

# Lesson Plan: Show, Don't Tell: Becoming a Word Detective

**Subject:** Writing

**Age Group:** 8-12 years old

**Time Allotment:** 45 minutes

## Materials Needed

- Notebook or paper
- Pen or pencil
- A "mystery object" in a bag or box (e.g., a pinecone, a crinkly leaf, a smooth stone, a piece of fruit)
- Optional: Index cards or small pieces of paper
- Optional: Whiteboard or large sheet of paper for brainstorming

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Define the writing rule "Show, Don't Tell."
- Identify the difference between a "showing" sentence and a "telling" sentence.
- Transform a simple "telling" sentence into a descriptive "showing" paragraph using sensory details.

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## Lesson Plan

### Part 1: Introduction - The Mystery Object (10 minutes)

#### Hook (5 mins)

**Educator:** "I have a mystery object hidden in this bag. I'm not going to *tell* you what it is. Instead, I'm going to help you figure it out by *showing* you with my words. Your job is to be a detective and listen to the clues."

1. Hold the bag with the mystery object. Without looking, reach inside.
2. Describe the object using only sensory details (touch, sound, smell). For a pinecone, you might say: "It feels prickly and rough in some spots, but woody and hard in others. It's lighter than I expected. When I squeeze it gently, it makes a quiet, crackly sound. It has a faint smell like a forest after it rains."
3. Let the learner guess the object.
4. Reveal the object and discuss which clues were most helpful.

## State Objectives (5 mins)

**Educator:** "What we just did is exactly what great writers do. Instead of just *telling* the reader 'There was a pinecone,' they *show* it through details so the reader can picture it in their own mind. That's our mission today! We are going to learn the writing superpower called 'Show, Don't Tell.' By the end of our time, you'll know what it means, how to spot it, and how to use it to make your own stories come alive."

## Part 2: Body - Building the Skill (25 minutes)

### I Do: Explaining the Concept (5 mins)

**Educator:** "Let's break this down. 'Telling' is when a writer states a fact or an emotion directly. It's a shortcut. For example:

- **Telling:** *The room was messy.*

"'Showing' is when a writer uses details—things you can see, hear, smell, touch, and taste—to paint a picture for the reader. The reader becomes a detective and figures out the idea for themselves. For example:"

- **Showing:** *Clothes were piled on the chair like a sleeping giant, dusty pizza boxes teetered on the desk, and a sticky soda stain created a map on the carpet.*

"See how the 'showing' example lets you picture the messy room without ever using the word 'messy'? It uses your senses, especially sight in this case."

### We Do: Sentence Transformation Team (10 mins)

**Educator:** "Now, let's be word detectives together. I'm going to give us a simple 'telling' sentence, and our job is to brainstorm ways to 'show' it instead. Let's use our five senses as our detective tools."

Write this sentence on a whiteboard or piece of paper: **The boy was scared.**

- **Ask guiding questions:**
  - "If someone is scared, what might we **see**? (Wide eyes, pale face, trembling hands)"
  - "What might we **hear**? (A gasp, chattering teeth, a pounding heart)"
  - "What might he **feel**? (Sweaty palms, cold skin, a knot in his stomach)"
- Together, write a new "showing" sentence or two. For example: "The boy's heart hammered against his ribs. He squeezed his eyes shut and pulled the blanket up to his chin, trying to ignore the scraping sound from outside his window."
- Do another one if time permits, like "The food was delicious" or "It was a cold day."

*(This is a great chance for formative assessment to check for understanding.)*

### You Do: Your Turn to Be the Director! (10 mins)

**Educator:** "You've got the hang of this! Now it's your turn to be the writer and director. I want you to choose one of the 'telling' sentences below and write a short paragraph (3-5 sentences) that *shows* it instead of tells it. Your goal is to make me feel like I'm right there in the scene."

### Telling Sentence Choices:

1. She was angry.

2. The dog was excited.
3. The cake was amazing.
4. He was tired.

**Success Criteria:** Your paragraph will be a success if it...

- Does NOT use the key feeling word (e.g., "angry," "excited").
- Uses details from at least TWO of the five senses.
- Paints a clear picture that helps me understand the feeling or idea.

*(Provide support as needed, but encourage independent work. This serves as the summative assessment.)*

### **Part 3: Conclusion - Sharing and Recap (10 minutes)**

#### **Share and Celebrate (5 mins)**

**Educator:** "Alright, let's hear the amazing scene you created! Read your paragraph aloud."

- After the learner shares, provide specific, positive feedback. Say things like, "I love how you described her clenched fists. I could really feel her anger," or "When you described the dog's tail thumping on the floor, it made me smile. I knew exactly how excited he was!"

#### **Recap and Reinforce (5 mins)**

**Educator:** "So, what did we learn today? What is 'Show, Don't Tell'?"

- Let the learner explain in their own words.
- Reinforce the key idea: "'Show, Don't Tell' is a tool that turns your reader from a listener into a participant. You give them the clues, and they get the fun of solving the mystery. As you continue writing, always ask yourself: 'Am I telling my reader this, or am I letting them experience it for themselves?'"

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## **Differentiation and Extension**

- **For Support:** Provide a pre-made "Sensory Word Bank" with words like *crunchy, buzzing, frigid, silky, metallic, booming, fragrant*. Work with the learner to co-write their "You Do" paragraph.
- **For a Challenge:** Ask the learner to write a longer scene (two or three paragraphs) that shows a more complex emotion, like jealousy, relief, or nervousness, without ever naming the feeling. Another idea is to find a "telling" sentence in a book they are reading and rewrite that section to be more "showing."