Your Brain (& Event) on *Story*

Story: The Language of the Mind
(And What It Means to You)

A Summary of Recent Research

by
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(As well as the brain of every person with whom you communicate)

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There are two halves to the word

"Storytelling:"

Story

—and—

Telling

When you *orally tell* it,

HOW you say it

has more *impact* than

WHAT you say

If you use
effective story structure
you make the
telling
much easier

Understanding **Story Architecture**

tells you as much about

how they hear

as it does about

what you need to say

Stories happen……

in the **mind**
of the **receiver**!

YOUR stories happen......

in the **mind**
of the **receiver**!

making sense, **understanding**, **memory**, **recall**, & **interpretation**

of your stories all happen……

in the **mind**
of the **receiver**!

Your job is
NOT
to present current best information.

Your job is

NOT

to broadcast your promotional messages,
NOT

to "get your story out there."

Your real job *is:*

have listeners
accurately understand, remember,
and apply your information

to affect their beliefs, attitudes,
values and behavior.

Your real job is to have listeners
understand, remember,
and apply your information
to affect their beliefs, attitudes,
values and behavior.

That requires *STICKY STORIES.*

Economic Events

You want to **buy** their **attention** in order to **influence**.

Listeners willingly **pay** with their attention **only** when *engaged*:
- When it makes sense
- When they perceive meaning (some value)
- When they perceive relevance

If they *don't* get these, they **disengage** (stop *paying* attention)

Attention is the currency
of learning & persuasion.

Engagement
is the essential **gateway** to
attention & *influence*.

You **give** them *engaging* material.

They **pay** with their **attention** to buy *engagement*.

While their **attention** is **engaged**
you can exert *influence*

Engagement is the essential **gateway** to *influence*.

Engagement*: Emotionally laden attention*

Engagement requires emotional involvement

Attention: Dedicated mental focus over time

Stories engage and hold attention

Engagement is the essential **gateway** to *influence*.

Influence: *Changing attitudes, beliefs, values, knowledge, and behavior*

Influence = ultimate goal of your communications

Engagement doesn't guarantee *influence*. It makes it *possible*.

The *Science* of *Story*

PEOPLE LEARNED:

- To **read**...

...**200** YAG (years ago)

PEOPLE LEARNED:

- To read   200 YAG

- To **write**…

…**7,000** YAG

PEOPLE LEARNED:

- To read   200 YAG
- To write   7,000 YAG

- To use **storytelling**…

…**>100,000** **YAG**!

100,000 years of storytelling dominance in human interaction

to **communicate** and to **archive** learning, wisdom, fact, knowledge, values, beliefs, history, etc.

has **evolutionarily rewired** the human brain to think in specific story terms.

The human brain is predisposed to think in **story terms**.

- To Understand
- To Make Sense
- To Remember

You turn incoming information into

story

before it reaches your conscious mind

with your **neural story net**

(8 people see an accident)

The **MAKE-SENSE** Mandate

- If the brain can't **MAKE SENSE**, it won't pay **attention**

- Your brain has assigned the **MAKE-SENSE** Mandate to the **Neural Story Net**

The Research:

In order to make it *make sense*,

Listeners routinely:

- change factual information,
- make assumptions,
- create new information,
- ignore parts of your presentation,
- infer connections and information
- infer motive, intent, significance

Think of the human **neural story net**
as a *PRISM*

Prisms
distort incoming light information

The Neural Story Prism

- Lies **between** external world and internal mind

- **Distorts** incoming information in order to make it **make sense**

- The story they see & hear *IS NOT* the story you said

Applying **effective story structure
to your information
minimizes that distortion

Your

Story Mind

in….*Action!*

Person #1: "Where's *John*?"

Person #2: "Well....I didn't want to say anything. **<u>But</u>**...I saw a *green VW* parked in front of *Carol's*."

- Did anyone say that there is no connection?
  - Did anyone say that it makes no sense?

NO!

Human minds automatically assume a connection
and assume it makes sense

and use *STORY* **Structures**
to fill in missing information.

Our Storied Minds in Action:

- **Person 1**: *"Hi **John.**"*

- **Person 2**: *"Shhhh! I'm not here! You never saw me. I'm not here!"*

- **Person 1**: *"It's okay. **Carol's** gone home."*

Your Story Mind in Action

He went to the store.

Fred died.

Sharon went hungry and wept.

Question: How do we do it?

Partial Information:

Human minds are designed to make decisions based on partial information.

HOW? We infer; we elaborate; we project; we assume....
"We jump to conclusions..."

Question: How do we do it?

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

"Banks of existing knowledge and experience about a relevant topic or narrative structure."

- Prior knowledge creates **context** for new information.

- Story structure makes new information **relevant**.

Applying **Prior knowledge** is how we remember.

Here are **7** groups with **20** letters.
In 10 seconds, try to memorize the groups in order:

J FKFB INAT OUP SNA SAI RS

How many can you recall in order?
(The average is just under 10.)

