

Grade 8 ▶

Unit Two

PRE-INSTRUCTION CHECKLIST ●▲◆★ Initial exposure → Mastery; ■ Maintenance

MECHANICS	ACQUAINTANCE & ANALYSIS
Review as necessary to enable revision skill use	<input type="checkbox"/> Story: Short Story
	WRITING ON DEMAND
	<input type="checkbox"/> ongoing, all disciplines

REVISION SKILLS

Showing Not Telling
Telling Details

GENRE FOCUS

Story: Short Story

NOTES

Details get a bad rap. Often considered to be merely peripheral to situations, gurus suggest not sweating the details. While such an approach may reduce stress associated with many scenarios, in writing details matter. “Detail is so potent,” claims Susan Bell (2007), “that one could tell a story with nothing but. When you edit, remove the random details. Significant details are the ones that describe more than what is visual... Choose the detail that has an echo behind it” (p. 121). In writing, the right details matter. Jack Hart (2006) suggests that writers limit their details on any given subject to three. Choose the three most telling details about a scene, a character, or other element, and make the most of those details by stating them in such a way that the reader constructs an image.

This unit focuses students on revising two detail-related elements: “telling” details and revealing more by showing than telling. Students will need to think deeply about the defining characteristics of the elements in their short stories and work to reveal more through indirect means—showing (e.g., *Mark waited, chewing on his pen cap.*) rather than telling (e.g., *Mark was nervous as he waited.*)

PATTERN STATEMENT

Essential attributes define

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The pattern, *Essential attributes define*, can be illustrated by giving students or displaying a photograph with complicated subject matter (e.g., a street scene with many elements—pedestrians, traffic, buildings, stoplights, etc.). Encourage the students to examine the photo carefully and list descriptors they would use to tell someone else about it, someone who has not seen the photo. Encourage them to list more than just concrete descriptors, including ideas that capture the feel of the photo (e.g., *active, busy, rushed*). When the students have lengthy lists, instruct them to choose the three details that best convey the photo’s essence. Then ask the students to think “like an artist.” If they were to use symbols rather than words—if they were to show rather than tell—to communicate those three ideas, what symbols would they use? Give sufficient time for students to think and actually sketch their ideas (EX-ex).

Then engage the students in discussing the following (EX-co):

- What did we just do? Describe the experience step by step.
- What did you think about/consider when selecting the three descriptors that best convey the photo’s essence? How did you make your decisions?

8

grade

- What did you think about/consider when converting the descriptors to symbols? How do your results show the ideas expressed in the descriptive words?
- Based on this experience, what can we say about something's details and its definition?

Continue to use questioning to guide students to recognize the pattern: *Essential attributes define* (EX-el). Then ask the students to identify other examples (or non-examples) of the pattern from their own experience—e.g., identify the essential attributes of their home, a sibling, the school (EX-ap).

REVISION SKILLS

SHOWING NOT TELLING			
Objective		Checklist	
Student independently reviews the portrayal of characters within a narrative or biographical draft and identifies ways “character-istics” can be shown rather than stated and makes the desired revisions.		<input type="checkbox"/> Read the draft to identify sentences/paragraphs/sections that explain something. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask yourself if it is possible to show the same ideas through action or dialogue. If so, make the revisions that entrust the reader to reach appropriate conclusions.	
Rubric			
EXEMPLARY	PROFICIENT	ADEQUATE	NOT YET
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing uses showing and telling well, sharing important elements with the reader in effective forms. ▶ Example of showing relate naturally to the rest of the text. ▶ Additional revision may improve other aspects of the writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing uses showing and telling well, sharing important elements with the reader in effective forms. ▶ Some examples of showing seem disconnected, as if the writer added them without relating them to the rest of the text. ▶ Additional revision may improve writing by better connecting all sections of the text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing contains few examples of the writer telling the reader something (e.g., <i>Mark was nervous as he waited.</i>) that would be better communicated through showing (e.g., <i>Mark waited, chewing on his pen cap.</i>). ▶ Additional revision could improve the writing's use of showing rather than telling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing contains several examples of the writer telling the reader something that would be better communicated through showing. ▶ Additional revision could significantly improve the writing's use of showing rather than telling.

