

Learn the Theory



In writing, it's quick and simple to 'tell', but it is also unconvincing.

Creating an emotional response is the key to persuading an audience. While the credibility of the writer and the use of facts and figures are important, these things alone will not persuade the reader.

In order to engage the reader's emotions, you need to 'show' rather than 'tell'. Use descriptive language to help the reader see things from your perspective (or the perspective of someone else) and connect with your arguments. Here's how ...

Top Techniques

Walk a mile in their shoes

You can build empathy and understanding by showing the reader an issue or situation from the perspective of someone who is affected by it. For example:

In Australia, a mozzie in the bedroom or at a barbie is an annoyance. A bite, a small swelling and an itch for a day or two. In other countries it brings the threat of malaria. A bite, shaking, fever, massive weakness – even death. Malaria kills nearly half a million people a year, and yet it is easily preventable with the right interventions.

Paint a word picture

Painting a vivid word picture using all the senses shows the impact of a particular issue or situation. For example:

Imagine you are in a beautiful rainforest, surrounded by large trees filled with different coloured birds, butterflies fluttering their wings and many amazing flowers. Suddenly you hear a bulldozer and a chainsaw chops down trees one by one. The sound makes your ears hurt. The last tree falls. This is deforestation.

(Joash, Year 4, Sunrise Christian School)

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