Different **spacing** will evoke
PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Prior knowledge creates **context** and
relevance.

JFK   FBI   NATO   UPS   NASA   IRS

It's the same letters.

J   FKFB   INAT   OUP   SNA   SAI   RS

Now memory laughably easy.

That is the power of **PRIOR KNOWLEDGE**.

Prior Knowledge

Consider the following seven sentences:

John walked on the roof.
Bill picked up the eggs.
Pete hid the ax.
Jim flew the kite.
Frank built the boat.
Harvey flipped the electric switch.
Ted wrote the play.

How many can you remember?

Who build the boat? Who flew the kite? Etc.?

You understood the sentences,
but have no context or relevance for them,
so weren't able to remember.

Change the names to invoke prior knowledge.

Santa Claus walked on the roof.
The Easter Bunny picked up the eggs.
George Washington hid the ax.
Benjamin Franklin flew the kite.
Noah built the boat.
Thomas Edison flipped the electric switch.
William Shakespeare wrote the play.

Another example of **Prior Knowledge** and **Story Structure**:

Paragraph #1

A thirsty ant went to the river. He was carried away by the rush of the stream and was about to drown. A dove, sitting in a tree overhanging the water, plucked a leaf. The leaf fell into the stream close to the ant and the ant climbed onto it. The ant floated safely to the bank. Shortly after, a birdcatcher came and laid a trap in the tree. The ant bit and stung him on the foot. In pain, the birdcatcher threw down his trap. The noise made the dove fly away.

Now compare with paragraph #2.

Pete argued that data gathered from a NASA voyage to Venus called into question current theories about the formation of our solar system. Part of his talk emphasized the importance of mass spectrometers. He then discussed the isotopes of argon 36 and argon 38 and noted that they were of higher density than expected. He also cited the high values of neon found in the atmosphere. He has a paper that is already written, but he was aware of the need for further investigation as well.

Prior Knowledge
and
Family Stories

When you tell stories to the family
there is much you omit
because they already know
(They have banks of **prior knowledge**).

The Curse of Knowledge:

"Once you *know*, it is *impossible* to remember what it was like to *not* know."

Once you *know*, you tend to write (and tell) as if **every reader/listener** also knew.

Write from the **audiences** known banks of prior knowledge

Not from yours

Prior Knowledge
and
The Betty Crocker Effect

Just because you show them that it's better, doesn't mean they will
like or accept it.

STORY:

The root form of *all* narratives.

The quintessential, intrinsic base of all
human communication.

The Central Thesis:

Research clearly shows that **STORY** architecture:

- Provides superior **retention** (memory and recall)
  - Provides improved **understanding**
    - Creates *context* and *relevance*
      - Creates **empathy**
- Makes readers/listeners **pay attention**
- Enhances the creation of **meaning**

THERE ARE ONLY THREE RULES TO CREATING GREAT STORIES....

THERE ARE ONLY THREE RULES TO CREATING GREAT STORIES.....

Unfortunately, Nobody Knows What Any of Them Are.....

What *is* a story?

What makes a story *stick...*
...while you tell?
...long after you've finished?

What's the difference between a story and...

- A magazine article?
- An essay?
- A lecture?
- An encyclopedia entry?
- A memo?
- A recipe?
- A poem?
- A directive?
- A conversation?
- A newspaper column?
- A joke?

"STORY"
doesn't refer to the **content**.

"STORY"
refers to the **structure**, the framework, to
how the content is organized.

STORY
is the most effective *delivery vehicle*
for your content.

"**STORY**"
guides the **interpretation** of;

"**STORY**"
guides the creation of **meaning** from;

"**STORY**"
controls the **memory** of

your information & facts

So, what *is* a story?

What the Dictionary says:

Story: "*A narrative account of a real or imagined event or events.*"

HE WENT TO THE STORE.

The dictionary is *wrong*!

And we are left without an **understanding** of what a **story** is or how to use this mighty architecture.

HE WENT TO THE STORE.

Eight Essential Elements

1.
2.
3. **Goal**
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.

Goal:

"What the main character **needs** or **wants** to do or get in this story."

NOT what they DO;
NOT what they ACCOMPLISH;
But what they are **AFTER**!

The Power of a *GOAL:*

Sally let loose a team of gophers. The plan backfired when a dog chased them away. She then threw a party but the guests failed to bring their motorcycles. Furthermore, her stereo system was not loud enough. Sally spent the next day looking for a "Peeping Tom" but was unable to find one in the Yellow Pages. Obscene phone calls gave her some hope until the number was changed. It was the installation of a blinking neon light across the street that finally did the trick. Sally framed the ad for the light from the classified section and now has it hanging on her wall.

Let's add a **goal**:
Sally hates the woman who moved in next door and **wants to drive her out**.

Now does it make sense?

