

Session 2b: Teaching Writing

This workshop will help you understand the writing process and give you strategies to get students writing. You will be placed in the student writer's shoes and will do some writing. We will have a look at writing blockers and how to get past them and put into practice some useful writing rules. You will have fun and be inspired to teach students writing.

Outline of the Course

Writing Process – An Introduction	3
Planning Techniques & Writing as a Problem Solving Process	4
1. Writing As Problem Solving	5
Examples Of Characters With Problems – Stage One	6
Step Two – A Difficult Choice With Two Sides	7
Step Three – Escalation Of The Problem On Both Sides	8
*Example Of Character With A Problem – Stage Two	9
Step Four – Emergence Of A Plot Via Escalation Of The Problem	10
*Example Of Character With A Problem – Stage Three	10
2. Technique. Planning The Story With Showing Actions	11
Scenarios Exercise – To Illustrate Showing and Telling	12
Example Scenario	13
Part Two Step One – Telling Writing	15
Part Two Step Two – Showing Writing	16
*Notes on Showing and Telling Writing	19
The Importance of Character	20
Short Story Points	21
Editing Points – by Clare Allan-Kamil	22
Literary Examples	23
Robert McKee Quote	28

Writing Process – An Introduction

In creative writing students are often instructed to “write a story”, sometimes with a prompt, sometimes not.

With few exceptions most students generally ask themselves what will this story be about?

Students consistently demonstrate that they think of an ending to surprise the reader.

Then, students, generally fit a character into the story.

The problem with this approach is that the plot is generated independently from the character’s actions. So... how do we encourage students to get the character’s actions to generate the narrative?

There has to be tension, a sense that something is imminent, that certain things are in relentless motion, or else, most often, there simply won’t be a story. What creates tension in a piece of fiction is partly the way the concrete words are linked together to make up the visible action of the story. But it’s also the things that are left out, that are implied, the landscape just under the smooth (but sometimes broken and unsettled) surface of things.

Raymond Carver

Planning Techniques & Writing as a Problem Solving Process

There are three aspects of creative writing I like to direct students to:

1. *Writing As Problem Solving*. Four Steps
2. *The Craft Of Writing*. Two Steps
- (3. *Writing and Editing Tips – Revision, and Redrafting*).

1. *Writing As Problem Solving.*

Step One – Change How We Think About Writing.

Rather than encouraging students to think:

What is this story about?

Consider encouraging them to:

Think of a character with a multi-faceted problem.

Think of a problem, which puts the (as yet unspecified) character between a rock and a hard place.

Think of a problem, which forces the character to make a difficult choice.

Encourage students to focus on the problem, while encouraging them to forget about *a story* in the first instance. Remind students that in the first instance this exercise calls for an *unspecified character*.

The exercise is to encourage students' thinking *away* from plot. The important thing is a character making difficult decisions.

Give the students some examples and perhaps open up a discussion. This is the fun part. Thinking of characters in a real jam.

Examples Of Characters With Problems – Stage One

* A boy who loves animals must decide to (is forced to) harm an animal.

A woman who is a drug addict must decide not to (is forced not to) take drugs.

A man who loves his wife must decide to (is forced to) betray her with another woman.

An honest man finds out his boss is stealing money from the company in order to keep him (the honest man) employed.

A woman with two children is running from a natural disaster and is only able to rescue one child.

Step Two – A Difficult Choice With Two Sides

We have established that:

For the unspecified character to solve his or her problem s/he must make a difficult decision, or choice.

Now add to this that:

This difficult choice must involve a struggle between – path A and path B.

This is a choice that is potentially life defining.

The choice will show the reader who this character is.

The character's response to his/her problem will show the reader if the character is proud, greedy, selfish, lustful, materialistic, cowardly, aggressive, a drunk, an addict, prejudice, courageous, gentle, clever, strategic, carefree, crazy, hopeful, disorganised, etc.

'...Fear is drama....songwriters, filmmakers, you're drawn to conflict. It's one of the things that people go to music for and any kind of art form. It's like, hey, we're all conflicted inside so how do you contextualise some of that conflict, how do you make sense out of it, how do you build something out of it instead of letting it destroy you. How do you make something out of it...' '...I believe the greatest rock and roll musicians are desperate men. You've got to have something bother you all the time...You've got to find that third thing, that you don't completely understand but it's coming up from inside of you. You can set it any place, you can choose any type of character but if you don't reach down and touch that thing, then you're just not going to have anything to say and it doesn't feel like it has life or breath in it. You're not going to create something real. It's not going to feel authentic.'

