

## Module 1: Introduction to Storytelling

### UNIT 1: TELLING STORIES - WHAT IS STORYTELLING?

**Timing: 120 minutes**

#### Learning objectives

At the end of this unit:

- They will become familiar with the main features of storytelling;
- They will understand we always tell stories from different perspectives;
- They will become familiar with the structure of a story;
- They will understand what a plot is and its main elements.

#### Learning content

List all topics covered in the unit:

- The main characteristics of storytelling: representation of a story, interaction, the combined use of language, actions, vocalisation, etc;
- The standard structure of a story;
- The key elements of a narrative.

#### Inputs and learning activities

List all activities in the logical sequence they should be followed\*

- Activity "Draw yourself!" (group work)
- Activity "Story spine" (group work)
- PPP "Telling stories: what is storytelling?" (informational input by the trainer)

\*Each module should start with overview ppt giving the big picture of the content, so the first learning activity will be the ppt itself.

## Inputs

Storytelling is an activity as old as any known culture. It was once the primary way of passing along information long before the written word even existed. Storytelling is a social and cultural activity and one of the most ancient forms of human expression. The most common definition of the term could be expressed as the interactive art of using words and actions to reveal the elements and images of a story while encouraging the listener's imagination.

A story is a real or fictional series of events that describes a human experience. Stories take facts and other things we want to retain and frames them in an emotional context.

Stories can be oral, written, visual or digital - communicated in various formats and expressing different voices. The telling is subject to the way a person uses oral (including body language if visual) and written language, or pictures. All human beings use storytelling in different aspects of their lives.

[Source Digital Storytelling – Guidebook for educators (page 11)]

[https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/1eda8b\\_37267445e22243808dc60e5b0734ab2b.pdf](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/1eda8b_37267445e22243808dc60e5b0734ab2b.pdf)

Before starting to talk about storytelling himself, the facilitator could ask the participants if they know this word and what it makes them to think.

A brainstorming around the word 'storytelling' could be proposed to the group at the very beginning of the module.

In order to start, we propose a group exercise that will allow participants to familiarize themselves with storytelling, while demonstrating to them how it is present in our way of living and relating to others.

The learning activity will have a double objective: to allow participants to interact with each other and get to know each other. Since we are at the beginning of the training, it is important that everyone feels good and comfortable in the group.

This well-being begins with the knowledge of the other, and precisely of his or her history, or at least a part of it.

## Learning activity A

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| <b>Title</b> | <b><i>Draw yourself!</i></b>  |
| <b>Type</b>  | <i>Activity: group work<br/>The facilitator is expected to explain the activity and assist participants during its implementation. S/he is called upon to debrief at the end of the activity so that participants understand the meaning and learning objectives of the activity.</i> |
| <b>Goal</b>  |   |

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|  | <p>Participants understand we always tell stories and that even our personal life becomes a story to tell others.</p> <p>They understand that a story can be told from different points of view.</p> <p>They get to know each other.</p>   |                      |                                     |  |   |
| <b>Description</b>   | <p>The facilitator gives A3 paper to each participant (they don't have to put their names on it).</p> <p>The facilitator asks participants to draw (using colored pens) 4 specific episodes, situations or memories connected with their living in <u>Pau</u> (to be changed according to the country and the city in which the training takes place).</p> <p>Participants have to divide their A3 as below [5 minutes] :</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="625 792 1110 1061"> <tr> <td>A place of childhood</td><td>The reason for living in <i>Pau</i></td></tr> <tr> <td>My favourite place in <i>Pau</i> (and why)</td><td>A special meeting in <i>Pau</i> (and why)</td></tr> </table> <p>They have 15 min</p> <p>Once finished, drawings will be shuffled and distributed again to the participants, having all one set of drawing from someone else.</p> <p>Now each participant has to tell, knowing the meanings of the drawings, what they meant: the meanings to the symbols drawn by another participant, and elaborate a story on them. The facilitator allows participants time to understand and interpret the drawings on the received sheet [5 minutes].</p> <p>Each participant shares the elaborated story.</p> <p>After this the participant that made the drawing would step in and tell the real meaning to the drawing he made. [25 minutes].</p> | A place of childhood | The reason for living in <i>Pau</i> | My favourite place in <i>Pau</i> (and why) | A special meeting in <i>Pau</i> (and why) |
| A place of childhood   | The reason for living in <i>Pau</i>  |                      |                                     |  |   |
| My favourite place in <i>Pau</i> (and why)                                   | A special meeting in <i>Pau</i> (and why)  |                      |                                     |  |   |
| <b>Additional information for trainers, if used for face to face session</b> | <p>It may be important the facilitator to instruct participants to make simple and easily recognizable drawings (for example, the childhood place should be characterized so that, as a general rule, everyone can guess it).</p> <p>The facilitator is free to change and adapt the topics of the 4 boxes according to the group (one of your successes, best achievements, or simply periods in a person's life: childhood, studies, first job, etc.). What is important is that the 4 boxes remain linked to topics related to the "My Community 2020" project: local history, link with the local</p>  |                      |                                     |  |   |