Sally let loose a team of gophers. The plan backfired when a dog chased them away. She then threw a party but the guests failed to bring their motorcycles. Furthermore, her stereo system was not loud enough. Sally spent the next day looking for a "Peeping Tom" but was unable to find one in the Yellow Pages. Obscene phone calls gave her some hope until the number was changed. It was the installation of a blinking neon light across the street that finally did the trick. Sally framed the ad for the light from the classified section and now has it hanging on her wall.

Eight Essential Elements

1.
2.
3. **Goal**
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.

He went to the store **for some milk**.
He got some.

The End

Eight Essential Elements

1.
2.
3. Goal
4.
5. **Conflicts & Problems**
6.
7.
8.

Anything that blocks a character (even temporarily) from reaching a goal is a
PROBLEM.

If the problem places a character in opposition to some other entity in the story it is a
CONFLICT.

If you're uncomfortable with

"*conflict*" and "*problem*,"

think of them:

- as "*challenges*,"
- as "*opportunities*,"
- as "*obstacles to overcome*"

He went to the store for some milk. A **whimpering three-year-old toddler sat in his way and sobbed, "You can't come in!"** He stepped over him and got his milk.

The End

Eight Essential Elements

1.
2.
3. Goal
4.
5. Conflicts & Problems
6. **Risk & Danger**
7.
8.

The magic ingredients:

RISK & DANGER

They create excitement, tension, drama

Risk is the probability of failure.
Danger is the consequences of failure.

Problems & Conflicts and Risk & Danger

- Are **always** there
- Drive **all** stories
- Do *not* mean stories about **failure**

- They are challenges along the road to **success**.

Does "Danger"
automatically mean
"*Physical* Danger?"

Absolutely *NOT*!

Any emotional, mental, social, or physical danger will do.

(embarrassment, rejection, ridicule, belittlement, being laughed at, being abandoned, being scorned, being unwanted, failure, lack of results, fears, etc.)

These are the best dangers!

He went to the store for some milk. **Three gun-totin', bullyin' *Bad Guys* blocked the front door threatening his life.** So he went in the back door and got his milk.

The End

Eight Essential Elements

1.
2.
3. Goal
4.
5. Conflicts & Problems
6. Risk & Danger
7. **Struggles**
8.

To **struggle**:

"to contend, to engage,
to exert a great effort,
to fight,
to stand against, to oppose"

Sticky Stories
require characters to *struggle*.

Readers/listeners won't appreciate **success**
without first *SEEING* **struggle**.

The greater the struggle, the more we care!

(Baby Duck woke up)

Struggle *HOW?*

Internally:

- Over a decision
- Between competing values or goals
- Self versus others (sacrifice)
- Over uncertainty, lack of information
- Over facing (or not facing) tasks, decisions, fears, etc.

Externally:

- Verbally with boss/contemporaries/parents subordinates/others
- Physically with enemies
- Over scarce resources

He went to the store for some milk. Three gun-totin', bully, **Bad Guys** blocked the front door threatening his life. He **risked his life** and **fought** through the **Bad Guys** and got his milk.

The End

A question:

What makes a story sound

REAL?

Eight Essential Elements

1.
2.
3. Goal
4.
5. Conflicts & Problems
6. Risk & Danger
7. Struggles
8. **Details**

Details:

- Create *all* images and *PICTURES*
- Create **reality**
- Allow listeners/readers to "**see**" a story
- Serve as **spot lights** for a story

- Details make listeners *believe*! (Cynthia)

What Details:

- Character Details
- Sensory Details
- Scenic Details
- Event (action) details

Eight Essential Elements

1.
2.
3. Goal
4. **Motive**
5. Conflicts & Problems
6. Risk & Danger
7. Struggles
8. Details

Motives

- Explain **why** a goal is **important**

- Give characters a **reason** to face conflicts, risks, and dangers

- Create suspense

- Cause listeners to *identify*

*** Motives also control how audiences *relate* to your character.***

The Power of **Motives**

Sharky, the shark, *wanted a puppy* because:

- He was tired of doing chores.

- He was tired of eating tuna.

- He was lonely and needed a friend.

- He wanted to show that land and sea animals could live in peace.

He went to the store for some milk **that would keep his deathly ill son alive until the doctor arrived**. Three gun-totin', bullyin' Bad Guys blocked the front door threatening his life. He risked his life and fought through the bad guys and got his milk.

The End

Eight Essential Elements

1. **Character**
2. **Character Traits** (that make characters interesting)
3. Goal
4. Motive
5. Conflicts & Problems
6. Risk & Danger
7. Struggles
8. Details

What makes a character …. a *character*?

A story character *must*:

- be a **physical** entity

- be an **individual**

- possess a **will** (be able to think and form intent and self interest)

- be capable of **acting** in support of that will

- be able to **communicate** (express self)

What kind of information makes a character

Interesting?

