

An Artist With Words

Practice having eyes in the back of your head; use your imagination! Show, don't tell! The following exercises will help you with your description and your scenes. Practice writing the scenes in the first person and in the third person*(see NOTE below).

SHOW, DON'T TELL.

How would you "picture write" the following scenes:

1. You are drunk.
2. You are abandoned.
3. You arrive at a foreign airport.
4. A policeman stops you for speeding.
5. You witness/are in an accident.

Hint: Describe the surroundings, the weather, your clothes, etc. Position every object/person/animal/bird/reptile, etc. around yourself. "Action" yourself with verbs, such as jump, hop, crawl, slide, slither, enter, slump, crumble, skip, climb, run, limp, sprint, etc.

HAVE EYES IN THE BACK OF YOUR HEAD

Take the following scenes, and describe other scenes that occurred at the same exact time. 1. You are drunk. A bank is robbed. A dog runs down the street. 2. You are abandoned. A car races down the street. Firemen put out a blaze. 3. You arrive at a foreign airport. A man bumps into you. 4. A policeman stops you for speeding. You faint in the driver's seat. 5. You witness/are in an accident. A helicopter lands on top of a building. An earthquake tremor cracks the sidewalk where you are standing.

*NOTE: If you are writing a novel in the first person, the

“I,” then this is a limited view of the world because the person writing the story cannot get into the minds of the other characters and you, the author, have that same limitation. The “I” person can get information and report it, but the “I” person is always limited: “My best friend told me she didn’t want to see me anymore because her mother didn’t want her to be around someone like me. Imagine that!” But the “I” point of view can really get into the mind of the character, which can be very revealing to the reader.

If you are writing a novel or a screenplay in the third person, the “he, she, or they,” then this is an omniscient view of the world. You, the writer, can get into the lives and motivations of the opponent, all the sub-plots, the point-of-view character, and all the other characters. You, the writer, can describe three different scenes, all occurring concurrently: The protagonist, or main character can be struggling with a car accident. But at the same time, you, the writer, can cut to the main character’s house where his girlfriend is eating a sandwich and drinking from a bottle of Scotch; the teenage daughter is in her room with headphones on, rocking to some music; the main opponent is driving away from the scene of the car accident (a hit and run).

Depending upon the genre of your story, you might prefer to use the first person or narrator approach or the third person omniscient approach. Sometimes, you might want a mystery narrator who is not revealed until the end of the story.