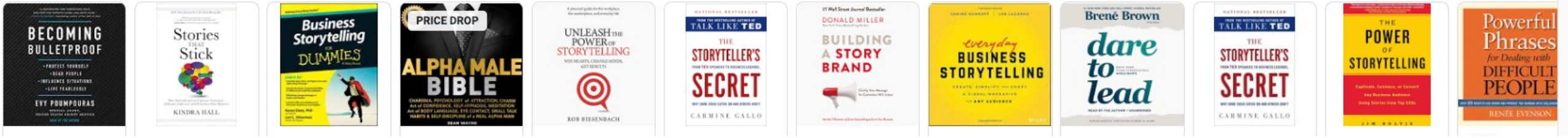
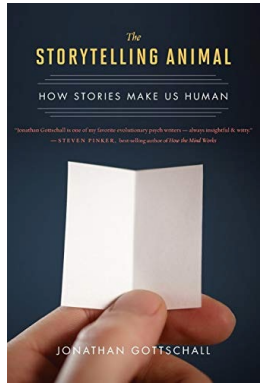
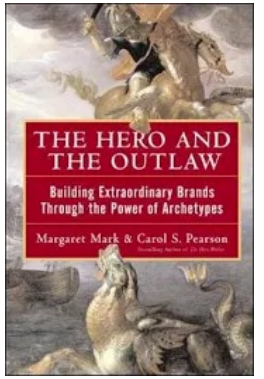
The Power of Story

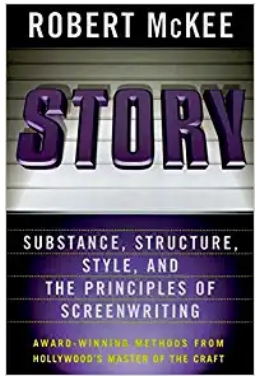
How to strengthen your communications through Story

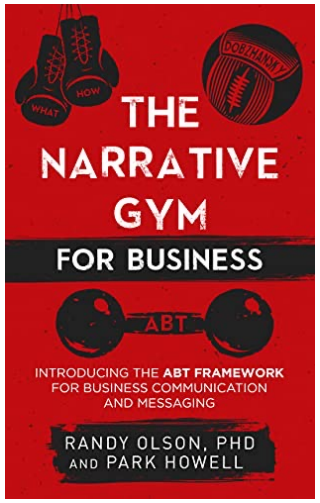


Much has been written over the last decade.







