

Building a Scene

Snapshots + Thoughtshots + Dialogue



© L. Alicia Monroe 2009
Oklahoma Writing Project Teacher Consultant

Adapted from Barry Lane's *After THE END* (1993)



Combining snapshots, thoughtshots, and dialogue to build a scene

The equation for building a scene is:

Snapshots + Thoughtshots + Dialogue* = Scene

* In a scene, dialogue should be used not to provide information, but to reveal character.



“A scene is dialogue mixed with description. [...] Two people talking is pure dialogue, but when the author inserts thoughtshots and snapshots then we have the makings of a scene.”

—Barry Lane



Example of a scene from literature:

His hair was dripping wet, disheveled—even so, he looked like he'd just finished shooting a commercial for hair gel. His dazzling face was friendly, open, a slight smile on his flawless lips. But his eyes were careful.

—Stephenie Meyer, *Twilight*



Example of a scene from literature:

My mind was spinning with confusion. Had I made up the whole thing? He was perfectly polite now. I had to speak; he was waiting. But I couldn't think of anything conventional to say.

—Stephenie Meyer, *Twilight*



Example of a scene from literature:

“My name is Edward Cullen,” he continued. “I didn’t have a chance to introduce myself last week. You must be Bella Swan.”

“H-how do you know my name?” I stammered.

“Oh, I think everyone knows your name. The whole town’s been waiting for you to arrive.”

—Stephenie Meyer, *Twilight*



Example of a scene from literature:

“Hello,” said a quiet, musical voice.

I looked up, stunned that he was speaking to me. He was sitting as far away as the desk allowed, but his chair was angled toward me. His hair was dripping wet, disheveled—even so, he looked like he’d just finished shooting a commercial for hair gel. His dazzling face was friendly, open, a slight smile on his flawless lips. But his eyes were careful.

“My name is Edward Cullen,” he continued. “I didn’t have a chance to introduce myself last week. You must be Bella Swan.” My mind was spinning with confusion. Had I made up the whole thing? He was perfectly polite now. I had to speak; he was waiting. But I couldn’t think of anything conventional to say.

“H-how do you know my name?” I stammered.

He laughed a soft, enchanting laugh.

“Oh, I think everyone knows your name. The whole town’s been waiting for you to arrive.”

—Stephenie Meyer, *Twilight*



Practice writing a scene:

Fill out each box and complete the equation, building a scene in response to **one** of the following picture prompts.









