



## Step 5: Show, Don't Tell

# Stephen Curtain – Filmmaker

Before watching Stephen Curtain's interview, discuss what you know about using Step 5: Show, Don't Tell in informative writing, especially informative or documentary films.

Now watch the interview and use the following questions to prompt discussion as a whole class or in groups.

### Discussion Questions

1. Stephen Curtain has filmed documentaries in places like Antarctica and remote mountain areas, from helicopters, skis, boats and drones. What do you think would be some of the best and the worst parts about filming in these places?
2. Why do you think Stephen says it's good to show a vivid picture of a place, without spelling out (telling) everything about it?
3. What role does storyboarding play in planning to Show, Don't Tell?
4. Can a film show a mood such as the mystery or sacredness of a place? What are some of the techniques Stephen uses to do this that we see or hear about in the interview?
5. What kind of shots (long, wide, close-up), motion (fast, slow) and light (bright, dark, silhouette) does Stephen use deliberately in the shot of the person walking on top of the hill?
6. How does storyboarding help to plan the kind of shots that will build the mood or emotion the filmmaker is looking for?
7. How does Stephen use close-up shots to 'show' rather than 'tell' information, such as the softness of the moss, the diversity of life in the water pools, and how tiny the stream is that eventually becomes the mighty Murray River?
8. How do the close-ups of the critically endangered Alpine Water Skink illustrate the technique of 'one is powerful'?
9. If you have done a good job of Show, Don't Tell in a video, what does Stephen say should be possible if you turn off the sound?

### FOLLOW-ON ACTIVITY

Students are sometimes unaware of the great amount of planning that goes into every aspect of making a documentary film. As a class or in groups, watch an emotionally powerful documentary clip, such as one of Sir David Attenborough's films. Students create a storyboard for a very short section of the film (1 minute or less) and write notes about how mood, emotion and engagement are deliberately built in this segment through film techniques that show rather than tell. Remind them to consider words (voiceover and on-screen), images (shot length, angle, speed and light) and audio (music, sound effects and the use of silence).