

Objects of Desire

Names to Faces

What is your favourite color? List three adjectives to explain your choice.

On Edge Reading Series

Showing versus Telling (handout)

Words are only noises in the air, marks on paper, that themselves represent things, actions, qualities, spatial relationships, etc. Written words are twice removed from experience. With film or drama, we can see and hear the words directly transmitted to us. Stories, novels and poetry are read as words on paper to be translated by the reader into an internal visual/audio/emotional etc. landscape.

-Hiromi Goto

Showing/Telling

In order to convince your reader to believe in and invest in this constructed reality, the standard advice is, Show, don't tell."

Showing/Telling

Specific, definite, concrete, particular details bring stories alive. This is how we know our world. John Gardner speaks of details as "proofs," like a geometric theorem of mathematical argument.

The details of a small village; the location of the butcher shop next to the bakery; the dung heap; the color of the dirt roads, red, not brown or yellow; the clothing of the people and their gestures of welcome and the absence of dogs but pigs, pigs everywhere: these are the details that convince us that the story is "true" while we are reading it.

Showing/Telling

Details are definite and concrete when they appeal to our senses. It should be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, or touched.

Writers need to work with sense detail, and the details must be significant. They need to be necessary to the understanding of your story. Details for the sake of details become clutter.

Showing/Telling

Descriptions immediately bring your story closer to life. Rather than an "observing" voice "telling" the story, let the story show itself.

Rebecca Solnit: the turquoise blouse

"...nostalgia is the desire for desire" (23) –Susan Stewart, *On Longing*

Write about an object about which you are nostalgic. Mix abstract and concrete language to give a reader a complete picture of the object.

Think about showing the object to the reader as opposed to telling the reader about the object.

What is the relationship between memory and language?

“We treat desire as a problem to be solved, address what desire is for and focus on that something and how to acquire it rather than on the nature and the sensation of desire, though often it is the distance between us and the object of desire that fills the space in between with the blue of longing. I wonder sometimes whether with a slight adjustment of perspective it could be cherished as a sensation on its own terms, since it is as inherent to the human condition as blue is to distance?”

Longing

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Try to articulate the sensation of longing for the object you've described.

What emotions does the object provoke? How can you articulate the emotional reality of the object to create an experience of it for the reader?

What is the atmosphere surrounding the object?

Solnit: Writing the blue of distance

“If you can look across the distance without wanting to close it up, if you can own your longing in the same way that you own the beauty of that blue that can never be possessed? For something of this longing will, like the blue of distance, only be relocated, not assuaged, by acquisition and arrival, just as the mountains cease to be blue when you arrive among them and the blue instead tints the next beyond.”

Maggie Nelson: Falling in love with a colour

Number each section and start with Nelson's line, "And so I fell in love with a colour.." and continue for at least three numbered sections.

Think of connecting visuals, emotions, actions, thoughts.

Think of places where you've experienced the colour you chose. Think of placing the reader within the atmosphere of that colour.

Next Phase: Colour

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Conduct research into your colour. Note what other people have said about it.

Notice where it occurs in your everyday life. Note down those occurrences.

Does the colour appear in your dreams? Try writing it down.

Listening Experiments

to facilitate collaboration

Focused Listening for Collaboration + Critique

Gather together in groups of four people:

- one person reads their writing for four minutes (use a timer)
- one person listens with the head/facts/figures
- one person listens with the heart/emotions
- one person listens with gut feeling/intuition/random thoughts

Take turns mirroring back what you've heard based on the mode of listening you're enacting for two minutes. Then change roles - rotate through so everyone plays each role.

Critiquing Process (link + handout)

Room Exercise

Collaboratively draw a room. Include specific items that a person who might inhabit that room would want.

Then each of you write your own character sketch of the person who lives in that space.

Collaborative Drawing Exercise

No talking.

Each person takes a turn making a mark on the page.

Collaborative Drawing Exercise

Each person in the group write their own individual piece based off the drawing.

Collaborative Project: Report on Your Progress

- Most outrageous idea
- Things you can/can't agree on
- Most viable direction so far

Next Week:

- **First workshop: read group 1 work + bring written critiques to class (see ‘how to produce effective critiques’)**
- **Group 2 posts 1-2 pages Oct 4**
- **Complete: Reading Responses**
- **Prepare to discuss your collaborative choice**