



# Showing & Telling: Learn How to Show & When to Tell for Powerful & Balanced Writing

*Laurie Alberts*

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**Showing & Telling: Learn How to Show & When to Tell for Powerful & Balanced Writing** Laurie Alberts

Write vibrant scenes and essential summaries

"Show-don't tell." How many times have you heard this standard bit of writing advice? It's so common in writing courses and critiques that it has become a cliché. Writers are often told to write scenes, dramatize, cut exposition, cut summary-but it's misguided advice. The truth is good writing almost always requires both showing and telling. The trick is finding the right balance of scene and summary-the two basic components of creative prose.

"Showing and Telling" shows you how to employ each of these essential techniques in the appropriate places within a narrative. You'll learn how to:

- write scenes and cut exposition
- compress time and summarize background information
- create graceful transitions
- effectively inject interpretation
- and more

Complete with examples from bestsellers and interactive exercises, this comprehensive guide offers an in-depth look at scene development, the role of reflection in storytelling, the art of summarizing, and how to bring it all together.

## Showing & Telling: Learn How to Show & When to Tell for Powerful & Balanced Writing Details

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Powerful & Balanced Writing Laurie Alberts**

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## **From Reader Review Showing & Telling: Learn How to Show & When to Tell for Powerful & Balanced Writing for online ebook**

### **Lex says**

This book was good. It's a step up in terms of intellectuality from a book like Plot and Structure. It takes a little more brain power but it's another good book on writing. I'm glad to have read it.

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### **Thing Two says**

Excellent! I've underlined the whole book. Definitely keeping this for reference. Lots of explanations, a how-to or two, and a few writing prompts. This woman knows her stuff.

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### **Todd says**

Too basic for me but good for a new writer or an undergrad lit student. The book covers the basics of showing (via description, characters, literary devices, etc.) and telling (narrative, etc.). Too often the literary community sacrifices one over the other. This book details how a good balance can be struck.

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### **Monica Rodriguez says**

Very good review of scene (showing), summary (telling), and how to adjust your narrative, transition, and when to use each. Very helpful!

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### **Brenda Clark Thomas says**

I found this book to be helpful, especially where I was having some problems with choppy scenes. I think it would be invaluable for short story writers. This book was recommended to me from a Stanford short story class I had attended.

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### **Peter says**

An excellent book both to read and use as a reference.

The section on Making Vibrant Scenes is superb and the examples about the dentist and kindergarten teacher are priceless.

Showing & Telling will be very beneficial for novice writers and improve the writing of the more experienced.

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First-rate.

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### **Kimberly [Come Hither Books] says**

A useful focused writing book that explores its topic in depth, including interesting examples and exercises. Sometimes it was a little basic, but it serves as a well organized review and reminder of the things I already knew but sometimes forget. Plus, it sent me off scribbling after ideas several times and that counts for a lot. I will most likely be adding it to my reference shelf in future.

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### **Darlene says**

It's a reference book so I go back to different sections when I need to.

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### **Kristena Tunstall says**

I think it was a great book on teaching what the difference is between showing and telling. As a new writer this was invaluable information.

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### **Catherine says**

Basically, this is a book to help tell the difference between creating action scenes and telling a story, and when it's appropriate to use each. While meant for writers, it would also be useful for those wanting to get a better understanding of literature.

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### **Gail says**

Made it about three-fourths through this one over the course of the fall; it was a solid text on the subject but I need to go back through the pages I've highlighted to remember all that I gleaned from it (and why I failed to finish it).

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### **Rose says**

I liked this writing guide on showing versus telling quite a bit, and it's a book that I will likely return to in the future for some of the things I was able to gain from it. I would say it's more beginner to intermediate level in terms of writing advice, but I think those who would want a quick refresher would find this helpful. The guide is broken into two main sections - relying on the distinction of "showing" versus "telling" by explaining the different functions of scenes and summaries and where they're most appropriate. As for the advice contained within, I cannot express how important some of the advice Alberts gives because I see beginning writers making these mistakes all the time, and she gives good insight into where these missteps

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occur, and provides examples that are brief enough to comprehend. There are a few spoiler warnings as far as some of the movies she references in the beginning of the novel, but once you get past that exposition, the points she gives are sound.

There's a sample of the author's own writing at the end of the book as well for perusal, which I thought was okay.

Overall score: 3.5/5

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## Sylvia McIvers says

“Show don't tell” is a familiar adage to many writers, beginners or experienced. Laurie Alberts is here to explain what each term means and when ‘telling’ is actually the more effective course of action. The book has a lot of useful information for writers, with many examples.

First, Ms. Alberts describes scenes, in which things happen. She brings many examples from a wide variety of books where showing was done well, then analyzes how supporting details worked to draw the reader into the story. She also brings sample paragraphs to contrast bland vs. vibrant ‘showing’ so that the reader will understand why details are so important.

Ms. Alberts shows how the writer must choose which details to include: to draw the reader in, to show a rising level of tension, to set up upcoming drama or reveal past incidents which intensify the current scene.

Time is a detail element as well – something always happens, something is constantly wished for, and something is always annoying. Other things happen right now – in the scene. How can a writer use details to show that an ongoing occurrence? For example: a father feels constant disappointment at his son's lack of get-up-and-go, which will set the reader up for the scene where Dad is angry that his son skipped a s job opportunity in order to play in the rock band. If this is the story of a boy and his band making money over the summer to cover their costs and bank a little, more, the scene – and its supporting details – will be different than if this is Dad's book, where he expect his son to take his place In the family firm.

The section on scenes closes with a chapter on common errors that creep into a scene, such as stilted dialogue, highly detailed scenes which fail to move the plot along, and credibility issues where a character acts for reasons no one can believe.

Telling is summarizing events which don't need the details of a scene. Telling should not be bland – it can contain as many concrete details as a scene.

Telling gives the writer a chance to show what the character is thinking, which affects how the reader emotionally connects to the scene and character. If Joe Blow gives five bucks to the beggar outside McDonalds – does he then spend the next five blocks annoyed because he thought it was a single? Or had he spent the last half hour over a coffee in McD worried about his kid in the hospital, and did he therefore choose to give extra charity to influence his karma? Same five dollars to the beggar, but the reader feels differently about Joe.

Ms. Alberts concludes this book with a section of Showing & Telling, where she shows how the two techniques can be blended for a book that draws the reader into the story.

Was this a good book? Certainly it had useful information, but somehow the presentation was deadly boring. All the advice was good, the examples given ran the gamut from gripping to dull, but this book got 'lost' under some paperwork for three weeks, and I was not motivated to finish it until I read all the other books in my stack. Other books on writing were better able to hold my attention.

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### **Scarlett West says**

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book and found it to be very informative. So many great tips with excellent, clear examples for how to write great scenes and summaries. Laurie Alberts Showing & Telling: Learn How to Show & When to Tell for Powerful & Balanced Writing gives clear, specific descriptions of how to tell the difference between showing and telling, and how to write each of them skillfully.

I especially enjoyed the section about summaries because the book gives a lot of ideas that help write better backstory, something I think is a hard skill to master. I definitely would recommend this book to writers looking to improve their craft.

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### **Emma Sea says**

I really loved this. The examples are wonderful, and I adored Alberts's short story, *Russia is a Fish*, in the appendix. I feel that all I can do is let the side down with my writing after Alberts's excellent instruction, but I shall do my best.

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