

Editing checklist:

Story Outline

1. Act 1, Set the stage.
2. Kickoff incident.
3. Act 2, Now he *really* wants something, or wants to do something.
4. He's off on a journey to try to reach his goal. Stakes are high. It feels like he's going to die if he doesn't get there.
5. Obstacles?
6. More obstacles?
7. Sometimes he overcomes, sometimes not.
8. What is he learning? How is he becoming a different person?
9. Act 3 Final huge obstacle. Feels like he's failed. But then ...
10. He reaches the goal. We are relieved.
11. What can he do at the end that he couldn't do at the beginning?

Show Don't Tell

We want to tell the story from Paul's point of view. So we need some idea of what he is sensing, thinking, and feeling. We can do this with "showing," as opposed to "telling."

All "telling": Paul walked into the barn, his brother Nathan following. They saw a huge stack of straw reaching nearly to the ceiling of the three-story barn. It looked perfect for climbing.

Rewrite with showing. We will "set the scene" using input from at least two senses.

New start: The huge pile of straw bales smelled to Paul like a summer wheat field, clean and fresh. Tiny swallows chirped in the dim rafters of the old three-story barn. Nathan's footsteps rustled behind Paul as they started to climb.

Also check:

Point of view. Each scene only from one character's point of view. Minimize shifts of point of view to keep the reader tuned in.

Thoughts and emotions of the point-of-view character, without italics or quote marks. Carry the reader along with what the character is thinking and feeling.

Sensory information to set the scene, including hearing and smelling. Touch and taste too!

Get ready to critique and be critiqued! Say encouraging words first, always. Always accept suggestions without arguing. They will help you toward your goal of being a better writer.

Come back to my website after Aug 1 for a free short story!

Phyllis Wheeler

PhyllisWheeler.com