Creating interesting characters is:
- the **biggest job** of every writer
- the **hardest job** for nonfiction writers

Anything that differentiates your character from those around him/her,

that makes them unique, unusual, or special,
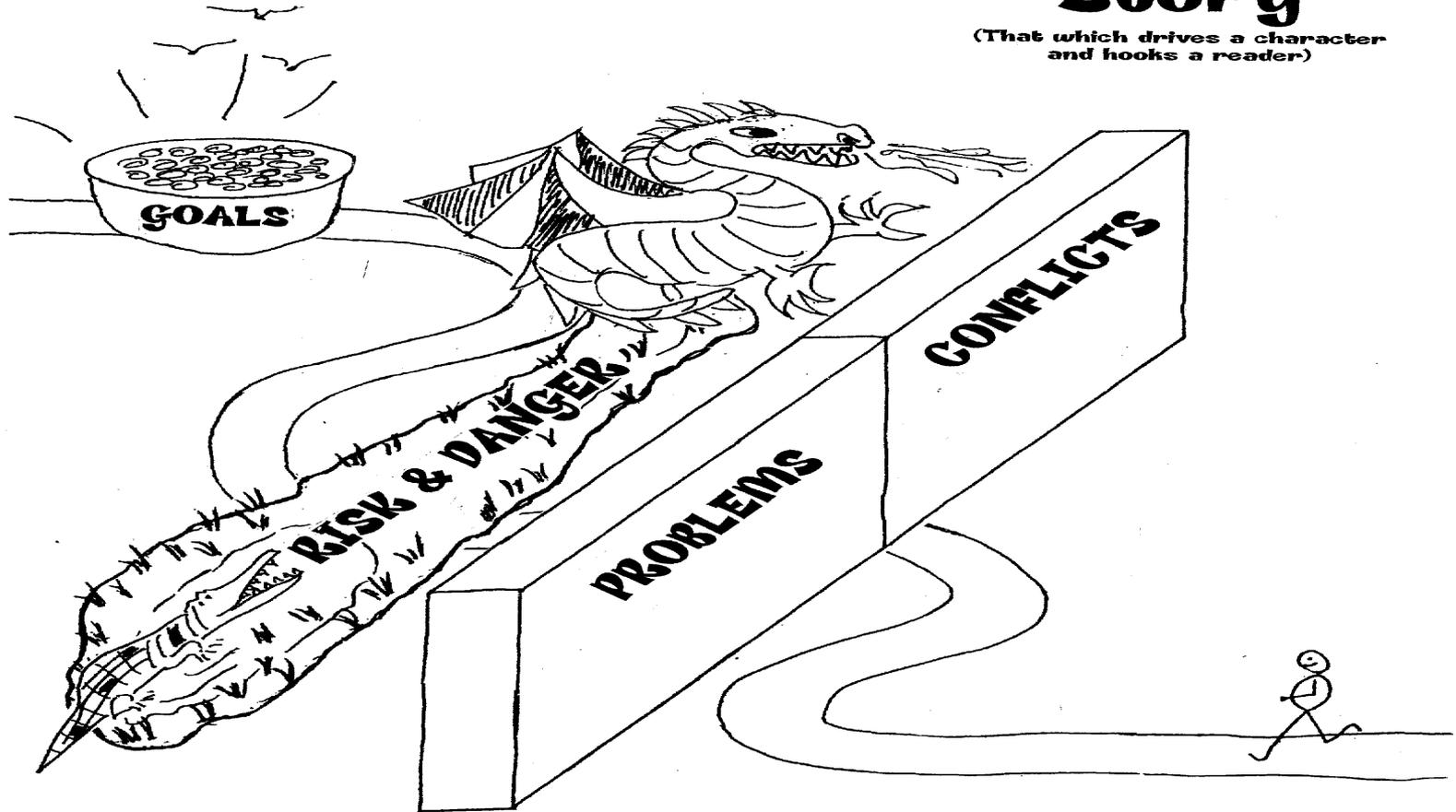
makes them *interesting*.

Find the things that make your character an *individual*.

Bob, a one-armed, blind, crippled father who suffered from early onset of Alzheimer's disease hobbled to the store for some milk that would keep his deathly ill son alive until the doctor arrived. Three gun-totin', bullyin' Bad Guys blocked the front door threatening his life. He risked his life and fought through the bad guys and got his milk.

The End

The Core of a Story

(That which drives a character and hooks a reader)

GOALS

RISK & DANGER

CONFLICTS

PROBLEMS

THE EIGHT ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
Of Every Story/Narrative

1. Who is the **MAIN CHARACTER**?
2. What **CHARACTER TRAITS** make them interesting?
3. What do the character need to do or get **(GOAL)**?
4. Why is that goal important **(MOTIVE)**?
5. What **CONFLICTS/PROBLEMS** block the character?
6. How do they create **RISK & DANGER**?
7. What does the character do **(STRUGGLES)** to reach goal?
8. What sensory **DETAILS** will make the story seem *Real*?

Effective story structure is:

that **character-based story organization** that provides the **informational elements** required by the **neural story net** in order to **understand** and to **make sense**

The **E**ight **E**ssential **E**lements

Are just *tools* (not *rules*)

BUT...

