

### **Sample 1: Telling**

My friends and I wanted to go cave exploring. When we got there, we walked in carrying torches. We found a big open area in the cave and decided to sit there for a while. My friend Jace asked if anyone was there with us, even though we were alone. There was a noise that scared us. We ran as fast as we could and we never went back.

---

### **Sample 2: Telling**

My friends and I wanted to go exploring in a haunted cave. When we got there, we walked down the dark passageways, the torches our only light. We found a large chamber and decided to sit there for a while. I was really scared. My friend Jace asked if anyone was there with us, even though we were alone in the dark. There was a noise somewhere not far from us. We said we had to get out of there and ran as fast as we could. We never went back.

---

*Compare Sample 1 with sample 2. How do they differ? What about sample 3? What do you notice?*

### **Sample 3: Telling**

My friends, Jace and Ahna, and I wanted to go exploring in a haunted cave. We walked through the jungle and arrived at the cave. When we got there, we walked down the dark passageways, the torches our only light. After a while, we found a large chamber and decided to sit there for a few minutes. I was really scared, but I didn't say anything. My friend Jace asked if anyone was there with us, even though we were alone in the dark. I thought he was being stupid. Suddenly, there was a noise somewhere not far from us. I grabbed Ahna's torch and ran away. Jace and Ahna followed me. We said we had to get out of there and ran as fast as we could. There was a loud crash behind us, and we ran faster in the dark. We never went back to the haunted cave.

---

## Sample 4: Showing

For years there had been stories of a haunted cave buried deep in the belly of an ancient mountain. Feeling a sense of adventure, and perhaps a little stupidity, my friends Jace, Ahna, and I decided to spend the night exploring the cave.

Its entrance was shrouded with tangled vines and thorn bushes which clawed their way out of the earth and over the dark, yawning mouth of the cave. I shivered as we pushed beyond the overgrowth and descended into the mountain.

Jace and Ahna walked ahead, the flickering light of their torches glowing eerily on the jagged stalactites which loomed like sharp teeth over our heads. The air in the cave was stale, dank, and cold, the darkness impenetrable. Water clotted and splashed from unseen caverns. Rocks shifted beneath my feet, and I ducked my head to avoid a cloister of bats hanging from a stone protrusion.

The narrow chamber we had been following opened into a large chamber. The air was still and icy. Goosebumps rose on my arms. Ahna blew out the torches. The darkness swallowed us.

“Is anyone here with us?” Jace called into the echoing blackness.

Silence engulfed us. I closed my eyes, but there was no escape from the darkness. A whisper shattered the silence, and a cry rose in my throat. I swallowed it and tried to stop my heart from pounding through my chest.

“Dude! Did you guys hear that?” Jace asked excitedly. Like a snake shedding its skin, his voice turned menacing. “If you’re with us, why don’t you do something to prove it? If you want us to leave, make us.”

“Jace,” I hissed, “don’t provoke it.”

“The locals say the spirits here are evil...maybe—maybe we should go,” Ahna suggested.

Fear crept around me like an icy cloak, his bony fingers digging into my spine and closing around my throat. I trembled.

There was eerie silence, deafening silence, and even the sound of water seemed to disappear as if someone, or *something*, was smothering the sound. A loud crack, followed by a harrowing cackle, echoed from down another chamber, and my ears filled with furious whispers from the dark abyss surrounding us.

I jerked myself off the stone slab where I had been sitting. “Let’s get out of here. Now.” I left no room for discussion or argument, snatching the torch from Ahna’s hand, relighting it, and turning to go. A resounding crash echoed behind us as a rock formation toppled over into a pool of water. The whispers grew louder, and Jace and Ahna’s retreating footfalls joined mine in the narrow tunnel. My ankles flipped sideways as I skidded across unsure rock and my breathing came in heaving gasps, but I ran on. In the violent flicker of the torchlight, the darkness seemed to laugh at us as we retreated from its grasp, heedless of stalagmites jutting from the floor and even the icy water that lurked along the path in deep, teeming pools.

The light piercing through the viney overgrowth punctuated our return to civilization, and as we burst out of the cave and tore through the jungle, we vowed never to return.

*How does Sample 4 compare with the other three examples? Why would sample 4 be considered showing instead of telling? Why do you think it is important for writers to “show” instead of “tell”?*