



Next Step Forward

Storytelling

<http://nextstepfwd.weebly.com/>

Act 1

Something odd is happening, watch out!



After a cosmic collision in a galaxy far, far away... (or as the result of new ways of teaching and learning in the 21st century, who knows?) students seem to have been turned into some kind of alien monsters who no longer want to learn through lectures...



How long will this take? It's so boring!



All history? Times change!

Will I ever use this in real life?



"Follow the instructions". Again? When exactly are we going to think for ourselves?



Act 2

Thank goodness Storytelling is here!



The [National Storytelling Network](#) defines storytelling as the “interactive art of using words and actions to reveal the elements and images of a story while encouraging the listener’s imagination”

Storytelling is [a powerful vehicle for teaching](#) because:

- We are wired for stories as documented in [Story Proof: The Science Behind the Startling Power of Story](#) and [The storytelling animal](#).
- Stories engage more areas of the [brain](#) than other forms of communication because they also appeal to our emotions and inspire us to action. (Watch this [video](#))
- Stories make the abstract concrete. They put in context how information can be used and they show the consequences of our actions letting us learn from a situation without having to go through the actual experience.

There are four basic ways of using [storytelling as an instructional method](#):



Narrative-based Instruction

It seeks to emotionally immerse the learners in the narrative's situation, increasing their motivation and engagement.

Case-Based Instruction

It relies on the facts of events. They are widely used in medical, law, and business schools. Students are able to appreciate the real life application of content.



Scenario-Based Instruction

(driven simulation, simulator, instructional games) The learners interact with the scenario and produce different outcomes depending on their decisions and actions in real time.

Problem-Based Instruction

Students solve ill structured problems that do not have optimal solution criteria or parameters, developing critical thinking skills.



Act 3



Developing super powers



Becoming a storyteller is not an easy task. To be honest, not everybody can be considered one. However, there are great resources to help us develop this skill.

First consider **why** you will use a story:

- To emphasize the relevance of a topic?
- To motivate students to deal with other activities in the course?
- To learn from other people's experience, mistakes or success stories?

Then **match the story to learning objectives** and **decide how the learners will interact with the content**

- Will the learners be able to change the story in any way?
- Will they apply elements of the story to a task or activity?
- Will they be asked questions to reflect on the content?

After you have decided why and how you will use a story consider:

- Will you use existing stories? If so, check out these sites:



- Do you want to write your own story? Have a look at:

[The golden rules of storytelling visualized](#)

[The seven characteristics of good stories](#)

[Kurt Vonnegut's theories about archetypal stories \(infographic\)](#)

[8 Classic storytelling techniques](#)

[Story Structure Architect](#) a book which provides several guidelines to write your own story like a pro.

Act 4

Oh, no! Our hero is in danger!



BEWARE OF CONTROL AND MANIPULATION

Storytelling is a very powerful tool and as such, it can be misused and abused. In his book *Storytelling: Bewitching the modern mind*, Christian Salmon argues that stories are moving from being spontaneous cultural practices and sharing of ideas, to being methods to control and manipulate. The author cites examples from politics, the military, business and marketing.



BEWARE OF SIMPLE SINGLE STORIES

[Tyler Cowen](#) urges us to step away from thinking of our lives — and our messy, complicated irrational world — in terms of a simple narrative. He states that simple stories tend to omit details and oversimplify reality. They can serve dual conflicting functions as the 'real' story might be in the untold details.

Novelist [Chimamanda Adichie](#) warns us that if we hear only a single story about another person or country, we risk a critical misunderstanding because our lives and cultures are composed of many overlapping stories.

Act 5



And the hero saves the day!



Using storytelling in your classroom

Apart from teaching with stories, it is key for educators to help students [evaluate the story](#), reflecting on its underlying narrative. Consider:

- The ideological assumptions interleaved within the narrative, for example which voices it privileges or silences.
- In what way the story characterizes a specific society at one time in history.
- How the narrative relates to other narratives
- Whether there are elements of persuasion or manipulation, how the author supports his claims, etc.

Özyürek & Trabasso's ["Evaluation during the understanding of narratives"](#) provides five kinds of evaluative inferences students may make:

1. appraisals (good versus bad)
2. preferences (like versus don't like)
3. emotions (happy versus frustrated)
4. goals (want versus don't want)
5. purposes (to attain or maintain X versus to prevent or avoid X).

During this process the students are able to reflect upon events that affect the characters of the story and identify with them. This way, they develop a means of understanding the lives of others as well as their own while building critical thinking skills at the same time. Short [ads](#) can be a great starting point for this kind of activity!

Finally, once the students are aware of the great power of storytelling and they have learnt how to evaluate narratives, they are ready to move from consumers to [producers of stories](#). [Digital tools](#) can help the students develop really awesome stories and share them with the world.

And what happened with the alien monster students? , you may be wondering by now... Well, they enjoyed learning through stories and became critical thinkers. And some of them -the very best- became storytellers.

*And they learned happily ever after.
(We all love happy endings, don't we?)*

The End