Bruce Springsteen on Spectacle: Elvis Costello with Bruce Springsteen Series 2. Episode 6. Part 1.

Step Three – Escalation Of The Problem On Both Sides

In order to show the character's struggle with his/her choice there must be:

An escalation in the difficulty on both sides of the choice.

A following internal escalation in difficulty for the character.

This creates both internal and external CONFLICT for the character, and will create the tension, which will underpin the story and drive it forward.

Most importantly the unspecified character will become someone at this point. As soon as the character makes his/ her choice s/he will come to life.

Q: Where do you get the idea for a story or for a particular character?

A: Sometimes I get the start of a story from a memory, an anecdote, but that gets lost and is usually unrecognizable in the final story. Suppose you have--in memory--a young woman stepping off a train in an outfit so elegant her family is compelled to take her down a peg (as happened to me once), and it somehow becomes a wife who's been recovering from a mental breakdown, met by her husband and his mother and the mother's nurse whom the husband doesn't yet know he's in love with. How did that happen? I don't know.

Conversation with Alice Munro

**Example Of Character With A Problem – Stage Two*

So, let's say our animal lover, who is incidentally pathologically afraid of the dark lives next door to the tough neighbourhood bully. The only living being our animal lover loves more than animals is his little sister. Let's say a dog up the road barks all night and keeps the bully and everyone else awake night after night. The bully can't harm the dog because he has a criminal record, and can't afford to get into any more trouble. So, he picks the most unlikely person to harm the dog. He says to him (our main character) if you don't kill that dog at night-time (so I am home with my parents and have an alibi) I will beat up your sister. If you tell anyone I will beat up your sister. All of sudden our main character must make a very difficult choice. This choice will define who he is. And, because of this difficult choice the reader is already going to be on the edge of his or her seat.

At this point the writer has done a number of things:

S/he has identified the nature of the problem.

S/he has made sure the problem has two sides, and identified that a difficult decision must be made.

S/he has set up a fairly simple premise (choice between sister or dog, plus face fear of night).

And this premise gives the writer a chance to explore the nature of the problem, and to explore the character's responses IN ACTIONS, which will be what defines the character, AND CREATES THE PLOT.

Notice that as yet the writer does not have a plot. All the writer has is a character with a problem.

Step Four – Emergence Of A Plot Via Further Escalation Of The Problem

Ask the students to plan the escalation of each side (path A and path B) of the problem. In other words – put the as yet unspecified character under increasing pressure from both directions. Encourage the students to play with different scenarios, which escalate the problem facing the character.

**Example Of Character With A Problem – Stage Three.*

For example, the character's sister is diagnosed with a bulging disk in her spine after an accident in gymnastics. The doctor insists on no physical activity and a neck brace for a month. The bully's sleepless nights are driving him to distraction and he is becoming irrational. He yells at a teacher at school. He kicks the rubbish bin at the front of the school bus one day. He breaks a window at school.

Notice the outline of a plot emerging. But, it is a plot created almost by osmosis as the main character's problem and the difficult choice he must make intersects with the other characters' problems.

Emphasise to the students at this point to stay focused on the main character's problem and his or her difficult choice.

In this example the boy is the main game. His sister and the bully are secondary.

This is because we are trying to encourage the students not to think about external events as much as inner conflict created by a difficult choice.

2. Technique. *Planning The Story With Showing Actions.*

... a unique and exact way of looking at things, and finding the right context for expressing that way of looking, that's something else. The World According to Garp is, of course, the marvellous world according to John Irving. There is another world according to Flannery O'Connor, and others according to William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway. There are worlds according to Cheever, Updike, Singer, Stanley Elkin, Ann Beattie, Cynthia Ozick, Donald Barthelme, Mary Robison, William Kittredge, Barry Hannah, Ursula K Le Guin. Every great or even every very good writer makes the world over according to his own specifications. It's akin to style, what I'm talking about, but it isn't style alone. It is the writer's particular and unmistakable signature on everything he writes. It is his world and no other.