- They exactly match receiver neural information demands
- Explain how listeners hear and make sense
- They are the best guide to effective stories
- They control engagement
- They are the gateway to influence

What *Is* a Story?
A Brief Sample

"The Lone Ranger wanted to go to the store for more silver bullets.
*He was attacked by **Bad Guys**.*
They fought. He won."

What's here? What's not?

What *Is* a Story?
A Brief Sample

"The Lone Ranger wanted to go to the store for more silver bullets.
*He was attacked by **Bad Guys**.*
They fought. He won."

What's here?

A character
Implied interesting character traits
Goal (go to store)
Motive (get silver bullets)
Conflicts
Risk & Danger
Struggles

What's missing?……*Details*!

The BARE BONES Version of the Eight Essential Elements

_____ (Character)

Needed _____

Because _____

But _____

So, _____

Finally _____

The Process:

Merging your information **content**

with

effective **story structure**

Communicator's Goal:

influence a target audience
by first **engaging** that audience.

Effective stories are a proven
vehicle to **engage**.

The Story Process:

1. Define the target **audience**

2. Create **theme** and "take away" message

3. Search for a core **metaphor** & *image*

4. Create **relevance** & **context**

5. Adjust for constraints & limits

6. Define/develop story **characters**

7. Build story **elements**

1. **Target Audience**:

- Effective stories are **always** audience specific

- How tightly can you define them?

- Can you characterize their Prior Knowledge?

- Do you know of their interests, issues, concerns & emotional triggers?

- Can you identify their cultural assumptions, norms, values, expectations, history, myths, etc.?

2. Theme:

- The "thing they *have* to get"

- What you *need* them to remember and believe

- The "Take-away" (influencing) message

- Keep it "simple" and they'll get it

Theme is the core of your message.

Story is the vehicle that effectively communicates your message and

makes that message *stick*!

An *Effective* (influencing) Theme:

- Is what you want **THEM** to **do** or **think**
- Make it one simple sentence
- Make it an *action statement*
- Make it an *action IMPERATIVE!*
- Why your desired action is in **their** interest and meets **their** goals
- Make it clear; make it firm; make it **bold**!
- Make it **emotionally** (viscerally) loaded!
- Paint an inspiring, alluring, & *demanding* **vision**

3. Create a central Metaphoric Image

- Metaphors create **dominant images**

- Metaphors allow us to **know** the **unknown**

- The best metaphors carry an **emotional punch**

Effective metaphors create a vivid, emotional, and un-opposable image of your theme.

(Apple pie, motherhood, red-white-and-blue)

What is a *metaphor*?

"Metaphors **ascribe** tangible, specific, and vivid **characteristics** of some known concept onto an unknown or unknowable concept in order to better to understand the latter."

What does a *Metaphor* look like?

- He was a shooting star.
- You are my sunshine.
- I am a rock; I am an island.
- Life is just a bowl of cherries.
- Seeing is believing.
- War is hell.
  …etc.

No **metaphor** is either "*right*" or "*wrong.*"

They simply create radically different views of the world.

Time:
    Is it money?
    Is it "a river I go swimmin' in?"
    Is time a predator?
    Is it a gift?
    Does it stand still or "keep on rollin'?"

Turn the words
of the metaphor

into a single,
vivid,
emotion-laden
image

4. Create **Relevance & Context**

Why should they "buy" this information and "pay" with their time, thought, memory, and attention?

- What will make them first stop and be engaged?
- How will it fit in with what they already know & believe?
- Why will they see that they need it?
- What will make them accept your story and information?
- How will it benefit them?
- How will you make them see that benefit?
- The answer to: "What does this have to do with *me*?"

5. Enter the Ugly Real World:
Limits and Constraints
(no story you write exists in isolation)

Time (research, writing, delivery)
Space (Media constraints)
Mandates
Audience's fixed expectations
Have you already done this story?
Do superiors want you to write it this way?

6. The **BIG Question**:
      Do You have a character??

The character MUST:

- Be a character (perceive, think, plan, act)
- Be the story's Main Character
- Allow you to tell your information & theme
- Efficiently carry (frame) your story

Examples of possible *story characters*

- Sponsors
- Organizers
- Business leaders
- Volunteers
- Workers
- YOU
- local folk
- children
- representative fictional characters

Etc., etc.
Etc., etc.

Keys to *Successful* **Story Characters**:

1) Make them *relevant* to, & of *interest* to, your audience.

2) Give them **goals** and **motives** *relevant* to, and *important* to, your audience—as well as critically important to the character.

3) Use motive matching to ensure identity

4) They must face *real risk & danger*, and they must *struggle*!

5) How they resolve their *goal* determines audience **residual emotion**

It's an **Iterative** Process

1) Pick a potential main character

2) Does he/she meet minimum mandates?

3) Can I easily create a good story around this character?

4) Will this story accomplish my mission?

