



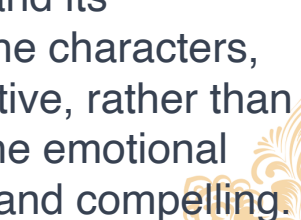
The Writer's Lathe Academy **'Show Don't Tell'- taster course**

Welcome to our mini writing course dedicated to unraveling the secrets of 'Show, Don't Tell' in Gothic literature. This technique is the key to immersing your readers in the haunting atmospheres and mysterious landscapes that define the Gothic genre.

Understanding the distinction between showing and telling is fundamental to mastering the art of novel writing. At its core, showing involves illustrating a scene through sensory details, actions, dialogue, and vivid descriptions, allowing readers to experience the story as it unfolds in their minds. On the other hand, telling involves directly informing the reader of information without allowing them to draw their own conclusions or immerse themselves fully in the narrative.

Imagine a scene where a character experiences fear. Telling might involve simply stating, "She was afraid." This approach lacks depth and fails to evoke any emotional response from the reader. However, showing the character's fear through trembling hands, rapid breathing, and darting eyes, while describing the eerie surroundings and ominous atmosphere, pulls the reader into the character's mindset, allowing them to feel the fear firsthand.

Showing not only engages the reader on a deeper level but also fosters a stronger connection to the story and its characters. By experiencing events alongside the characters, readers become active participants in the narrative, rather than passive observers. This immersion heightens the emotional impact of the story, making it more memorable and compelling.





Lesson 1: Evoke Emotion Through Descriptive Imagery

In Gothic literature, emotions are often heightened, and the surroundings play a crucial role in conveying the mood. Instead of directly stating a character's fear or anxiety, paint a vivid picture with descriptive imagery. In Robert Louis Stevenson's "Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde," consider the transformation scene:

Tell: The transformation was terrifying.

Show: As Dr. Jekyll's body contorted, his face twisted in agonising pain, and his clothes tore asunder, revealing the grotesque metamorphosis into Mr. Hyde. The moonlight bathed the scene in an eerie glow, accentuating the horror of the change.

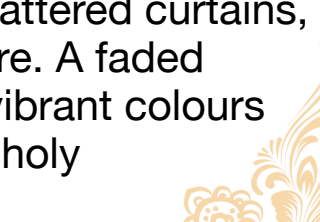
More Examples-

Tell: The night was terrifying.

Show: The moon hung low in the sky, casting long shadows that danced eerily across the abandoned streets. A chill wind whispered through the darkness, sending shivers down my spine as I hurried home, my heart pounding in my chest with each echoing footstep.

Tell: The room was sad.

Show: The walls of the room were draped in tattered curtains, casting a gloomy pallor over the dusty furniture. A faded portrait hung crookedly on the wall, its once vibrant colours now muted and somber, mirroring the melancholy atmosphere that permeated the air.





Lesson 2: Use Symbolism to Convey Themes

Gothic literature thrives on symbolism, allowing readers to delve into deeper meanings. Instead of explicitly explaining the theme, incorporate symbolic elements into your narrative. In Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein," the creature itself symbolises the consequences of playing god:

Tell: The creature represents the dangers of scientific experimentation.

Show: Dr. Frankenstein gazed at the creature he had birthed from lifeless parts, its mismatched limbs and vacant eyes reflecting the unintended consequences of tampering with the natural order. The creature, in its solitude, becomes a living embodiment of the scientist's hubris.

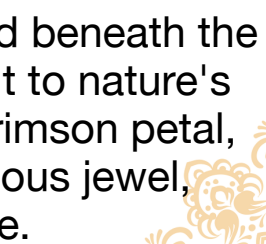
More Examples-


Tell: The storm represents turmoil.

Show: Thunder rumbled ominously in the distance, heralding the approaching storm. Lightning split the sky, illuminating the roiling clouds with jagged flashes of light. Rain poured down in torrents, washing away the fragile semblance of peace and drowning the world in chaos.

Tell: The rose symbolises love.

Show: The delicate petals of the rose unfurled beneath the morning sun, their velvety texture a testament to nature's perfection. A single drop of dew clung to a crimson petal, reflecting the tender light of dawn like a precious jewel, embodying the purity and passion of true love.





Lesson 3: Develop Characters Through Actions and Dialogue

Gothic characters are often enigmatic, and their personalities are best revealed through their actions and dialogue. Avoid straightforward character descriptions and let their behaviour speak volumes. In "Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde," Mr. Hyde's malevolence is evident through his actions:

Tell: Mr. Hyde is a sinister character.