Raymond Carver

Now, encourage students to:

Plan the writing itself, while fully engaged with how the unspecified character will solve his/ her problem.

Come up with a list of between eight and twelve actions that make up the entire story.

Do this plan twice – once in telling language, once in showing language.

Most students will be familiar with planning a story. Encourage and guide students to use the two parts of the planning process to make their own summary of the difference between showing and telling writing and how to achieve it.

Scenarios Exercise – To Illustrate Showing and Telling

Instead of telling the reader that:

Fred felt nervous.

Show the reader that:

Fred felt the beads of sweat gather on his upper lip, and his hands trembling.

The second example insights a physiological response in the reader at the level of brain activity related to memory of bodily experience. Therefore the reader is given a better opportunity to empathise with Fred.

Understanding the relationship between showing and telling. Understanding the similarities and differences. The example scenario below is one of many students can perform in class.

The aims of this exercise are *1. Identifying clearly the told structure of narratives. 2. Identifying ways to convert telling into showing.*

The Performers are - *A teller, A doer (mime), Questioners, A teller transforming into a shower*

The performance of each scenario will happen two times.

PART I – The teller reads actions to the doer. The doer to performs mimed actions (the rest of the class to read actions, and carefully observe the actions).

PART IIA – The teller reads the actions again. The performer repeats the actions a second time, but this time not miming. The performer describes the actions. The questioners ask about the bodily experiences (the senses) that the performing character is feeling. The questioners make observations about the visual (and other sense information) they see, or experience. At this point this is limited to those things that are objectively verifiable.

Questioner/ Observers to write down the responses of the doer.

PART II B – Group to be guided while asking the questions about showing, and each class member to note down his own responses. These individual responses will be used as templates, or plans for a short story.

Example Scenario

Arriving Home After School – Telling

1. Smiling
2. Walking to the lounge room
3. Putting down school bag
4. Unbuttoning and taking off coat
5. Going to fridge to get a drink
6. Sitting on couch
7. Turning on TV

Arriving Home After School – SHOWING ACTIONS

1. Smiling

TOUCH/BODY

What does the door handle feel like in your hand?.....

How is the temperature inside the house different to outside the house?

.....

2. Walking to the lounge room

SMELL

What does the lounge room smell like?.....

How does this affect your sense of hunger?.....

3. Putting down school bag

SOUND/BODY

What sound does your school bag make as it hits the floor?

.....

What is the floor made of? Can you feel any vibrations in your feet from the bag landing?.....

4. Unbuttoning and taking off coat

TOUCH/BODY

What do your shoulders feel like as your coat slides off them?

.....

5. Going to fridge to get a drink.

TOUCH/SIGHT

How does the air from the fridge feel against your skin as you reach into it?

How does the fridge light affect your eyes?.....

6. Sitting on couch

SMELL/TOUCH

What does the couch smell of?.....

How does the fabric of the couch feel against your skin?

.....

7. Turning on TV

SOUND/BODY

How does the remote control feel in your hands?.....

What sounds does the TV make?.....

Arriving Home From School carries many possible meanings with it. Entering a safe, or hazardous place. A separation from learning at an institution. A place of food and shelter. Or a place where you might be feeling stuck and trapped.

What images are you able to add to this scene to convey its emotional vibe?

What memories do any of the above sensations or images bring up in your character?

Part Two Step One – Telling Writing

(Essential for planning, but to be minimised in the actual writing. Tip for students – get into the scene late, and get out of the scene early):

1. Boy walks with his sister to school. She chats a lot.
2. Next day, boy is confronted by bully and given ultimatum.
3. Boy can't sleep due to ultimatum and hears dog barking.
4. Boy's sister is injured (preferably off-stage)
5. Boy walks with sister again, but slower due to her injuries. Boy and sister are late for school. Sister is less chatty.
6. Bully irrationally assaults someone at lunchtime, looking exhausted, breaks a window, or kicks bus rubbish bin.
7. Boy walks sister home, they are confronted by the bully, who makes his demand again.
8. Boy has another sleepless night thinking of ways to kill the dog, and alternate ways to protect his sister.
9. Boy sneaks out at night and in great torment injures dog's throat with his strong fingers. Dog lives but can't bark. End.

Or, Boy somehow finds some money and gets bully's bedroom windows double-glazed and boy and bully become friends.

Or, Boy kills dog and lives with deep torment.

