



KS3 Spine

How to be Subtle

What does Subtle mean?

Making use of clever and indirect methods to achieve something.

Example: authors of mysteries often use subtleties to help the reader/audience work out who committed the crime. Rather than saying something directly, you try and guide your reader to **Infer** information about the setting, character or action from your writing using some of these techniques.

Show not Tell

This is a technique that will help you write in a more descriptive way. It creates a picture or image in the reader's mind by **showing** instead of **telling** the reader about:

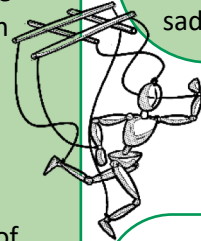
- characters' thoughts or feelings
- the action that's taking place
- the setting.

Example:

Tell = I was happy

Show = I skipped home, humming a tune and feeling like everything was as good as it could be.

Activity: Can you write your own 'show not tell' for sadness?



Techniques for creating subtlety

Metaphor: a direct comparison between two objects

- **Life is a dream**
- **Life is a journey with many crossroads**

Extended Metaphor: An extended metaphor is when the author takes a single metaphor and uses it at length with various subjects, images, ideas and situations.

You can use an extended metaphor to:

- exaggerate
- create atmosphere
- create images
- help the reader to make connections between parts of your story.

Imagery: a way of describing something using language to create a picture in your reader's mind.

Example: "He walked along, dragging his huge hands by his side like a bear."

- What does this suggest about the speed of the man's movement?
- What do we associate with a bear?
- What does this suggest about the man?

Explicit, Implicit and Inference

You should try to include a mixture of explicit and implicit information in your writing so that readers are able to infer some things for themselves; this makes them **think** in a deeper way about your characters, settings or situations.

Is this explicit or implicit and what do you infer from it?

The glass shook in the window frame. A whistling sound screamed through the gap in the door and outside, the leaves danced around the garden.

Why should we be subtle?

Sometimes, holding back information in description means the reader has the 'fill in the gaps' and use their imagination. In horror writing, for example, this can be effective as it can increase tension by holding back details and letting the reader's mind run wild. Also, by being subtle, we can keep the reader guessing and imagining what might happen next.

In non-fiction, subtlety can make a text more persuasive. If we are too forceful, it could be off-putting. If we use subtle language, repetition and other techniques to persuade our reader to imagine a scenario or situation, it can bring them round to our way of thinking and purpose and be more effective.

When should we avoid being subtle?

Although being subtle can increase how effective our writing is, sometimes we can have a greater impact by not being subtle at all. For example, explicit language choices may highlight awful facts and statistics to a reader and shock them to adopt our way of thinking and therefore achieve our purpose.

Key Vocabulary

Audience: The person or people reading or hearing the text.

Context: The context of a text is the place and time in which it was written, who it was written by, and where it was published.

Genre: The category the writing fits into.

Explicit information is obvious, factual information that can be proven easily.

Implicit information is information that we know even though it is not directly stated and we need to **infer** the meaning.

Inference: we use our prior knowledge and explicit evidence from the text to make conclusions.

Antonyms of Subtle	Synonyms of Subtle

Subtlety in nonfiction

Read the articles below and see if you can work out the writers' opinions.

- Is one writer more subtle than the other? How do you know?
- How many of the techniques explained can you spot in these articles? Each time you find one, try to highlight it and explain its effect on you the reader.
- <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/apr/09/le-cinq-paris-restaurant-review-jay-rayner>
- <https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=best+complaint+letter+to+virgin+airways&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&hl=en-gb&client=safari>

Read the below article written by Caitlin Moran.

<https://nownorsummat.wordpress.com/2011/10/15/you-cant-even-change-the-colour-of-your-front-door/>

- What is the article about?
- Is she subtle about her feelings and point of view?
- What does she want you to infer from the text?
- Find an example of 'show not tell'.
- Can you find a metaphor or/and an extended metaphor?
- Can you explain the effect of these on you, the reader?

Activities

1. What does it mean to be subtle in writing? Look at the examples of techniques on the other side. Can you summarise what it means to be subtle in your writing?
2. Listen to Rhianna's song Umbrella or read the lyrics from this site <https://genius.com/Rihanna-umbrella-lyrics>
 - a. How has she used the umbrella as an extended metaphor?
 - b. What is her subtle message?
3. Can you think of another song or poem that delivers a message in a subtle way?
4. Can you write a show not tell sentence for each of these explicit feelings?
 - a. He was afraid.
 - b. She was nervous
 - c. The classroom was hot.
 - d. The teacher was embarrassed.
5. Write three paragraphs based on this image in which you 'show not tell' when describing what you can see.



Activities

Look at the images below and label them for what is explicit and what is implicit information.

What can you infer from these images?



Choose one of the images above and use it to write a story or creative piece of writing.

Try to include as many of the subtle techniques you've looked at as possible.