

# KQED Perspectives Unit Curriculum

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## DRAFTING

### Lesson 6: Show, Don't Tell

Objective:

- Students will be able to identify places in their essay where they can use expressive language to show feelings, actions, setting, etc.

Estimate time: One to two 50-minute class periods

Recommended Perspective models:

- The San Francisco School: “My Grandparents and Me” by Nina, “Bernie’s Death” by Lily, and “My Parents” by Lucy at <http://www.kqed.org/radio/programs/perspectives/sfschoolproject.jsp>.
  - Youth Radio: “The Yellow School Bus” by Hannah Kingsley-Ma at <http://www.kqed.org/epArchive/R507120737>.
1. To introduce this lesson, I mime a variety of poses or actions and ask students to guess what emotion I am trying to convey (surprise, boredom, terror, etc.). Then, I ask how they knew what I was feeling if I didn't tell them. This leads into the concept of “Show, Don't Tell” in writing. Through specific and vivid language, good writers show how a character is feeling, rather than simply telling.
  2. It's important to then provide good models of “Show, Don't Tell.” First, provide a one sentence “telling” version of passages in a book. (You'll need to create these beforehand.) Then, have students close their eyes as you read the actual “showing” versions from the book. Ask students to share aloud what they visualized as you read. There are a number of good examples of showing versus telling online. One I like is Write Design Online: <http://www.writedesignonline.com/assignments/shownottell.html>.
  3. Next, give the students a few examples of telling sentences. Have them choose one to transform into a showing sentence. Give students a few minutes to do a quick write on this, and then ask them to share aloud. Here are some examples you could use:
    - My neighbor is strange.
    - I was nervous for the first day of school.
    - It was a delicious ice cream sundae.
    - The roller coaster was exciting.

4. Finally, have students identify at least one place in their Perspective essay where they can incorporate “showing.” At the end of the period, each student shares an example from his or her writing.
5. Optional Extension: Add in a lesson about word choice: using active rather than passive verbs and specific rather than general nouns. Keep lists in the room about alternate choices for overused words. Some teachers like to create a “dead word wall” to retire overused words.