Or, Boy runs from any action and bully harms his sister leaving the boy feeling eternally guilty, and like a coward.

Part Two Step Two – Showing Writing

(To be used as much as possible in the actual writing)

1. Boy walks with his sister to school. Half way he offers to carry her bag. She chats a lot.

SOUND

What do the siblings' foot falls sound like?

.....

TOUCH

How does her bag feel on his shoulders?

.....

2. Next day, boy is confronted by bully, physically pushed, and given ultimatum.

SMELL

What does the bully's breath smell like?

.....

TOUCH

What does the bully's hand feel like? Is it heavy? Is it shaking with anger, is it a little hesitant, like he's not sure of himself?

.....

3. Boy can't sleep due to ultimatum, and earplugs causing him discomfort. He hears dog barking.

SOUND

What do the boy's ears feel like?

TOUCH

What is the temperature beneath the doona?

.....

4. Boy's sister is injured.

SOUND

What does boy's father's voice sound like as he tells this in dialogue to his son?

.....

5. Boy walks with sister again, but slower due to her injuries. Boy and sister are late for school. Sister is less chatty.

SOUND

What do the boy's and his sister's footfalls sound like now?

.....

TOUCH

What is the temperature, and how does the sister's face look in response the temperature?

.....

6. Bully irrationally, minor-ly assaults someone at lunchtime in front of boy and his sister. Bully is looking exhausted.

SOUND

What does the bully's voice sound like?

.....

VISION

To what degree is the sun hurting the boy's eyes as he watches the bully lose his temper?.....

TOUCH

What is the boy's experience of the temperature at this point?

.....

7. Boy walks sister home. The two are confronted by the bully, who makes his demand again.

SOUND

What does the bully's voice sound like?

.....

VISION

What does the bully's face look like?

.....

8. Boy has another sleepless night thinking of ways to kill the dog, and alternate ways to protect his sister.

TOUCH

What do the boy's earplugs feel like now? What does his doona feel like?

.....

SOUND

What can the boy hear? How does this affect him?

.....

9. Tormented and frightened, boy sneaks out at night and in great torment jumps neighbour's fence, injures dog's throat with his strong fingers. Dog lives but can't bark. End.

TOUCH

What does dog's throat feel like?

.....

What sound does dog make when injured?

.....

Or, Boy somehow finds some money and gets bully's bedroom windows double-glazed and boy and bully become friends.

Or, Boy kills dog and lives in deep torment.

Or, Boy runs from any action and bully harms his sister, leaving boy feeling eternally guilty and like a coward.

Additional Points To Consider About The Themes Generated By The Character's Problem

A bully is usually a coward.

A boy who loves animals and his sister is usually a kind, good person.

A dog barking late at night is an annoyance to everyone around it.

Fear of the dark is common and often a ?kin to fear of the unknown.

Sleeplessness can create a lot of stress.

The dog's barking is not its fault. It is the fault of its owners.

What images are you able to add to this story to convey its emotional vibe?

What characters are you able to add to this story to convey its emotional vibe, and create minor or major conflict?

What memories do any of the above sensations or images bring up in your characters?

How can these be shown, via bodily experiences, actions, and visual images?

**Notes on Showing and Telling Writing*

Do these words provide visible images and visible actions?

Could a camera see the actions and images being written about?

Do these words refer to the bodily experiences of the characters?

Which of the five senses are the characters using and what words are used to describe these?

What body language are the characters using?

Your characters know their world, their history, each other, and themselves. Let them use what they know as ammunition in their struggle to get what they want.

Robert McKee Story.

The Importance of Character

Notice that the central focus is on character. The best writing is a communication to the reader about the psychological and associated bodily experiences of characters.

Characters need to be understood.

Characters are not existent until they are shown.

We understand them by what they do.

We understand characters by ACTION DRIVEN DRAMA

Characters can only communicate via action

Character driven drama is action driven drama.

GOOD DRAMATIC WRITING IS NOT ABOUT BRINGING COMPLICATED CHARACTERS TO LIFE. IT IS ABOUT THE ORGANISATION OF THE COMPLICATED THINGS THAT CHARACTERS DO.

Stephen Cleary – <http://www.stephenclearyfilm.com>

Finally, it is important for writing teachers to provide helpful and quick feedback to students about their writing. When teachers or classmates offer writing feedback to the student, they are honest but also maintain an encouraging tone.