5) Repeat 1) through 4) for each potential main character

6) Pick the best character

The Most Common Story Pattern:

1. Lead with a short story
       (engage, create emotional involvement, create context and relevance)

2. Slide in your thematic info/facts
       (while you hold attention)

3. Back to the next story snippet
       (re-establish engagement, suspense, emotional involvement)

4. Back to more core thematic info………
       and so on……….

7. Now lay out the story

- Focus on the *struggle* to create ending audience attitude

- Let the main character be readers' eyes and ears

- *Sensory* detains create all images

- Be sure to regularly weave in the information, itself

- To make the story exciting, include Risk & Danger (time)

- Come back to character and goal at the end

- Edit, edit, edit ("No one ever wrote it right the first time…or even the second)

Thoughts
to Leave You With

Storytelling Deadly Sins

1. Vanity

- Always sounds like bragging
- Stories about you never as interesting to others as to you

Storytelling **Deadly Sins**

1. Vanity

2. **No conflict, no climax……….. no story!**

Storytelling **Deadly Sins**

1. Vanity
2. No conflict, no climax……….. no story!

3. **We love to laugh at the emperor**
    - Risk of claiming to be an expert
    - Be the "butt" of your own stories

Storytelling Deadly Sins

1. Vanity
2. No conflict, no climax……….. no story!
3. We love to laugh at the emperor

4. Wolves never look good in sheep's clothing

- Be yourself
- Be honest; deadly danger lurks in presenting other than who you are
- Don't try to put on "airs"
- Everyone wants to see "the man behind the curtain"…let them

Storytelling **Deadly Sins**

1. Vanity
2. No conflict, no climax……….. no story!
3. We love to laugh at the emperor
4. Wolves never look good in sheep's clothing

5. Humor is essential

- But not at anyone's expense other than our own
- Laughter is the best measure of engagement and attention

Thoughts to Leave You With

1. **Effective Story Structure Creates**:
   Context
   Relevance
   Engagement
   Understanding
   Empathy
   Meaning
   Memory & Recall

Thoughts to Leave You With

1. Effective Story Structure Creates…

2. **Our Brains & Minds are Hardwired for Story**

Thoughts to Leave You With

1. Effective Story Structure Creates…

2. **Our Brains & Minds are Hardwired for Story**

   Story *IS* how we learn

Thoughts to Leave You With

1. Effective Story Structure Creates…

2. **Our Brains & Minds are Hardwired for Story**

   Story **IS** how we learn, because…

   - Story is how our brains are wired,
   - Story is how our minds are pre-programmed

Thoughts to Leave You With

1. Effective Story Structure Creates…
2. Our Brains & minds are Hardwired for Story

3. **The Make Sense Mandate**

Thoughts to Leave You With

1. Effective Story Structure Creates…
2. Our Brains & minds are Hardwired for Story
3. The Make Sense Mandate

4. **The Neural Story Prism**

Thoughts to Leave You With

1. Effective Story Structure Creates…
2. Our Brains & minds are Hardwired for Story
3. The Make Sense Mandate
4. The Neural Story Prism

5. **We know the informational elements of effective story structure.**

Thoughts to Leave You With

1. Effective Story Structure Creates…
2. Our Brains & minds are Hardwired for Story
3. The Make Sense Mandate
4. The Neural Story Prism

5. **We know the informational elements of effective story structure (the informational elements your neural story net requires).**
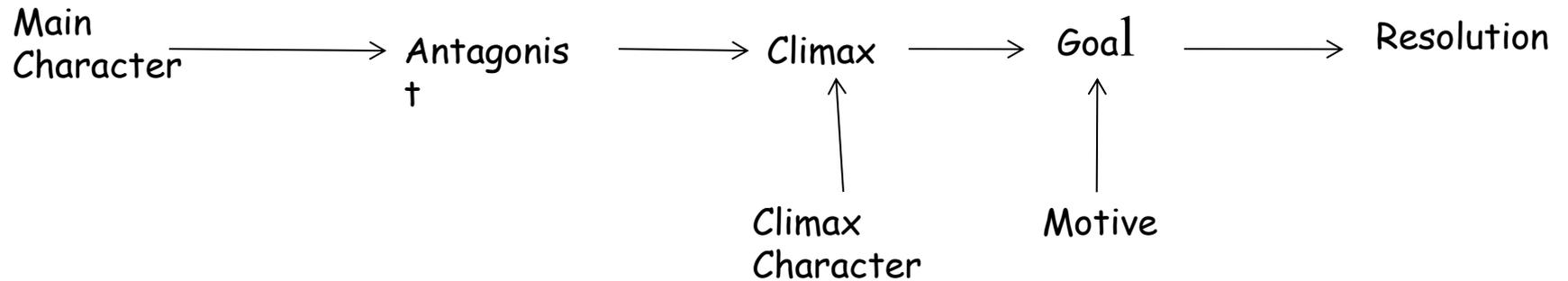
Thoughts to Leave You With

1. Effective Story Structure Creates…
2. Our Brains & minds are Hardwired for Story
3. The Make Sense Mandate
4. The Neural Story Prism
5. We know the informational elements of effective story structure.

