Step 5.
Show, Don't Tell

Our job as writers is to create pictures in the brains of our readers. That's what 'Show, Don't Tell' is all about.

For instance,--
Tell. My brother is lazy.

Show. 'Your turn for the dishes, Tank,' said Mum.
'Yeah, later,' he said yawning and turned the TV louder.
'No, now,' said Mum. She stood in the doorway, arms crossed. She knew later in Tank's mind meant somewhere between the year 2012 and infinity. Once, as punishment, Mum put all the dishes and saucepans Tank had forgotten on top of his bed. He just dumped them on the floor. A week later they were still there, a shoe in the spaghetti sauce, sweaty socks on the plates and a really bad smell wafting out the door.

Ah, now we 'see' it. It takes much longer to write, but our readers are far more convinced.

TOP TIP.
Ask kids to 'prove' important things.
e.g. What tells you Jake is a great friend?
Answer. He ate the biscuits I cooked that tasted like wet cement.
Write that scene to really convince your reader.

ACTION ACTIVITY.
Test with your kids how words form pictures in our minds. Slowly read these.--

• Red flowers stand tall and cheerful in a vase.
• There's a baby elephant under the tree in our garden.

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Before. Aaron was mad and embarrassed.
After. As Jack pushed Aaron, Aaron’s heart dropped and his eyes faced down towards the old, rusty floor as everybody laughed hysterically. His face soon turned red as he stood up and ran out of the classroom.

By Presleigh, Aaron and Jack 6B

Before. Lilly felt embarrassed.
After. SPLAT! Someone spilt juice all over Lilly’s front. She felt her face reddening and her eyes watering as she flew down the steps to the girls’ bathroom. Her face felt like fire and she desperately wanted to disappear.

By Dakoda and Gemma 6B

Before. Patrick was really angry.
After. Patrick was pushed down the giant staircase. He started yelling and screaming as loud as he could. With his fist clenched, his forehead wrinkled, his body tensed and his teeth tightened he stormed back upstairs and slammed the door shut.

By Max, Patrick and Hayden 6B
Audrey feels bigger than yesterday and decides that she would like a house of her own. So she asks Dad to help her build one.

Are you scared of heights?

“Dad, you know I am bigger than I have ever been.” stated Audrey
“Well, you are bigger than you looked yesterday.” laughed dad.
“It’s not funny.” yelled Audrey furiously. “I need a new house!”
“Ok. I’m sorry. Where would you like me to build your new house?” inquired dad as they walked outside.

“Up there in the tree.” explained Audrey.

Dad’s legs trembled.” You can’t have it there. Don’t you think it’s too high?” dad asked with a quiet voice.

“It’s perfect for bird watching.” explained Audrey happily.

“Don’t you think it’s too windy?” questioned dad.

“It’s perfect for hot days.” answered Audrey excitedly.

“Dad, are you scared of heights?”

“Yes!” answered dad, feeling embarrassed.

“It’s Ok. We can make my new house when you are not so scared of heights.” replied Audrey.

“Really?” he asked.

“Yes” answered Audrey as they walked back inside together.