unit
TWO

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Showing Not Telling



Telling Details



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TELLING DETAILS			
Objective		Checklist	
<p>With teacher prompting and support, student identifies a draft's details (e.g., details of a character, details of a place, details of a process), evaluates the details to recognize those that are and are not "telling," and revises the draft to include or emphasize "telling" details.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Read the draft to identify details (adjectives, adverbs, metaphors, similes). <input type="checkbox"/> For each detail, ask, "Does this provide the reader with a new image—one that deepens understanding?" If not, consider deleting the detail. <input type="checkbox"/> For each target, identify the three most significant details. If you have included more than three, consider scaling back the description. If you have fewer than three, be sure you've provided adequate description for the reader to be able to envision what you're describing. 	
Rubric			
EXEMPLARY	PROFICIENT	ADEQUATE	NOT YET
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing contains no details that seem unnecessary or that fail to reveal something important about the element they describe. ▶ Descriptive sections flow naturally with the rest of the writing. ▶ Additional revision may improve other aspects of the writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing contains no/ almost no (one or fewer) details that seem unnecessary or that fail to reveal something important about the element they describe. ▶ Some descriptive sections seem forced or unnatural within the writing's flow. ▶ Additional revision could improve writing by further eliminating unnecessary or unimportant descriptors or by revising descriptive sections to more naturally fit within the writing's flow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing contains few (three or fewer) details that seem unnecessary or that fail to reveal something important about the element they describe. ▶ Additional revision could improve writing by further eliminating unnecessary modifiers or by adding descriptions that reveal essential details. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing contains several unnecessary descriptors or descriptors that fail to reveal something important about the element they describe. ▶ Additional revision could significantly improve descriptor choice and use.

8

grade

unit
TWO

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STORY: Short Story			
Definition		Objective	
Presents a story with a fully developed theme and plot but is much shorter and usually less involved than a novel		Student writes a short story that features a problem to be solved or challenge to be met, a reasonable (i.e., believable within the story's context) resolution, appropriate description (e.g., of settings, character, events), appropriate evidence of "showing not telling," and an emerging theme.	
Rubric			
EXEMPLARY	PROFICIENT	ADEQUATE	NOT YET
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing presents a short story that features a problem to be solved or challenge to be met, a reasonable (i.e., believable within the story's context) resolution, and appropriate description (e.g., of settings, character, events), appropriate evidence of "showing not telling," and an emerging theme. ▶ Story contains good development of character, setting, plot, and thematic elements, providing an enjoyable and complete experience for the reader. ▶ Additional revisions may minimally improve the text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing presents a short story that features a problem to be solved or challenge to be met, a reasonable (i.e., believable within the story's context) resolution, and appropriate description (e.g., of settings, character, events), appropriate evidence of "showing not telling," and an emerging theme. ▶ Story contains good development of character, setting, plot and elements, providing an enjoyable experience for the reader. ▶ Story's theme seems forced, as if the writer added it after the story had been developed rather than making it more central to the story. ▶ Additional development or revision may improve the story's thematic focus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing presents a short story that features a problem to be solved or challenge to be met, a reasonable (i.e., believable within the story's context) resolution, and appropriate description (e.g., of settings, character, events), appropriate evidence of "showing not telling," and an emerging theme. ▶ Story lacks sufficient development of characters, setting, plot, or theme to be more than just a coherent tale, AND/OR ▶ story loses focus by too much description of or attention to unimportant elements. ▶ Additional development or revision could increase the story's quality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing fails to present a short story that features a problem to be solved or challenge to be met, a reasonable (i.e., believable within the story's context) resolution, and appropriate description (e.g., of settings, character, events), appropriate evidence of "showing not telling," and an emerging theme. ▶ Additional development or revision could significantly improve the story's coherence and/or completeness.

PRACTICE TEXT

Logan was frustrated. “But I have straight A’s in English and science, and my math grades are off the chart—in the advanced class!” He reiterated for the third time in the coach’s crowded office.

The coach obviously cared about the young player. “I know, Logan,” responded Coach Barker patiently. “But *all* your grades have to be at least a C, including Spanish. You’d be an asset to the team, but I can’t bend the rules, even for a great tackle.”

