

Image

An image is a word or series of words that evokes one or more of the five senses. An image appeals to the senses. This is the foundation of imaginative writing.

- **Abstractions** are the names of ideas or concepts, which cannot in themselves be experienced directly through one or more of our senses, such as intelligence, criticism, love, anger.
- **Generalizations** can only be vaguely visualized because they include too many of a given group: something, creatures, kitchen equipment.
- **Judgments** tell us what to think about something instead of showing it: beautiful, insidious, suspiciously.

Abstractions, generalizations, and judgments are important to human communication because enable humans to think conceptually.

But **impressions** make writing vivid because information taken in through the five senses is processed in the limbic system of the brain, which generate sensuous responses in the body: heart rate, blood/oxygen flow, muscle reaction, etc. To have an effect on your reader's emotions, you must literally get into the limbic system. In written literature (unlike film), images strike the eye as little symbols on the page, which must be translated by the brain into the sound that these symbols represent, which must then be translated into the sense that our language signifies by that particular sound. It is a dynamic process: words not only **denote**, or literally refer to their meaning, but **connote**, suggest or imply through layers of connection in our experience and culture.

Creative writers are frequently advised: *Show, don't tell*. The advice emphasizes the importance of addressing the senses: vivid writing contains concrete, significant details.

- **Concrete** means that there is an image, something that can be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, or touched
- **Significant** mean that the specific image also suggests an abstraction, generalization, or judgment
- **Detail** means that there is a degree of focus and specificity