Show, Don’t Tell

5th and 6th Grade Writing

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What do you think?

- Paragraph A:
  Carter was sick of living a lie. She was sad and angry. So, she slammed her bedroom door.

- Paragraph B:
  “I’m tired of pretending!” Carter shouted, tears streaming down her face, before slamming the door behind her.

Which paragraph do you think is a better example of descriptive writing? Why?
Carter told Rose that she was sick of living a lie. She was sad and angry. So, she slammed her bedroom door.
“I’m tired of pretending!” Carter shouted, tears streaming down her face, before slamming the mahogany door behind her.
What is “Show Don’t Tell?”

“Show Don’t Tell” is a technique that writers use to help make their writing descriptive.

Descriptive writing paints a picture for your readers.

- The sky is blue.
- The sky above was the color of a robin’s egg and littered with fluffy white clouds.
Ways to Show

- **Use sensory language:**
  - Sensory words take hold of a reader’s senses
  - 5 Senses: sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell
  - Words like dazzling, melodious, rough, bitter, or pungent

- **Use strong action verbs:**
  - Strong action verbs have a greater impact on your reader.
  - Don’t say dislike. Use abhor, avoid, condemn, or detest.
  - Don’t say love. Use admire, adore, or cherish.
  - Don’t say run. Use dart, dash, or scurry.
Practice: Rewrite these options in your notes.

SHOW me what happened!

- Option A: Peter ran to meet Marcus. It had been a long time since they had seen each other. Peter was very happy to see Marcus again.

- Option B: The grass was green and tall. Sarah told Liza that she thought the flowers were pretty.

- Option C: Reginald was an old man and tripped down the stairs because he was running to see Liza. Marcus is mean, so he laughed.