

*You learn to write by writing...The only way to learn to write is to force yourself to produce a certain number of words on a regular basis.*

-William Zinsser  
On Writing Well, Second edition, page 53

Murray provides us with this sample of "telling," one that looks familiar to readers of student essays:

### **My grandmother was a very brave little girl (page 142)**

It seems straightforward enough, easy to understand. But does it really tell us anything about Grandma? We might think so, until we compare it to Murray's "showing" example:

One day when my grandmother was a little girl she and her friends cut across a pasture on the way home from school. When a bull charged them she turned, got her friends behind her, pulled out her long sewing scissors from her school bag, and stuck them up the nostrils of the bull. He didn't bother them anymore. (page 142)



Notice that Murray does not need to even use the word "brave" in this example. We discover this for ourselves-not to mention Grandma's resourcefulness (how handy that she was armed with scissors) and impressive selflessness (did she really put herself between her friends and the bull?). This is a grandmother we'd like to hear more about-and isn't that the whole idea?