

SPECTRUM TUITION PTY LTD

PRACTICE EXERCISE 2 – NARRATIVE WRITING

When you are writing, it is important to describe a character in detail, so that the reader can get a clear image of them in their head. There are three main things readers want to know about a character:

1. Their personality
2. Their appearance
3. Their emotions or how they are feeling

When describing any of these things, you should always remember the principle 'show, don't tell.' This means that instead of telling the reader about the character (e.g. Homer is fat, Homer is lazy, Homer feels hungry), you *show* it through their actions:

Homer's stomach rumbled. Images of a fat, juicy hamburger floated through his imagination: he could almost taste the salty meat, the sweet tomato sauce, the soft bun. (this shows that Homer is hungry)

Homer struggled to pull his shirt down over his rounded stomach. He looked in the mirror: I could really stand to lose a few kilos, he thought to himself. (this shows that Homer is fat.)

Homer lay on the couch, sweat dripping off his brow. The television blared in the corner of the room: news! How he hated the news! He glanced around for the remote, and noticed it sitting on top of the TV. He tried to lift his head, but it was too hot to move. (this shows that Homer is lazy)

When writing, therefore, you should always avoid saying "the character is ____" (bored, thin, pretty, angry, annoying, etc). Instead, you should always show this through description.

Practice Questions

Read the following passages: rewrite the parts that could have been shown instead of told by using action sequences, vivid verbs, figurative language and imagery.

Michael crept down the passageway. It was dark and gloomy. He had never been in such a place before.

Michael couldn't believe his eyes. Standing before him was the most amazing creature he had ever seen: it was huge, terrifying and looked like it was ready to eat him.

Michael was scared and confused. He tried to look for a way out but there was none.