Show: Mr. Hyde's cold laughter echoed through the dark alley as he trampled over a child's toy without a second glance. His callous disregard for innocence and his ominous presence revealed a darkness that transcended mere malevolence.

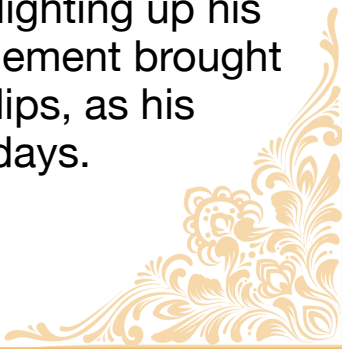
More Examples-

Tell: She was brave.

Show: With a determined set to her jaw, she squared her shoulders and stepped forward, facing her fears head-on. Despite the trembling of her hands and the racing of her heart, she refused to back down, her courage shining bright in the darkness like a beacon of hope.

Tell: He was kind.

Show: He reached out a hand to help the old woman struggling with her heavy bags, a warm smile lighting up his weathered face. His gentle words of encouragement brought a twinkle to her eye and a grateful sigh to her lips, as his kindness warmed her heart on the coldest of days.





Lesson 4: Utilise Atmospheric Settings

Gothic literature thrives on its atmospheric settings. Instead of just stating the location, immerse your readers in the eerie surroundings. In "Frankenstein," consider the desolate Arctic setting:

Tell: The Arctic landscape was harsh.

Show: The relentless wind howled through the icy expanse, biting into Victor Frankenstein's bones as he pursued the creature. The desolation of the Arctic mirrored the isolation and hopelessness that consumed both the creator and his creation.

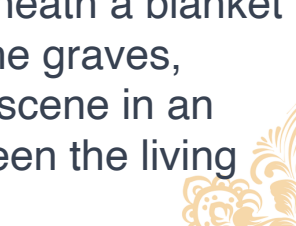
More Examples-

Tell: The castle was imposing.

Show: Towers loomed against the stormy sky, their jagged silhouettes etched like dark claws reaching for the heavens. Ivy clung to the ancient stone walls, weaving a tapestry of shadows that seemed to writhe and twist in the moonlight, casting the castle in an aura of foreboding mystery.

Tell: The graveyard was eerie.

Show: Tombstones jutted from the earth like crooked teeth, their weathered inscriptions barely legible beneath a blanket of moss and ivy. A thick mist crept between the graves, obscuring the path ahead and shrouding the scene in an otherworldly haze, where the boundary between the living and the dead blurred into obscurity.





Lesson 5: Build Suspense through Pacing

Gothic tales are known for their suspenseful and mysterious nature. Master the art of pacing to keep your readers on the edge of their seats. In "Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde," the revelation of Hyde's true nature is a prime example:


Tell: The truth about Mr. Hyde was shocking.

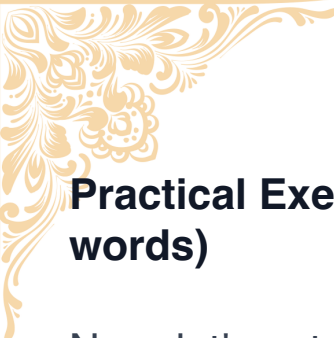
Show: The letter unfolded, revealing Dr. Jekyll's confession of his dual identity. With each revelation, the tension escalated, leading the reader through a psychological labyrinth until the chilling truth emerged about the duality residing within the same individual.

More Examples-

Tell: The revelation was surprising.

Show: With trembling hands, she unfolded the letter, her eyes widening in shock as she read the words inscribed upon the page. Each sentence seemed to pull her deeper into a web of intrigue and deceit, her heart racing as she raced to uncover the truth hidden within the cryptic message.





Practical Exercise: Crafting a Gothic Scene (250-500 words)

Now, let's put these lessons into practice. Choose a Gothic setting—a decrepit mansion, a mist-covered cemetery, or a moonlit forest—and create a scene using 'Show, Don't Tell.' Describe the emotions, use symbolism, develop characters through actions and dialogue, immerse readers in the atmospheric surroundings, and build suspense through pacing.

Share your creations and discuss the techniques you employed with fellow writers. This exercise will not only hone your skills but also deepen your understanding of how 'Show, Don't Tell' transforms a narrative, making it an immersive Gothic experience. Happy writing!

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