

TAYLOR'S TIPS for a productive writing career...



Dear Fellow Writer,

Have you ever been mesmerized by a great storyteller at a party? The punch line or ending seems to come too soon, you are so enraptured by the tale this person is weaving. Isn't it the same with a good book, or a great short story or essay? When we become lost in the words, and can almost see ourselves there, we don't want the experience to end.

At the recent Orange County Spring Writers Day, I discussed show versus tell. This is important whether you are writing fiction or nonfiction (if you were in my class you saw this already, sorry for the repetition ☺).

SHOW--DON'T TELL

Ask yourself: is this SHOWING or TELLING?

“Come on, Daddy, we’re gonna be late,” Kristen said.

“Get in the car, Honey, I’ll be right there.” Tom closed his email on his home computer and rushed out the front door.

“The play is gonna start in fifteen minutes,” his daughter whined.

“I know, Kristen, we’ll get there in time,” Tom said. He glanced at his watch and quickly backed out of the driveway. This was supposed to be a relaxing day off work. He put in for it

months ago. He planned to watch his eight-year-old daughter’s school play and then take her out for ice cream.

“Are we gonna make it?” Kristen pleaded.

“We’ll make it,” Tom replied, and glanced again at his watch while navigating the stop signs and red lights of the small community.

“Yippee, there’s the school. Hurry up and park, Daddy.”

Tom pulled into a spot crookedly, but he didn’t back up and straighten the car like he usually would. Unhooking his seatbelt, he scrambled out and trailed behind Kristen, who was skipping up the school steps. Just before he reached out to open the tall, wooden door, his cell phone rang. Kristen turned on her heel and shot him a glaring look. He grabbed the phone out of the pouch on his belt and looked at the caller ID. It was his boss.

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What do we know about Tom? Without “telling,” what have you figured out on your own? Did you see that he’s trying to be a good father? That he has a demanding boss? That he’s trying to do everything-like checking his emails at home on his day off? How about that he’s let his daughter down in the past?

Now how about this – is this **SHOWING** or **TELLING**?

Tom works hard. He put in for a vacation day months ago, and today is that day. He’s taking his daughter to a school play and then out for ice cream. But first, he checks his business email from his home computer, which makes him run late. His daughter is worried they won’t get there in time. Just before they arrive, his cell phone rings. His daughter has heard that before, and knows what’s going to happen next.

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Which version engages you, the reader? Which entices you to read more? Which version do you think an editor would be more interested in?

Show emotions, conflict and drama—don’t tell. Put yourself in the shoes of your characters and write from the heart. Be that great storyteller that captivates an audience. You’ll sell more work that way, and your readers will love you for it.

What’s Happening...

May 20th – That’s my self-imposed deadline to have a full proposal and sample chapters written for my nonfiction book, *Choices* (how women in their 50s and over can lose 15-20 lbs without giving up everything they love). The one-sheet I brought to Mount Hermon in March garnered enough interest with an editor to warrant the request. Now on to crafting a detailed proposal and compelling chapters. I’ll keep you posted on how it goes. ☺

June 24th – Don't miss out. You still have time to write, edit, fine-tune and then submit a story to the *Guideposts* writers contest. I won a spot in the contest in 2004 as one of fifteen writers invited to attend the five-day all expenses paid workshop in Rye, New York where the editors of *Guideposts* taught us all about inspirational writing. Check out the website for the guidelines.
www.guidepostsmag.com/writers-workshop/

Follow your dreams...

B.J.

Author of :

“The Complete Guide to Writers Groups That Work”

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