 3–5

Good writers are aware of the importance of presentation. Final copy can serve as a welcome mat or as a barricade to the reader depending on the level of care the reader has taken. Share these guidelines for presentation with your students so that they can adequately prepare their work for publication.

MATERIALS:

Worksheet 3, markers, Studenttreasures Publishing Kit

WHAT TO DO:

1. Explain to students: *Now that we have a completed draft of our stories, we are going to publish them!* Publishing is an important step because it provides evidence of the students' position as writers. Now your students will prepare to have their work bound into a hardcover book by the Studenttreasures Publishing Program.

2. Explain that presentation relates to how the writing looks on paper. Once their writing is ready to share—whether handwritten, word-processed, or designed—it should have a finished look that shows care. Write the following list on the board:

- Uniform spacing.
- Clear, consistent handwriting or appropriate use of fonts and sizes.
- Use of margins and white space around the text.
- Headings, bullets, and numbers to help guide readers.
- Good relationship between words and illustrations.

3. Discuss each bullet point (from step 2) with students. Make sure they understand the importance of each presentation point.

4. Provide students with manuscript pages. Allow them to take time to carefully write their stories on the manuscript pages. Note: Students should also do a draft of their drawings, and create their final drawings as they are preparing to publish.

5. When students have completed copying down their stories, distribute **Worksheet 3** and have students assess their presentations.

6. When your class's work is complete, submit your manuscript materials to Studenttreasures for publishing into a hardbound book. When students receive their completed books, have a publishing party where students can share their work and celebrate their accomplishments.

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Presentation

How the Writing
Looks on the Page

WORKSHEET

3

GRADES 3–5