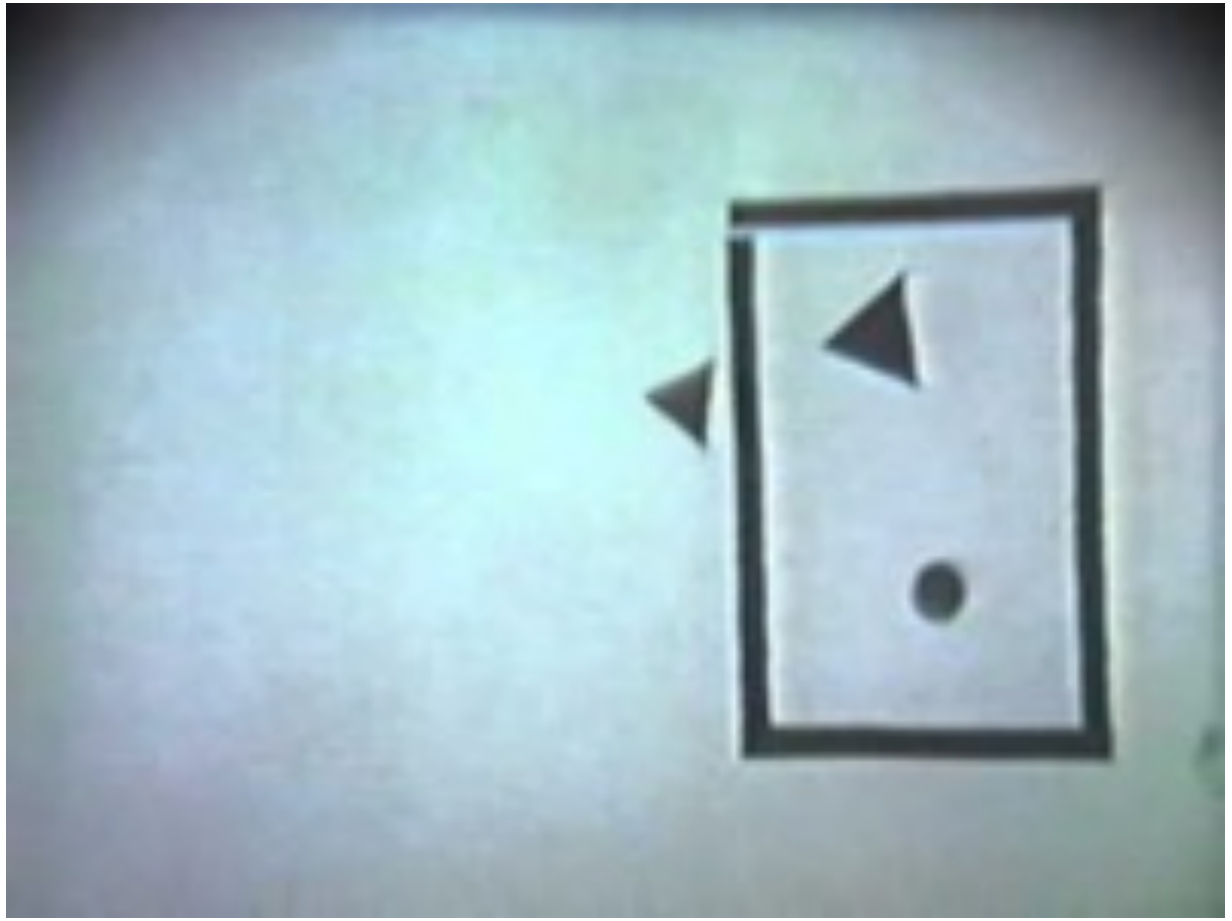


Randy Olsen
and Park Howell

The Power of Storytelling

- How the human mind grapples for meaning.
- Story-fied communications are more memorable
- Story-fied communications are more relatable
- Story-fied communications are more likely to be shared
- Story-fied communications trigger responses in the brain that inspires people to act

