

Building a Scene

Thoughtshots



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



Compare and contrast the sentences below.

Mark was angry.

Mark's head spun. How could he? After 17 years of marriage, how could his father just walk away from his wife, his children, his home, his responsibilities?



Writers have the power “to tell their own thoughts and the thoughts of characters. Just as writers make physical snapshots, they can also take a snapshot of the thoughts in their characters’ heads, or in their own mind.”

– Barry Lane



What is a thoughtshot?

A thoughtshot is simply a look at the reflections, thoughts, feelings, or opinions of the author or a character. Thoughtshots are used in fiction and non-fiction. Thoughtshots place events in a context and give the reader a reason to be interested.

Thoughtshot: written description that captures what the author or a character is thinking or feeling



Examples of thoughtshots from literature

You've got to hand it to the guy, Hutch thought. He *is* cool. A couple of minutes before practice and he still acted as if he had all day to gear up.

– Mike Lupica, *The Big Field*



Examples of thoughtshots from literature

I wondered how she could say that. What was so great about me? A dyslexic, hyperactive boy with a D+ report card, kicked out of school for the sixth time in six years.

– Rick Riordan, *The Lightning Thief*



Examples of thoughtshots from literature

I see a few friends—people I used to think were my friends—but they look away. Think fast, think fast. There's that new girl, Heather, reading by the window. I could sit across from her. Or I could crawl behind a trash can. Or maybe I could dump my lunch straight into the trash and keep moving right on out the door.

– Laurie Halse Anderson, *Speak*



Examples of thoughtshots from literature

My palms tingled—I wanted so badly to hit something. I was surprised at myself. I was usually a nonviolent person. I turned my back and started to walk away.

– Stephenie Meyer, *Twilight*



Examples of thoughtshots from literature

It was as though they had been plunged into a fabulous dream. This, thought Harry, was surely the only way to travel—past swirls and turrets of snowy cloud, in a car full of hot, bright sunlight, with a fat pack of toffees in the glove compartment, and the prospect of seeing Fred’s and George’s jealous faces when they landed smoothly and spectacularly on the sweeping lawn in front of Hogwarts castle.

– J.K.Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*

Building a Scene: Thoughtshots



Practice writing thoughtshots

Choose ONE picture prompt and write ONE thoughtshot in response. Practice capturing what the character is thinking or feeling.





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Revise for thoughtshots

Now that you have learned to capture what characters are thinking and feeling, apply this as a revision strategy to a piece of your own writing. Add thoughtshots to a descriptive paragraph or personal narrative.