6. **Effective story concepts are not being taught.**

Story *Influence*

The Main Influence Story Line

Main Character → Antagonist → Climax → Goal → Resolution

Climax Character ↑ Climax

Motive ↑ Goal

- **3 Characters**
- **2 Events**
- **2 Concepts**

Character Role Assessment

Always on the Main Story Line

- Main Character
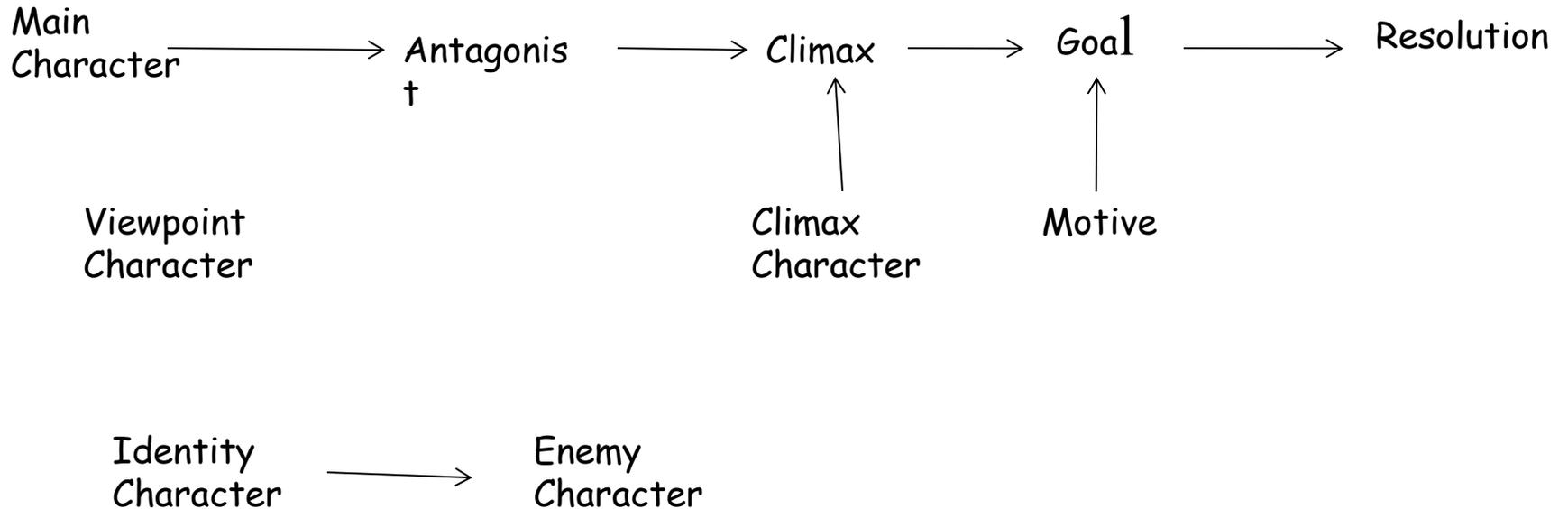- Antagonist
- Climax Character

Always Present

- System Character
- Viewpoint Character

Influence Characters

- Identity Character
- Enemy Character

The Main Story Line

System Character

Main
Character $\longrightarrow$ Antagonis
t $\longrightarrow$ Climax $\longrightarrow$ Goal $\longrightarrow$ Resolution

Viewpoint
Character

Climax
Character

Motive

Identity
Character $\longrightarrow$ Enemy
Character

Three key questions define a story's **Influence Potential**

1. Who is this story really about *for me*?

2. How *bad* is the ending of this story for that character?

3. Who can I *blame* for it?

In-Group—Out-Group Links: "US" versus "THEM"

Identity Character = In-Group exemplar
Represents key In-Group values & beliefs
Becomes an In-Group role model

Enemy character = Out-Group definition
Represents Out-Group flaws
Coalesces enmity and loathing for Out-Group
Trigger In-Group action

My characterization of *story power*:

If: (1) in an audience appropriate and **effective story**,

(2) you create an **identity character** with whom listeners become personally vested (emotionlly involved), then,

(3) if **bad (unjust) things** happen to that character during the story—they *struggle*—or if the story unjustly ends badly for that character,

(4) listeners experience strong, unresolved **emotional reactions** that cause them to respond and to reassess.

We say that this story was, therefore, *powerful for this audience*.