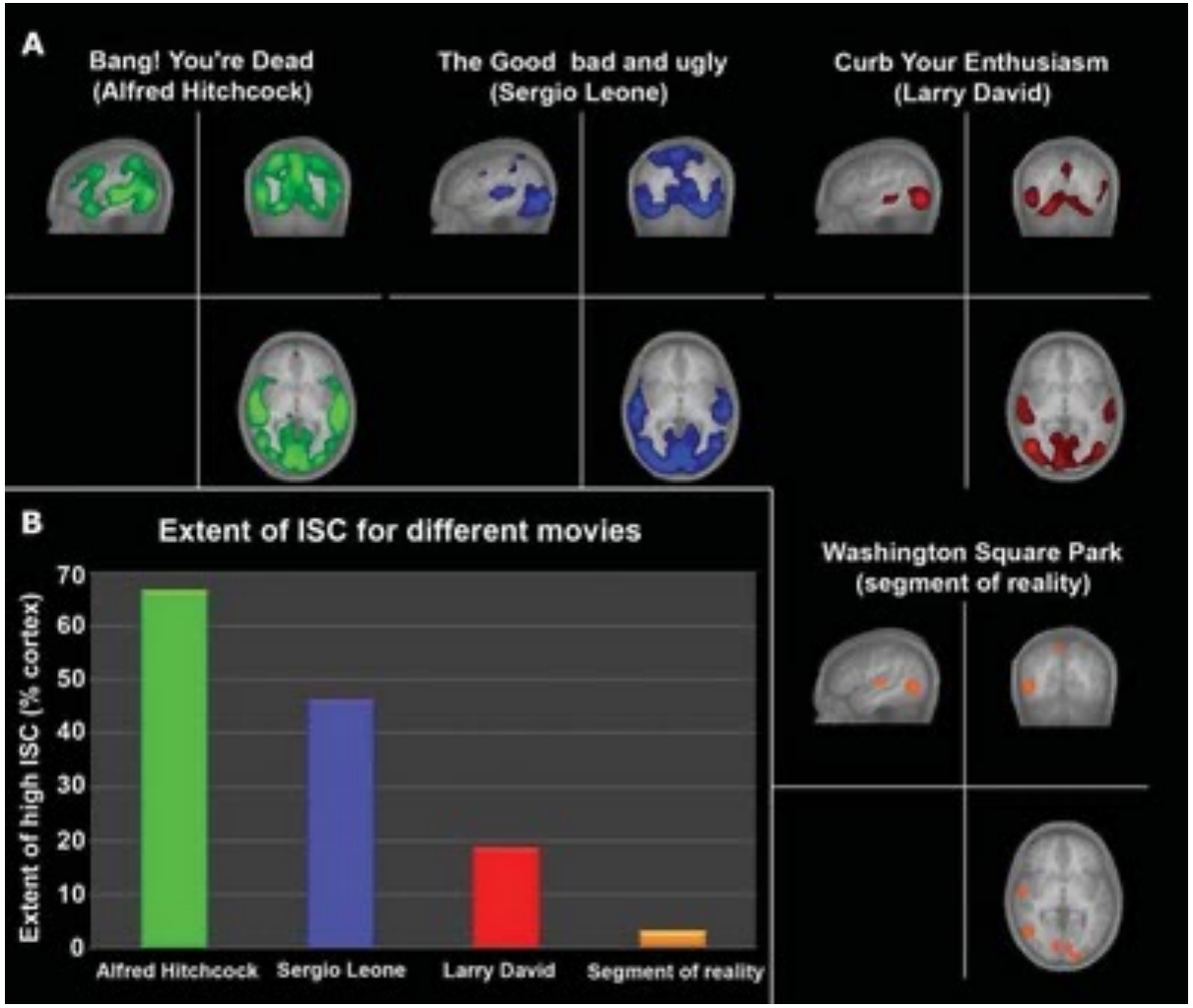
The Heider-Simmel Illusion



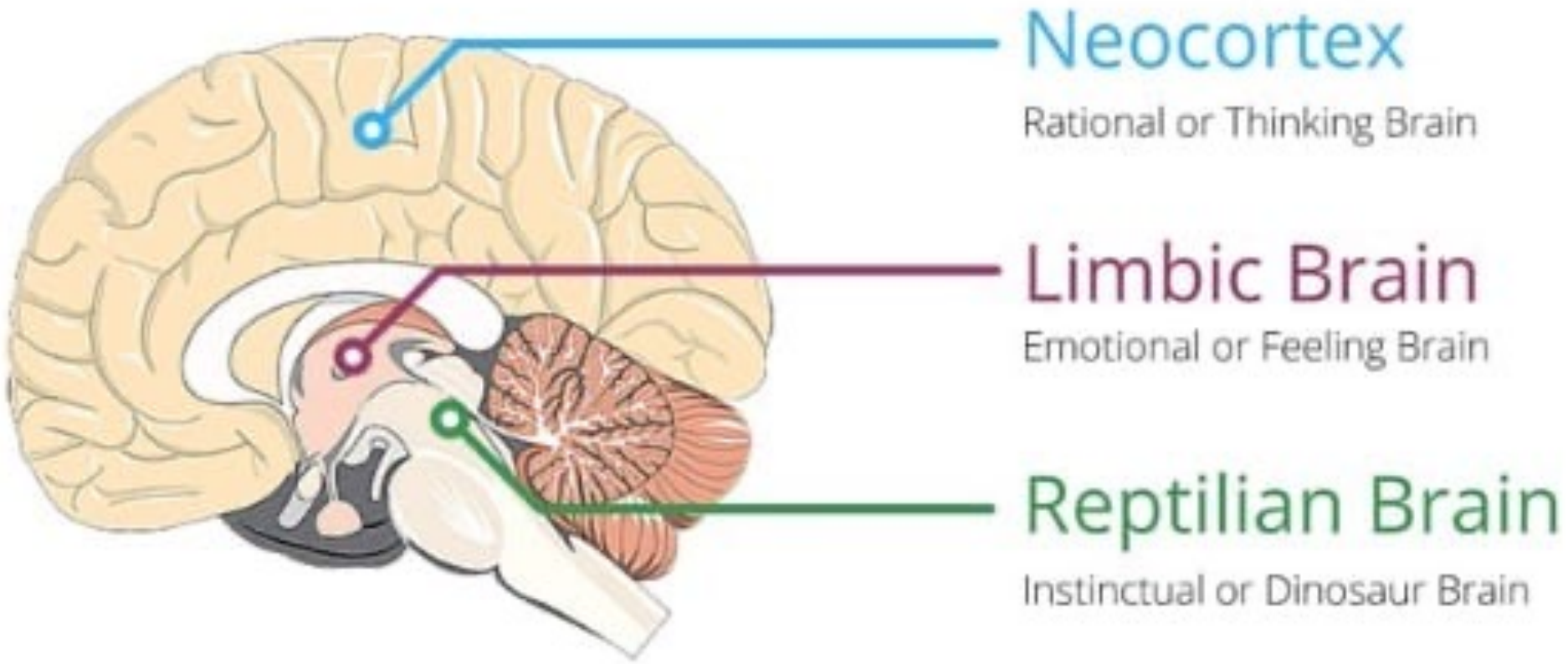
What did several comedians say?