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|                 | community, etc.  |
| <b>Material</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A4 paper</li> <li>- Crayons, markers, colored pencils, pens</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Timing</b>   | 45 minutes   |
| <b>Comment</b>  | <p>The objective of the exercise is to, first, stimulate the expression of one memories and episodes through drawing (a good technique as alternative to have self-expression), and then the interpretation and recreation from someone else of the original work.</p> <p>Finally, the explanation of the original and the comparison to the recreation will be used to exemplify how we can interpret, and to tell the same story, accordingly to our own understanding of both the meanings and of the drawings, creating different stories from the same context.</p> |

## Input

A story is first of all a chain of events that begins at one place and ends at another without any essential interruption.

“A tale shall accomplish something and arrive somewhere”: it is the first rule in Mark Twain Writing Guide (“Fenimore Cooper’s Literary Offenses”).

So, a story goes somewhere. It follows, with purpose, one or more characters through a series of events. By the end, it arrives at a target destination, fulfilling its reason for having been told.

The sequence of all the events is called a plot.

Event is a meaningful change in character’s life, the thing that happens during a story that transforms the world from one state into another.

During a story, the main character (protagonist) goes through a series of events, each of them *taking him closer to, or farther away from his Goal*.

This series of events culminates in Climax — the major, most important event of a story, the moment when protagonist achieves his goal (or, less often, fails to achieve it). Climax is what the story is about.

The structure of the story is something very important: it is the answer to the question “What do we want the audience to know and then?” Changes in the structure of the story can change the audience feelings about the story itself and the characters.

What is the structure for a success story?

Whether you are writing romantic comedies, suspense thrillers, historical dramas or big budget science fiction, all successful stories movies follow the same basic structure.

Even if you are a novelist, speaker, marketer or attorney, understanding these turning points, and incorporating them into your stories, will strengthen your ability to enthrall your reader or audience.

## Learning activity B

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| <b>Title</b>       | <b>Story spine</b>   |
| <b>Type</b>        | <p>Activity: exercise, group work.</p> <p>The facilitator is expected to explain the activity and assist participants during its implementation. S/he is called upon to debrief at the end of the activity so that participants understand the meaning and learning objectives of the activity.</p>  |
| <b>Goal</b>        | <p>Participants know what a plot is.</p> <p>They familiarize themselves with the main elements of a story, while trying to build one according to the proposed schema.</p>   |
| <b>Description</b> | <p>Most stories have important aspects in common, regardless if it is a princess, a knight, a tree or a student going against a witch, a dragon, the wind or a professor. These things constitute what we call structure.</p> <p>The structure of a story can be analysed by following different schemas, derived from the studies and bibliographies of writers, experts in oral literature, directors, script writers, etc.</p> <p>The origins of this story-analysis come from Aristotle, an ancient Greek philosopher, who defined a beginning-middle-end structure to the story whose approach survived for centuries, until Roman times, where Horace, the roman poet, redefined the structure to 'exactly 5 parts'. Renaissance gave a name to those 5 parts: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution. Later, other made other interpretations and sub-divided the parts until finding more than 30 specific parts (like Vladimir Propp, the Soviet folklorist for example)</p> <p>[Source Digital Storytelling – Guidebook for educators (page 20)<br/> <a href="https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/1eda8b_37267445e22243808dc60e5b0734ab2b.pdf">https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/1eda8b_37267445e22243808dc60e5b0734ab2b.pdf</a>]</p> <p>Each of these analyses share things in common: the objective is to identify the main moments of history, i.e. the turning points, which dictate the rhythm of our history, by showing us what is happening.</p> <p>Without disregarding any of them, we decided to present the so called « Story spine » structure.</p> |

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|   | <p>The facilitator presents the story spine structure (see Comment).</p> <p>S. He then divides the participants into two groups and, following the first line of the spine story structure, gives the beginning of a story:</p> <p>"Once upon a time... there was a little girl who came from a town called Pau."</p> <p>Each group writes the story of the "little girl" following the story spine structure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Once upon a time ...</li> <li>2. Every day ...</li> <li>3. Until one day ...</li> <li>4. Because of that ...</li> <li>5. Because of that ... (repeated as many times as they wish)</li> <li>6. Until finally ...</li> <li>7. And ever since then ...</li> </ol> <p>What is important is that the history, in addition to respecting the 7 lines of the structure, presents elements specific to the cultural and historical heritage of the city, or at least of the department or region, of the participants.</p> <p>Participants are free to choose the period of their story (past or present), to invent their characters or to be inspired by personalities from the local community, present or past.</p> <p>The facilitator is also free to change the beginning of the story, the important thing is that it allows participants to create a story anchored to the local.</p> <p>The two groups then share the invented stories.</p> |
| <p><b>Additional information for trainers, if used for face to face session</b></p> | <p>The facilitator can complete the information already provided via the activity sheet by consulting the following pages:</p> <p><a href="#">Back to the story spine</a>, which also provides examples of well-known stories whose structure has been analyzed according to this scheme;</p> <p><a href="#">Scriptwriting: The Five Key Points of Story Structure:</a></p> <p><a href="#">STORY STRUCTURE: The 5 Key Turning Points of All Successful Screenplays:</a></p> <p><a href="#">"What makes a hero?" - Matthew Winkler:</a></p> <p><a href="#">Digital storytelling – Guidebook for educators</a> (from page 21 to 24).</p>   |



