

# TALKING HEADS

## Crypt School

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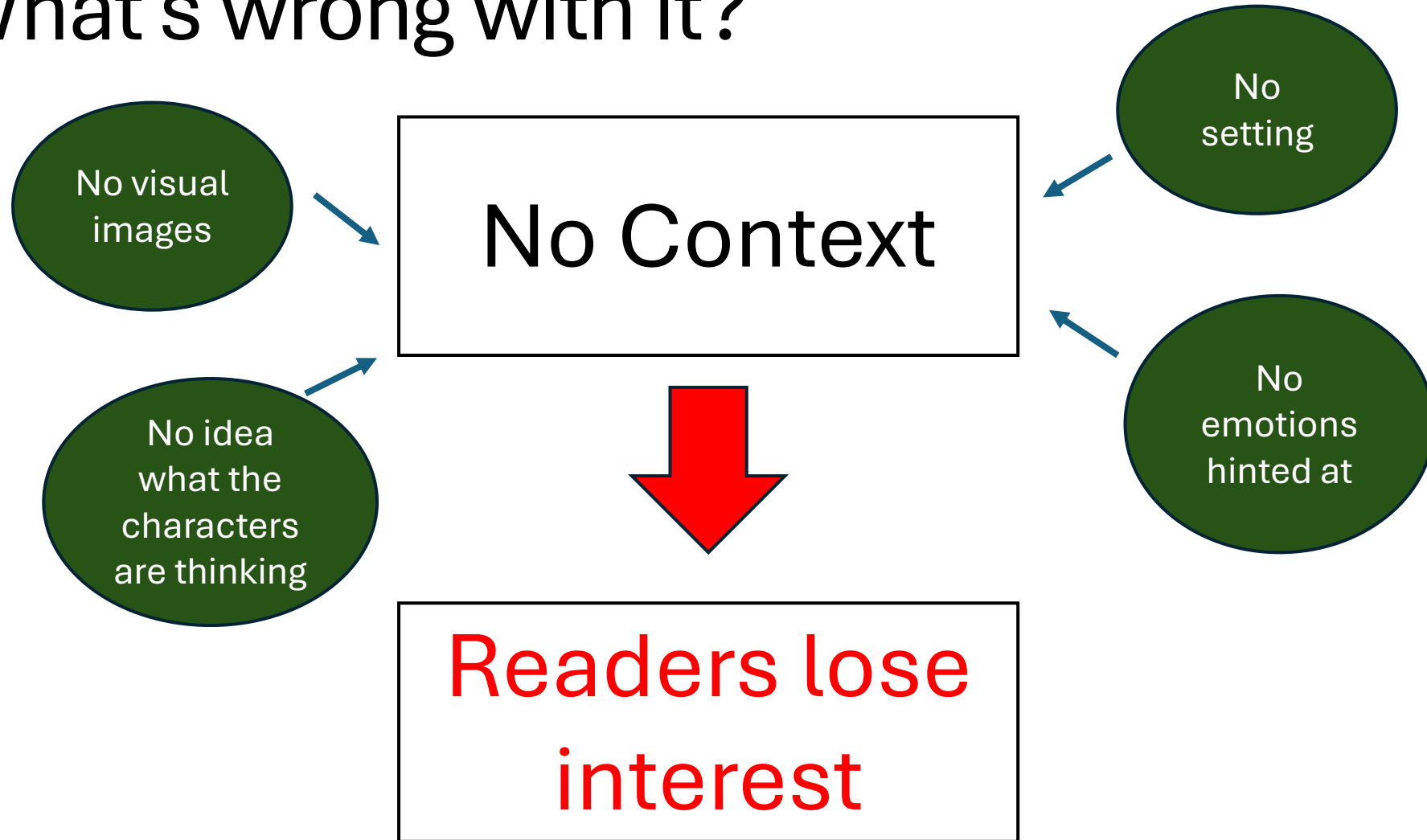
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# What is it?

Google says –

*Talking heads syndrome occurs when dialogue dominates a scene without accompanying action, setting, or internal thought, making readers feel the characters are floating in an empty void.*

# What's wrong with it?



# How do we fix it? (1)

Where are  
they?

Walking along a road? In a café?

What's happening around them?

What's the weather like?



Paint a context for the reader/reinforce mood

Their  
appearance?

Unbrushed hair or immaculate makeup?

Bags under their eyes or sparkling?

Mismatched socks?



Hint at personality and state of mind

# How do we fix it? (2)

What are they  
doing?

Fiddling with a spoon?

Jiggling their knee?

Waving a travel brochure?



Hints at current mood/emotions  
(And reinforces setting)

What are they  
thinking?

I wish I was somewhere else?

If only I'd win the lottery?

They don't understand me?



The undercurrents – what they're not saying  
Insights into the character's emotions

# How to incorporate into the scene

- *Narrative: keep it brief*

- They sat at the café table, coffees steaming in front of them. An elderly man and woman sat, silent, in a corner. (*visual setting*)

The beat of the rain on the pavement reflected the drumming of her heartbeat (*atmosphere*)

- *Action beats: in lieu of dialogue tags*

- ‘Are you happy with that?’ He tapped his spoon against the cup, a sharp staccato. (*she’s not meant to be happy*)

- *Inner monologue (POV character only)*

- No, she wasn’t. She smiled brightly. ‘Yes, of course, whatever you say.’ (*her real thoughts*)

# AMEND YOUR SCENE TO ADD IN AT LEAST ONE OF

- Where they are and what's happening around them
- What the characters look like which suggests state of mind
- What they are doing while they talk
  - Action beats to break up the dialogue and/or to show state of mind
- What the POV character is really thinking.

# A layered, richer reader experience

