

The Pros Show not Tell!

Telling: It was foggy.

Showing:

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.
- excerpt from "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T.S. Eliot



Telling: The trees are bent over from the heavy ice.

Showing:

When I see birches bend to left and right
Across the lines of straighter darker trees,
I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay.
As ice-storms do. Often you must have seen them
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning
After a rain. They click upon themselves
As the breeze rises, and turn many-colored
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.
Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells
Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust
Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.
They are dragged to the withered bracken by the load,
And they seem not to break; though once they are bowed
So low for long, they never right themselves:
You may see their trunks arching in the woods
Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground
Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair|
Before them over their heads to dry in the sun.
- excerpt from "Birches" by Robert Frost



Telling: The woman is pregnant.

Showing: "Metaphors"

I'm a riddle in nine syllables,
An elephant, a ponderous house,
A melon strolling on two tendrils.
O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!
This loaf's big with its yeasty rising.
Money's new-minted in this fat purse.
I'm a means, a stage, a cow in calf.
I've eaten a bag of green apples,
Boarded the train there's no getting off.
- Sylvia Plath



Telling: The girl is in love.

Showing:

She's so happy, this girl,
she's sending out sparks like a brush fire,
so lit with life
her eyes could beam airplanes through fog,
so warm with his loving
we could blacken our toast
on her forehead.

The phone rings
and she whispers to it
"I love you."
The cord uncoils
and leaps to tell him
she said it,
the receiver melts in her hand
as if done by Dali,
the whole room crackles

and we at the breakfast table
smile
but at safe distance
having learned by living
that love so without insulation
can immolate more than the toast.
- LoVerne Brown