The Radicalization Potential Equation

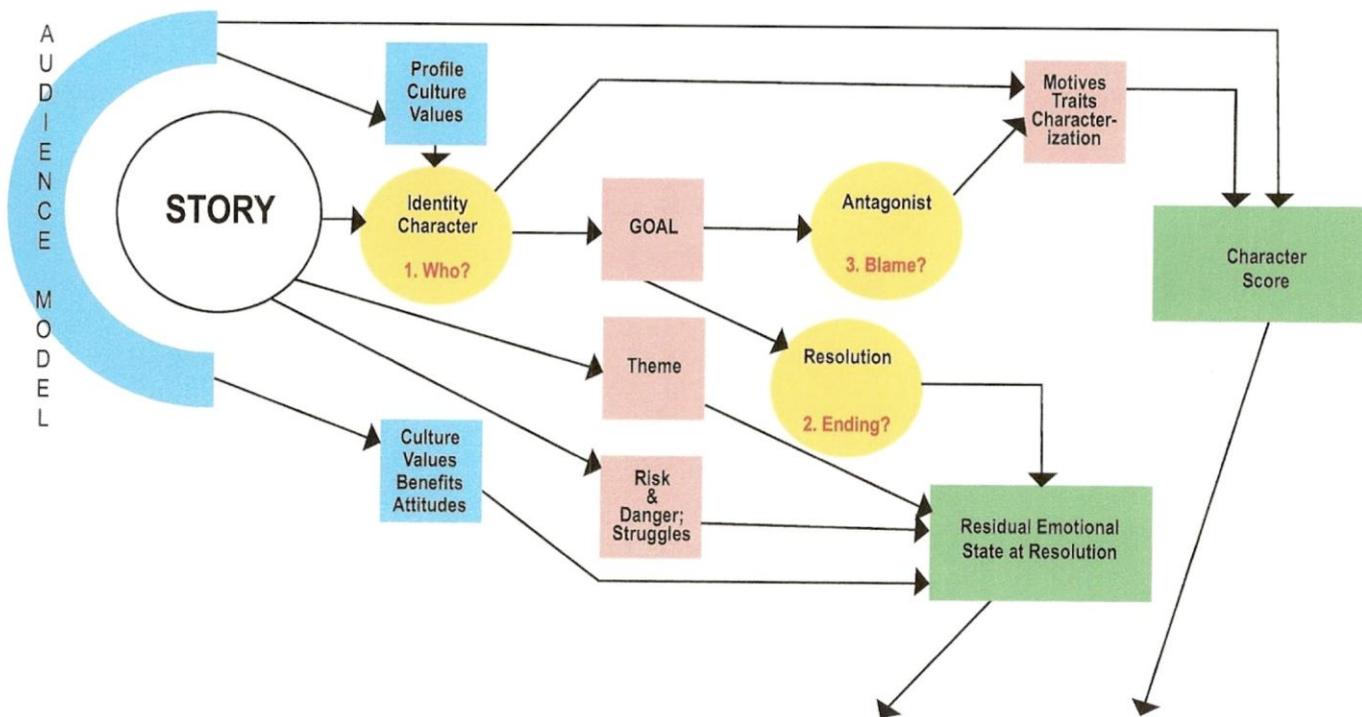Early Findings that have formed the basis for the Radicalization Potential Equation

Our early live tests confirmed that a target audience's **residual emotional response** to a story:

- is dependent on that audience's **identity character**—not on the story's main

- depends on listener's interpretation of how the story **resolves** for that
identity

    character

- can be accurately predicted by quantifying a select few key story structural
    elements related to that identity character

These key story elements can be identified and quantified through three questions:

1. **Who is this story about _for me_?**
2. **How bad is the story's ending _for that character_?**
3. **Who can I blame for it?**

Radicalization Potential Equation

AUDIENCE MODEL

STORY

Profile Culture Values

Identity Character
1. Who?

GOAL

Antagonist
3. Blame?

Motives Traits Character-ization

Character Score

Theme

Resolution
2. Ending?

Culture Values Benefits Attitudes

Risk & Danger; Struggles

Residual Emotional State at Resolution

$$RP = Rf \ (D_i - D_a)$$

Where: **RP** is defined as the Radicalization Potential of the story

Rf is the Resolution factor (varying from 0 to 4)

D_i is the character value of the Identity Character (varying from 0 to +5)

D_a is the character value of the antagonist (varying from 0 to -10)

RP can vary from 0 to 60.

We hypothesize that boundary value(s) of RP will delineate stories capable of radicalizing a given target population.

An effective counter-narrative strategy is to alter the value of any one of these three core variables to change a story's RP value in the desired direction beyond a boundary value.

A Word on Story (Influencing) **Theme**

We believe that the following questions will lead us to determine if a story's influencing theme to exert strong (polarizing, radicalizing) influence and that they can be converted to a quantified metric:

1. Is the RPE score > 45?
2. Is there a clear, single theme?
3. Is that theme presented as a clear take-away statement?
4. Is that presented as an Action Statement (should)?
5. Is it presented as an action imperative (must/shall/will—or need?)?
6. Will that statement resonate with the target audience's Prior Knowledge?
7. Is the theme instrumental to and an integral part of the climax outcome?
8. How aligned are the Influence Characters with and along the Main Influence Story Line?
9. Exposure: Are there other stories that reinforce and promote this same theme?