

co·wonders



**story time!**  
starting with storytelling

## story time! starting with storytelling

Written by: **Jorge Aguado Sánchez**  
and **Eukene Oquendo Briones (Co.Wonders)**

### What is it about:

- understanding the core principles of storytelling and impactful communication
- focusing on one clear, shareable idea to engage your audience
- practice creating and delivering small, amazing and impactful stories

---

**source:** Jorge Aguado Sánchez, Bobette Buster, Walter Fisher, William Labov-Walter Fisher and Eukene Oquendo Briones.

---

**domains:** interpersonal communication and engagement, community building, rituals, leadership and creativity

### approach description:

In *Big Fish* (2003), there is a scene between a doctor and the son of a patient, that goes like this:

**Doctor:** "Did your father ever tell you the real story of your birth?"

**Son:** "No. Only the one with the fish and the wedding ring."

**Doctor:** "Your mother arrived in the afternoon. You were born a week early, no complications. It was a perfect delivery. Not very exciting, is it?"

The doctor paused, a small smile forming as he added:  
"If I had to choose between the true version and the one with a fish and a wedding ring, I'd choose the story every time."

This scene shows us how storytelling transforms ordinary events into something extraordinary, adding meaning and color to life. And who does not like a good story?



# story time!

Storytelling is one of the most powerful tools of communication, as it shapes how we understand and connect with the world. William Labov, an American linguist, researched the way stories engage people, and he found out that a recognizable structure that evokes emotions is the way to bring attention. For example, using classical fairy tales structures (beginning-knot-ending).

Walter Fisher went beyond Labov, and designed a narrative paradigm, showing that people evaluate stories not on logical arguments, but on their coherence (does it make sense?) and fidelity (can I trust or relate to it?). This paradigm makes communication an experience that one can listen to and reflect on their own life.

Finally, Bobette Buster says that storytelling is about crafting a single, impactful idea in a way that sparks curiosity, resonates emotionally, and inspires action. It's not about giving facts or concepts but to put together ideas into a narrative that audiences can believe in and pass on.

A small guide to do storytelling:

The storytelling approach encourages communicators to:

- **Start with an attention grabbing hook.**

Begin with a statement or question that grabs attention and sets the tone for what's to come, sparking curiosity or interest in the audience. Do you remember the "once upon a time...?" - find your own variation.

- **Set the scene with characters and context.**

Introduce the people, place, or situation at the heart of the story, giving the audience the base to understand and connect. You can use the 5W+H of journalism: *Who, Where, What, When, Why* and *How*.

- **Introduce conflict or challenges to drive engagement.**

Present a problem, obstacle, or turning point that adds tension and keeps the audience emotionally invested in how it will be resolved. Ask yourself: "*what's the problem to solve?*"

- **Resolve the story with meaning.**

Bring the story to a nice conclusion by connecting its events and offering a clear takeaway. This is where you answer, "*What was the point?*". Labov calls this the moral of the story or its resolution.

- **Finish with a memorable message**

End with a powerful closing statement that resonates emotionally or intellectually, making the story leave a lasting impression.



# story time!

These steps unite the structure, emotion and impact of the story, making the storytelling a tool to transform ideas into memorable and impactful experiences that makes people connect and get inspired.

We understand that the storytelling world is huge. There are thousands of tools, webinars, studies or workshops around it, anyhow, our aim is to share a little bit of the huge cake. We invite you to discover more about the fascinating art of telling stories.

---

## aim of use:

To provide a structured framework for participants to develop clear, engaging, and impactful stories (or narratives). This communication canvas encourages self-expression, simplifies complex ideas, and fosters emotional connections by helping participants craft stories that inspire, inform, and resonate with their audience. Finally, it gives an opportunity for creativity and sharing stories around a fire as a community.

---

## educational method:

- **Step 1: Recall and share popular stories**

Begin by asking participants to recall and share popular stories they know. These could be from books, movies, TV shows, or even personal anecdotes.

Suggest these questions to discuss and reflect on common story elements:

- Which story stuck with you?
- What do you think made it memorable?

Write down recurring elements that participants mention (on a board or flip chart) such as characters, heroes, conflicts, antagonists, obstacles, exciting events, resolutions, or emotional moments.

# story time!

- **Step 2: Identify the elements of a good story**

Guide participants to notice patterns in the stories they shared.

For example:

*“Did you notice that many of these stories have a hero, a problem, and a resolution? That’s because all great stories follow a structure that makes them easy to relate to and remember”.*

Introduce the concept of storytelling:

*“Storytelling is the art of turning ordinary events into extraordinary experiences by adding meaning and emotion. It’s about creating connections and leaving lasting impressions.”*

- **Step 3: Introduce step-by-step story creation**

Explain the structure to build a 5-line story to encourage participants to create their own stories.

The 5-line story structure:

- Who is the hero? Introduce the main character.
- What do they want? Define the hero’s goal or dream.
- What’s the challenge? Highlight the obstacle or conflict they face.
- How do they overcome it? Show their moment of courage, creativity, or action.
- What’s the result? Conclude with the resolution and a meaningful takeaway.

- **Step 4: Break into groups and provide storyboards**

Participants work together to brainstorm, sketch, and write their 5-line stories.

Provide sheets with 5 boxes, one for each step of the story. Participants can sketch, write their story in the boxes or even create a small theatre to perform the story.

# story time!

- **Step 5: Group Reflection Questions**

After each group has written their stories, bring them together to share and reflect.

Suggest these questions to discuss:

- What made your hero relatable? Did the hero face challenges similar to things you've experienced or care about?
- How did the obstacle make the story more exciting? Would the story have been as interesting without the challenge?
- What does this story teach us about overcoming challenges? Did your hero learn something new, and how can it apply to real life?

To wrap up the activity you can suggest creating a "story wall" or pop-up expo, where participants post their storyboards and can check them (like in a museum). This creates a sense of community and celebrates everyone's creative contributions.

---

## read more:

- **Book:** Do Story: How to Tell Your Story So the World Listens. Bobette Buster. Do Books, (2013)
- **Book:** Storytelling as communication strategy. Guillaume Lamarre. Pyramyd éditions, (2018)
- **Website:** A guide to writing storytelling captions. Cyndi Zaweski
- **Website:** Become a master storyteller in 7 sentences. Cyndi Zaweski





**story time!**

**co·wonders**



Cofinanciado por  
la Unión Europea