Our brain is wired for stories

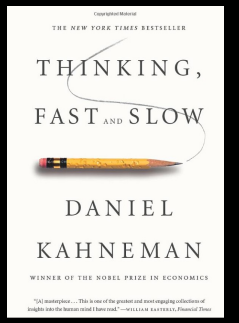
In 2008, Uri Hasson and colleagues measured how viewers' brains responded to different types of films, ranging from real-life scenarios, documentaries, and art films to Hollywood blockbusters.



Fact-Based in Biology



THINKING FAST & SLOW



95%

5%

LIMBIC BRAIN

- Feelings: Trust & Loyalty
- Responsible for behavior and decision making
- Faster
- No capacity for language

NEOCORTEX

- Rational
- Analytical Thought
- Language
- Slower

nking Fast & Slow, D. Kahneman, 2011

People make decisions emotionally and justify their decisions with facts afterward.

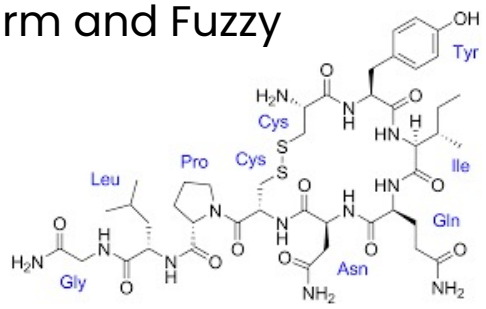
1972 VW commercial

Story-fied Volkswagen

What else happens through stories?

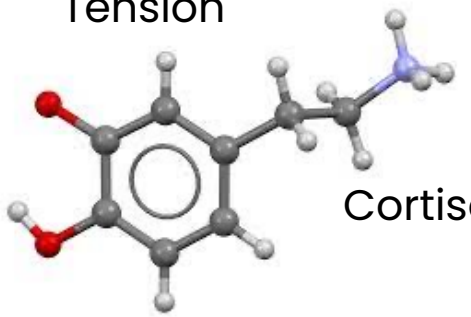
- Neurocoupling
- Hormone release
- Recall and retell
- A story can go where quantitative analysis is denied admission: our hearts.
- NUMBers: Data can persuade people, but it doesn't inspire them to act

Warm and Fuzzy



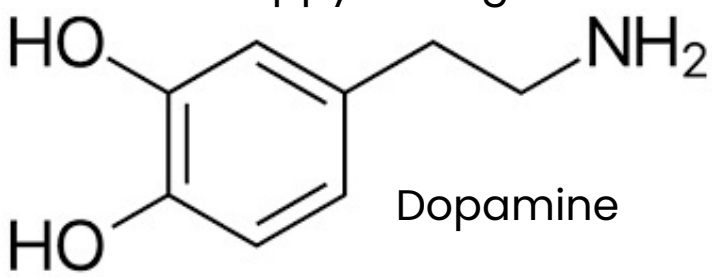
Oxytocin

Tension



Cortisol

Happy Endings



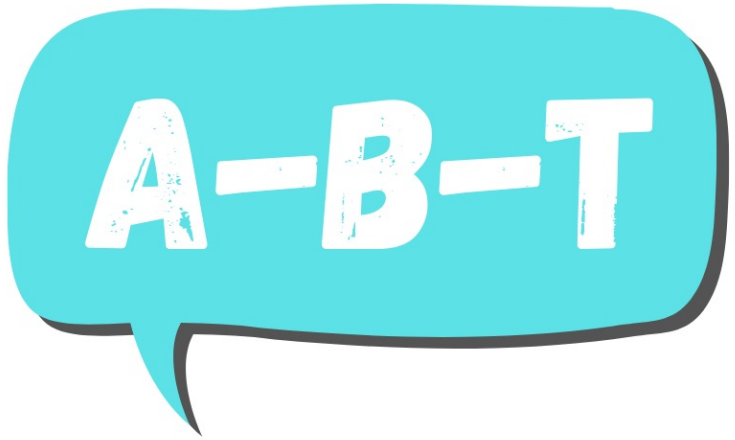
Dopamine

Storifying your communications

- When the story resonates, it forms a belief from the receiver about how your concept or idea will be delivered, experienced and acquired.
- It also forms a compelling picture of how you want your target audience to perceive your proposal or idea.
- Memorable, relatable, and shareable
- It is important to be authentic and genuine - people can tell the difference.