Short Story Points

1. Does the story set up what is at stake, or what is important for the characters?
2. Is each story pushed by the character's motivations? (This is vital).
3. It is very important that the reader (and the characters themselves) understand what it is they have to lose.
4. *Are the main characters faced with circumstances that force them to realise, or understand their problems?
5. Are there triggers that start up the action and conflict, and that create challenges for the characters in relation to these problems?
6. If the characters experience something that changes the way they think (which is usually desirable in a short story) why do these occur when they do? Another way of saying this is – what in the story forces the characters to act now?
7. Some back-story is fine, but ask of each story is the story driven and does *every bit of back-story count and contribute to the story moving forward?*
8. What makes the characters change?
9. What makes them turn around?
10. What is it in the story that sets up the drama?
11. What is the central question in the story, that runs like a spine through the whole story, that the reader will want answered (and therefore be compelled to keep reading)? *This is the focus.*

Editing Points – by Clare Allan-Kamil

After writing the draft needs to be looked at and the following question must be asked of every paragraph:

1. Does every word on this page carry the narrative or are any words extraneous to the text? For example how many ‘thens’ do we need as the reader to indicate that we are carrying along the same aspect, the same point of view on the page?
2. How many times are we saying the same thing? Do we describe the same moment or thing or visual or feeling several times and do we need to?
3. Does the opening to this line lead us into or away from the next line and or does it take us into action or is it designed to carry us to a juxtaposition, a presaging point, a change in tone?
4. Is the use of this setting interesting?
5. Does this backdrop add to the feeling of the piece? Does it tell us more or lead us away from the character’s story?
6. Does this character enter and leave the page in a way that connects with the story line?
7. What is the metaphor in this piece?
8. Is this narrator internal, external?
9. Is the narrative voice the author’s voice, or an external third person, or first person?
10. Are we setting-up the reader (is the narrator a reliable or an unreliable narrator?)
11. Would dialogue or internal thought bring us closer to the character?
12. Does this piece contain a fragment or a whole story in itself?
13. How does this fragment connect to the character/s does it carry the plot or the backdrop?
14. Read it slowly OUT LOUD to hear the sense and rhythm of the lines.

Literary Examples

Example Of Showing – Lord of the Flies

In *Lord of the Flies* there is an image of Ralph trailing his school jumper on page one. The visual image *shows* the reader a number of things. The gesture is casual. So, the reader gets a picture of a boy without too much concern for his appearance, or his clothes. It also shows (especially in the year 1954 in England) that this ‘school boy’ is very much ‘out of school’. The gesture reflects the setting – he is in the wild. He is not wearing the jumper because it is hot. (The metaphor of the removal of the social veneer of clothing is also interesting).

“Though he had taken off his school sweater and trailed it now from one hand, his grey shirt stuck to him and his hair was plastered to his forehead”.p. 1.

The reference to Ralph’s shirt stuck to his back gives the reader a visual image and a bodily sensation related to Ralph. This showing so early in the narrative cements an empathetic connection to the character and the setting he is in.

Example of Showing – Runner

Behind him, Mrs Redmond appeared at the door with something in her hands.

'Hello, Charlie,' she said, joining her husband. 'I've a bowl of broth 'ere fer young Jack. Would ya mind?'

Shivering, I pushed through the gate and approached the porch.

'Crikey, lad,' said Mr Redmond. 'What you been up ta? Yer bleedin'.'

In my hands the bowl felt deliciously warm. I lifted it up to my face and breathed it in.

'Nothin'?' protested Mrs Raymond. 'Yer soaked through, Charlie. Get on 'ome and find some dry clothes'.

Rob Newton *Runner*, p. 21.

In the above example from *Runner* notice how Charlie's bodily reactions are used to indicate that he is cold. The reader can see his shivering body. Then, the bowl of broth is warm in his hands, and he breathes in the steam. These are bodily experiences related to touch. Notice also that dialogue is used to convey information that can be seen by the camera. Mr. Raymond *shows* the reader that Charlie is bleeding, by saying it. The reader *sees* it through her eyes. Again, Mrs. Raymond *shows* the reader that Charlie is soaked through, by saying it. This is a much better way to convey the information than just *telling* it to the reader. Rob Newton, the author could have used *telling* by writing:

I was bleeding. I was very wet from the rain.

