

## Creative Writing Invitation #5: Writing Vivid Description

Do You See What I See? Show-Me-More!

At some time in your life, a teacher probably asked you to bring something to school for "show-and-tell." Show-and-tell is when you bring something of personal value, e.g., your favorite teddy bear or a rock from your first camping trip, to school and show the object as you tell your classmates why the item matters so much to you. In show-and-tell, the audience has the advantage of being able to see the object as you tell them the story.

On the other hand, in writing we don't have this luxury. Wouldn't it be nice if the author could literally place you in the story so you could watch it live, as it unfolds? Unless you count virtual reality, this probably is not going to happen. That's what makes reading so enjoyable. You get the chance to imagine the story.

But you can't imagine the story on your own. You need help. This is where the writer comes into play. The writer must help you visualize the story so you can absorb the information. He or she does this by showing you what's happening in the story along with telling you what's happening, much like the school show-and-tell.

"As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect. He was lying on his hard, as it were armor-plated, back and when he lifted his head a little he could see his dome-like brown belly divided into stiff arched segments on top of which the bed quilt could hardly keep in position and was about to slide off completely. His numerous legs, which were pitifully thin compared to the rest of his bulk, waved helplessly before his eyes." - Franz Kafka, "The Metamorphosis"

As you can see, Kafka paints an image with his writing, showing you Gregor's new insect body, describing him in detail. Kafka could just have easily said, "Gregor Samsa woke up in his bed, and he was a big bug." Does that give you much of an idea? In this case, a reader might have asked Kafka: "Show me more! What kind of bug was he? What could he see? How big was he? What was he doing? And so on?"

Show Your Reader an Object: Choose an object that is meaningful to you for some reason. Next, describe it in detail so your readers can "see" it for themselves. Remember, they may initially have no idea what you're talking about. It's your job to paint the picture using your pen and your imagination. You can describe it in any way that you want, giving your object human or life-like qualities, or whatever you think is necessary to make your reader really SEE your object. (You can think about letting them FEEL, SMELL, etc., the object, too.)