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| <b>Material</b> | Paper<br>Markers<br>Pens  |
| <b>Timing</b>   | 60 minutes  |
| <b>Comment</b>  | <p>The Story Spine, originally created by playwright Kenn Adams, is a tool for creating well-structured stories. It is a series of sentence fragments that prompt the narrative elements of a story, and it can be used when we are asked to make up stories.</p> <p>Actually, the seven sentences that follow can help us to start writing a story and build it, scene by scene, to its climax and resolution. And it all begins with those familiar four words:</p> <p><b>Once upon a time...</b></p> <p>Whether you use these exact words or not, this opening reminds us that our first responsibility as storytellers is to introduce our characters and setting – i.e., to fix the story in time and space. Instinctively, your audience wants to know: Who is the story about? Where are they, and when is all this taking place? You don't have to provide every detail, but you must supply enough information, so the audience has everything it needs to know to understand the story that is to follow.</p> <p><b>And every day...</b></p> <p>With characters and setting established, you can begin to tell the audience what life is like in this world every day. In <i>The Wizard of Oz</i>, for example, the opening scenes establish that Dorothy feels ignored, unloved, and dreams of a better place "over the rainbow." This is Dorothy's "world in balance," and don't be confused by the term "balance." It does not imply that all is well – only that this is how things are.</p> <p><b>Until one day...</b></p> <p>Something happens that throws the main character's world out of balance, forcing them to do something, change something, attain something that will either restore the old balance or establish a new equilibrium. In story structure, this moment is referred to as the inciting incident, and it's the pivotal event that launches the story. In <i>The Wizard of Oz</i>, the tornado provides the inciting incident by apparently transporting Dorothy far, far away from home.</p> <p><b>And because of this...</b></p> <p>Your main character (or "protagonist") begins the pursuit of his or her goal. In structural terms, this is the beginning of Act II, the main body of the story. After being literally dropped into the Land of Oz, Dorothy desperately wants to return home, but she is told that the only person who can help her lives far away. So, she must journey</p> |

by foot to the Emerald City to meet a mysterious wizard. Along the way she will encounter several obstacles (apple-throwing trees, flying monkeys, etc.) but these only make the narrative more interesting.

#### **And because of this...**

Dorothy achieves her first objective – meeting the Wizard of Oz – but this is not the end of her story. Because of this meeting, she now has another objective: kill the Wicked Witch of the West and deliver her broomstick to the Wizard. In shorter stories, you may have only one 'because of this,' but you need at least one.

#### **Until finally...**

We enter Act III and approach the story's moment of truth. Dorothy succeeds in her task and presents the Wizard with the deceased witch's broom, so now he must make good on his promise to help her return to Kansas. And this he does, but not quite in the way we initially expect.

#### **And ever since that day...**

Once we know what happened, the closing scenes tell us what the story means for the protagonist, for others in the narrative, and (not least of all) for those of us in the audience. When Dorothy awakens in her own bed and realizes she never actually left Kansas, she learns the lesson of the story: what we're looking for is often inside us all along.

## Learning activity C

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| <b>Title</b>       | <b>"Telling stories: what is storytelling?"</b>   |
| <b>Type</b>        | Informational input by trainer: introduction of the facilitator using the PPP and discussion with participants.   |
| <b>Goal</b>        | The participants become familiar with the main features of storytelling.<br>They understand what it means to tell a story and the main conditions necessary for this action.<br>Furthermore, participants become familiar with the structure of a story and with the key elements of a narrative. |
| <b>Description</b> | Using the PPP "Telling stories: what is storytelling?", the facilitator presents:   |



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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the main characteristics of storytelling: representation of a story, interaction, the combined use of language, actions, vocalization, etc;</li> <li>- the main features of a story: simple, emotional and truthful;</li> <li>- the standard three act structure of a story;</li> <li>- the key elements of a narrative.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Additional information for trainers, if used for face to face session</b> | <p>The facilitator is supposed to interact as much as possible with the participants, by asking questions and stimulating their reflection and analytical skills.</p> <p>S.He makes him/herself available for any further explanations and information.</p> <p>More information for the second part of the PPP: <a href="#">Fundamentals of Story Structure</a></p>          |
| <b>Material</b>  | <p>PPP "Telling stories: what is storytelling?"</p> <p>Computer</p> <p>Screen</p>  |
| <b>Timing</b>  | 30 minutes   |