The teenager was clearly discouraged by his own failure to qualify. Head down, Logan dejectedly ambled home, cradling his football and grappling with the fact that his failing grade in Spanish would keep him off the field. Bam! A sudden blow jolted his head. He grabbed the careening soccer ball and glanced up to see the new kid Carlos jogging toward him. “Lo siento...I mean...sorry! Are you okay?”

“Sure, guess I wasn’t watching where I was going,” Logan responded. Logan watched as Carlos returned to the game. Carlos seemed like an expert at dribbling the soccer ball. “Hey, Carlos,” Logan asked, “do you play football? With a kick like that you should join the team.”

Carlos called a time-out and jogged back to Logan. “Muchas Gracias. I wish to play, but I know only soccer,” he replied.

“Well, I wish to play too, my friend, but I only know English well enough to earn a good grade.” Flipping his wavy blond hair out of his eyes, Logan thoughtfully squinted his sky blue eyes at Carlos. “Maybe, with a little preseason teamwork, we can both make the team!”

Carlos seemed confused but looked excited. “Como. . .how?”

“We’ll help each other. I’ll teach you football,” Logan explained with a sly grin, “and you’ll teach me Spanish. Coach says I have to have a C in order to play. I can learn the vocabulary and use a dictionary to do translation. I just can’t keep up in conversation. Señora Garcia talks so fast.”

Carlos got excited. “Buena idea! Si, it is true! We can help each other!”

The two friends went to work on their tutoring project, Carlos helping Logan study all spring to pass Spanish class, and Logan helping Carlos study football and practice plays.

“Aaaaaaaaah, boom!” The roar of the fans started the first game of the season as Carlos blasted a record-setting kickoff. The ball return was cut short by Logan’s monstrous tackle. Carlos offered a hand up and, of course, Logan responded, “Gracias, amigo!”

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A POSSIBLE REVISION

This is not THE correct revision, but one possibility. Accept any justifiable revisions.

“But I have straight A’s in English and science, and my math grades are off the chart—in the advanced class!” Logan reiterated for the third time in the coach’s crowded office.

“I know, Logan,” responded Coach Barker patiently. “But *all* your grades have to be at least a C, including Spanish. You’d be an asset to the team, but I can’t bend the rules, even for a great tackle.”

Head down, Logan ambled home, cradling his football and grappling with the fact that his failing grade in Spanish would keep him off the field. Bam! A sudden blow jolted his head. He grabbed the careening soccer ball and glanced up to see the new kid Carlos jogging toward him. “Lo siento...I mean...sorry! Are you okay?”

“Sure, guess I wasn’t watching where I was going,” Logan responded. Logan watched as Carlos returned to the game and easily dribbled the ball around two opposing players. “Hey, Carlos,” Logan called, “do you play football? With a kick like that you should join the team.”

Carlos called a time-out and jogged back to Logan. “Muchas Gracias. I wish to play, but I know only soccer,” he replied.

“Well, I wish to play too, my friend, but I only know English well enough to earn a good grade.” Flipping his wavy blond hair out of his eyes, Logan thoughtfully squinted his sky blue eyes at Carlos. “Maybe, with a little preseason teamwork we can both make the team!”

Carlos wrinkled his brow but his eyes lit up as Carlos pictured himself on the football field. “Como...how?”

“We’ll help each other. I’ll teach you football,” Logan explained with a sly grin, “and you’ll teach me Spanish. Coach says I have to have at least a C in order to play. I can learn the vocabulary and use a dictionary to do translation, but I just can’t keep up in conversation. Señora Garcia talks so fast.”

Carlos bounced from foot to foot. “Buena idea! Si, it is true! We can help each other!”

The two friends went to work on their tutoring project, Carlos helping Logan study all spring to pass Spanish class, and Logan helping Carlos study football and practice plays.

“Aaaaaaaaah, boom!” The first game of the season was off to a roaring start as Carlos blasted a record-setting kickoff. The ball return was cut short by Logan’s monstrous tackle. Carlos offered a hand up and, of course, Logan responded, “Gracias, amigo!”