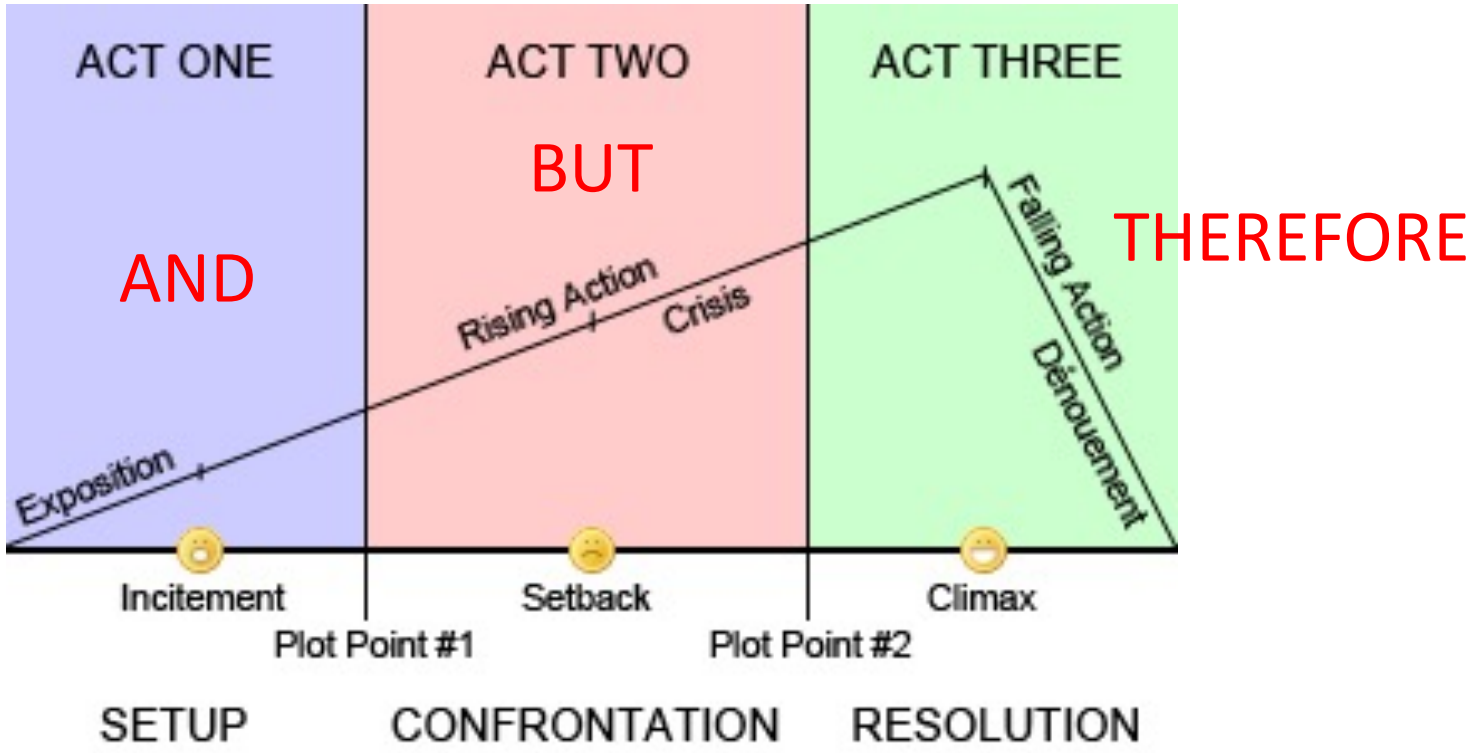
Building your Story with ABT

- The A-B-T Formula
- _____AND _____BUT, _____THEREFORE_____
- The ‘And’ component establishes the situation.
- The ‘But’ establishes the conflict
- The ‘Therefore’ resolves the conflict.