Instead, he has other characters notice what Charlie looks like. This is a form of showing, and it works well for minor details like this.

Example Of Showing – Breath

“We come sweeping up the tree-lined boulevard with the siren and lights and when the GPS urges us to make the next left we take it so fast that all the gear slams and sways inside the vehicle. I don’t say a thing. Down the dark suburban street I can see the house lit light? a cruise ship.

Got it, she says before I can point it out.

Feel free to slow down.

Making you nervous, Bruce?

Something like that, I murmur.

But the fact is I feel brilliant. This is when I feel good, when the nerve endings are singing, the gut tight with anticipation. It’s been a long, slow shift and there’s never been any love lost between Jodie and me. At handover I walked up on a conversation I wasn’t supposed to hear. But that was hours ago. Now I’m alert and tingly with dread. Bring it on.

At the call address Jodie kills the siren and wheels around to reverse up the steep drive. She’s amped, I guess, and a bit puffed up with a sense of her own competence. Not a bad kid, just green. She doesn’t know it but I’ve got daughters her age.

When she hits the handbrake and calls in our arrival at the job I jump out and rip the side door back to grab the rusus? kit. Beneath the porch steps on the deny grass is a middle-aged bloke hugging himself in silence and I can see in a moment that although he’s probably done his collarbone he’s not our man. So I leave him to Jodie and go on up to announce myself in the open doorway.

In the living room two teenage girls hunch at opposite ends of a leather couch.

Upstairs? I ask.

One of them points without even lifting her head, and already I know that this job's become a pack and carry. Usually they see the uniform and light up with hope, but neither of them give me as much as a glance.

The bedroom in question isn't hard to find. A little mat of vomit in the hall. Splinters of wood. I step over the broken-down door and see the mother at the bed where the boy is laid out, and as I quietly introduce myself I take it all in. The room smells of pot and urine and disinfectant and it's clear that she's cut him down and dressed him and tidied everything up.

I slip behind her and do the business but the kid's been gone a while. He looks about seventeen. There are ligature marks on his neck and older bruises around them. Even while I'm going through the motions she strokes the boy's dark, curly hair. A nice looking kid. She's washed him. He smells of Pears soap and freshly laundered clothes. I ask for her name and her son's, and she tells me that she's June and the boy's name is Aaron”.

Tim Winton *Breath*, p. 1.

This long example has many wonderful showing components in it. Notice Bruce talks about his nerve endings and his love of anticipation. This shows the reader what sort of character he is. He likes action.

Notice the image of the man nursing his collarbone, the girls on the couch, the vomit on the floor, the splintered wood. These are all things that the camera can see. They are all very effective because the tone of the scene is directly related to the tone of the imagery used.

In this example the camera can see these images.

Notice also that the senses are used. This is a very effective way to show. Bruce can smell Pears soap and clean clothes. The sad attempt of the boy's mother to clean him up is emphasised by this showing device. As the reader we can really feel Bruce's experiences because we know what soap and clean clothes smell like. We remember that when we read the passage.

Example Of Showing – Breath

There were several major swells that year as big lows rode up out of the Roaring Forties, but we spent more time waiting for them, discussing them, imagining them, than riding time. Winter had its many interludes when for weeks on end the wind turned sideshore and brought swell in at hopeless angles, and there were days and days of dark, squally chop when the sea was a misery to behold.

Tim Winton *Breath* p. 131.

In this example the words that seem to come from the personality of the character are ‘hopeless’, ‘squally chop’, and ‘a misery to behold’. These put forward a sense of an almost cynical character, who has a very casual way of speaking. They add to the laid-back character of a surfer, and *show* the reader that this character is feeling pretty despondent about the surf.

**...we tell stories about people who have something to lose—family, careers, ideals, opportunities, reputations, realistic hopes and dreams. When such lives go out of balance, the characters are placed at jeopardy. They stand to lose what they have in their struggle to achieve a rebalancing of existence. Their battle, risking hard-won values against the forces of antagonism, generates conflict. And when a story is thick with conflict, the characters need all ammunition they can get. As a result, the writer has little trouble dramatising exposition and facts flow naturally and invisibly into the action. But when stories lack conflict, the writer is forced into “table dusting”.*

Robert McKee Story, p. 339