The Three Act Play

- The ABT follows the traditional three act play structure: beginning (thesis), middle (antithesis), and end (synthesis).



There is a little girl living on a farm in Kansas, AND her life is boring,
BUT one day a tornado sweeps her away to the land of Oz,
THEREFORE she must undertake a journey to find her way home.

Jack and Jill

Jack and Jill went up the hill, **AND**
To fetch a pail of water. **BUT**
Jack fell down and broke his crown, **THEREFORE**
And Jill came tumbling after.

We choose to go to the moon in this decade AND do the other things, not because they are easy, BUT because they are hard, THEREFORE that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too.

Hey, I just met you,

AND this is crazy

BUT here's my number,

SO call me, maybe

ONCE
UPON
A
TIME
Let's Write a Story

Start with a central theme/topic for your story

- Vendor relations
- A presentation you'll need to give
- Situations with managing people
- Conversations with parents, PTOs and administration
- Developing emails and other communications

Part One: Finding a central theme

- Provide some guard rails for context
- The Dobzhansky Template
- “Nothing in Biology Makes Sense except in the Light of Evolution”
- Nothing in _____ makes sense, except in the light of _____

Nothing in cafeteria management makes sense except in the light of food safety

Nothing in managing people makes sense except in the light of respect

Part Two: Who's your hero (main character)?

Part Three: Start in the Middle

The PROBLEM excites the brain and the SOLUTION calms it

The heart of narrative storytelling: Conflict

- We'll start in the middle with BUT – the tension or conflict
- What's the Problem (conflict, or what's keeping your receiver from success or aligning with your viewpoint?)
- Keep it to a singular problem narrative
- We transition away from the world as we knew into the reason why your services/ideas are necessary or favored.

My building principal doesn't always understand all the issues we have to deal with in the lunchroom….

My vendor just doesn't understand that these kids just don't like this food….

Our school's problem in securing adequate inventories is……

Verbalize it first, then write it down, then re-write it.

The Purpose of **BUT**

- Conflict
- Establishes contradiction which activates the brain
- Things (perceptions, reality, situations) have changed

- *BUT the problem is……*
- *BUT what really happened….*
- *BUT it didn’t go as expected…*
- *BUT we assumed wrong…..*

Part Four: **AND**, The Set-Up

- The exposition, a laying out of a few facts—basically the setup of the story.
- Points we can all agree on
- Introduce your **hero/protagonist** and flesh out their persona.
- Your receiver's world before anything happens to change it
- Needs to address three specific things:
  - Who the receiver is? Parent, administrator, student, co-worker
  - What they want?
  - Why it's important to them?
- Build up the case for your protagonist and illustrate what they go through in the process you guide. Use the "**And"** method to gather momentum.

Part Five: **Therefore**
Bringing it all together

- “Therefore” is a synthesis word signaling a consequence or effect.
- It ties your goals together and promises to deliver a “resolution” to your audience (hero) for the BUT statement (problem) you just laid out.
- The unwinding of everything
- The positive consequence of utilizing your services, recommendation, or solution
- The second moment of transition back to the normal world order.
- If you don’t like “therefore”, substitute another adverb such as consequently, then, thus, so, as a result, etc..

You should now have the framework of your Story

- Stich the three parts together
- Massage some grammar
- Test drive it on a friend
- Weave it into your Elevator Speech
- Attach some relevant imagery

As an A school, Anywheresville High School strives to be the best educational choice for kids and parents in XXX County. And to create that experience we need to provide the best nutrition for the students during their time on campus. Through state of the art cafeterias and well researched meal plans we feel the meals provided meet the needs of these children.

But often, food goes to waste due to picky eaters and perhaps less than tasty options.

Therefore we have made it standard practice to test out new options with a small group of kids and parents before ordering for all our districts.

Where and When to use Story

- **Opening** – As you begin a conversation, presentation, or speech, try opening with a story instead of launching into the presentation.
- **Emails:** It may take a little longer but try and storify your email communications
- **Closing** – If you want your audience to remember what you said, then try to end with a story.
- **Introducing a new concept** – We are programmed to remember a story with much greater accuracy than a list of facts or data.
- **Validate a point** – After you make a point, use a story to identify how it can be applied.
- **Handle objections** – The objection becomes the BUT and your solution follows.
- **Social Media:** When crafted with brevity, social media copy can be more impactful through story.

Story On!