

IEARN Project: Folktales, Past and Present

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The logo for IEARN, featuring a small globe icon above the letter 'i', followed by the letters 'EARN' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

Introduction

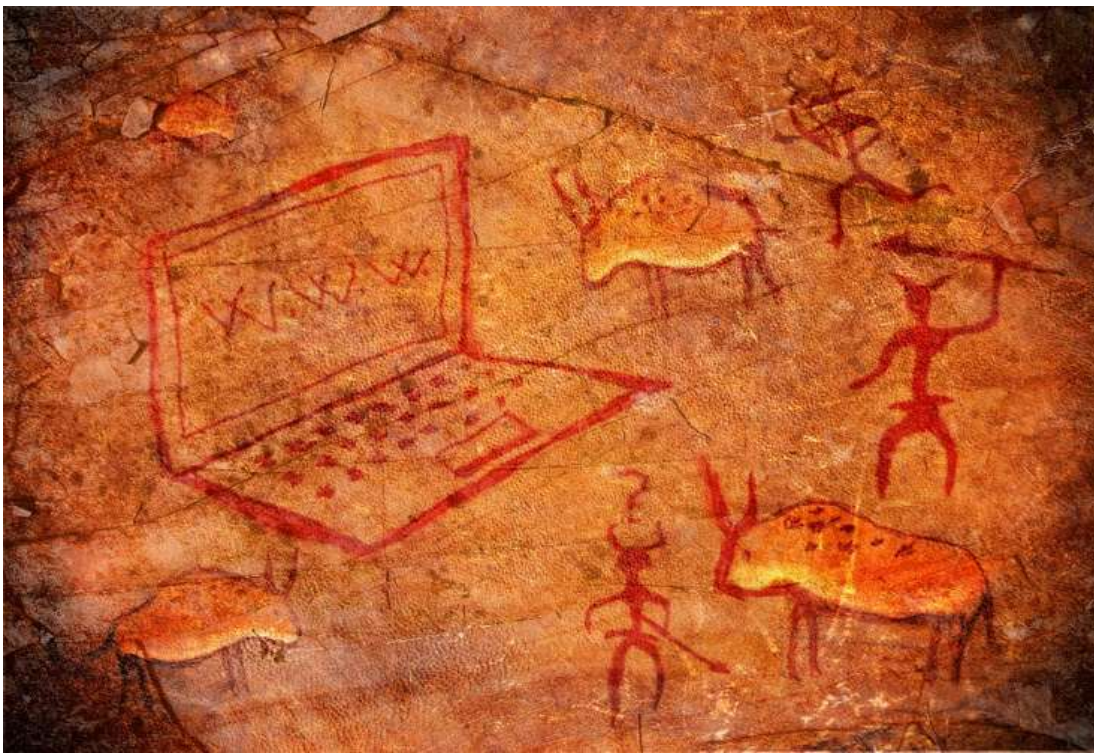
Storytelling has been around for thousands of years. Humans tell stories as a means of entertainment, communication and passing down information from generation to generation. It's in our nature to tell stories, but the way we tell them has changed due to advances in technology. As Jonathan Gottschall said, *“The way we experience story will evolve, but as storytelling animals, we will no more give it up than start walking on all fours.”* From rocks to computers, here is a brief history of storytelling.

What you will read in this essay?

1. History of storytelling
2. Types of storytelling
3. Importance of storytelling
4. Where do we see storytelling?
5. Methods of narrating
6. Storytelling around the world
7. Conclusion
8. Key words and references



History of storytelling



Visual storytelling, oral storytelling, written words, photography, radio, motion and TV are the levels of development of storytelling

Visual Storytelling

The earliest forms of storytelling were visual, the drawings in the cave is an example. These visual representations were effective ways to tell their stories, but it wasn't easy to spread and share their message like it is today.

Humans in all societies, even dating back to cavemen, have an inclination toward visual representations. Visual storytelling reflected a universal language by which all could understand and appreciate the stories.

With the advent of writing and the use of advanced media, stories were recorded, stories were recorded, transcribed and shared over wide regions of the world.

The first story which is recorded: The *Chauvet* cave in France is the oldest representation of storytelling found thus far, dating to 36,000 years ago. The cave paintings are believed to tell the story of a volcanic eruption.

Some examples of visual storytelling in all over the world:

- ✓ African rock art (30,000 years ago)



- ✓ Assyrian palace reliefs (883–859 BC in Iraq)



- ✓ Chinese bronze mirror (202–220 BC)



- ✓ Casket showing the Passion cycle (in Rome in the first half of the fifth century AD)

Oral storytelling

Oral storytelling has been around as long as the human language.

Intrapersonal communication is also an example of oral storytelling.

Oral storytelling is telling a story through voice and gestures. The tradition of oral storytelling is ancient and crosses cultures. The oral

tradition can take many forms and it can encompass myths, legends, fables, religion, prayers, proverbs, and instructions.

Elements of oral storytelling: We have two types of story vocabulary: **formulas** and **theme**.

- **Formulas:** Across many story traditions, fully 90% of an oral epic is assembled from lines which are repeated verbatim or which use one-for-one word substitutions. In other words, oral stories are built out of set phrases which have been stockpiled from a lifetime of hearing and telling stories.
- **Theme:** Just as the teller of tales proceeds line-by-line using formulas, so he proceeds from event-to-event using themes. A theme can be as simple as a specific set sequence or it can be large enough to be a plot component. A theme does not belong to a specific story, but may be found with minor variation in many different stories.

Written Words

The first written stories were manually transcribed, whether on paper, stone or clay. Writing began as drawings, but over time changed into script. The current alphabets were derived from older forms of writing, such as *the Phoenician alphabet*.

The Greeks are the first known civilization to develop writing and apply it to storytelling, which they used to leave messages and write poems. Most of their communication was in times of sorrow, war, and celebration.

China's invention of **paper** was a game changer for storytelling. It reached the Western world in 1150 AD and led to the creation of more books and art.

Written storytelling really started to evolve with *Johannes Gutenberg's* invention of **the movable-type printing press**. The printing technology allowed for news and books to travel across Europe much faster than before. The next great milestone in communications history is the introduction of mass printing that would make news and other information more readily available to all. Printing helped increase literacy among lay people.

Photography

The gift of photography in the 21st century is impressive. The first person to take a photograph and have it shown to the world was *Joseph Nicéphore Niepce*.

Today, photography is very easy. However, it took a lot of research and experimenting to get to this point. The first photograph was taken in 1826 and 35 years later the first color photo was taken. Photography was the catalyst for modern visual storytelling.

Radio, Motion & TV

The invention of radio in 1895 dramatically changed how stories were told. Now oral communication wasn't just between individuals; a storyteller could address an entire audience regardless of their physical proximity.

Today, **podcasts** are the latest and greatest when it comes to oral storytelling. There is a podcast for everyone and with any topics and formats.

Photos were put into **motion** in the late 1800s when the Lumière Brothers created the early motion-picture camera and projector called the **Cinematograph** and *Thomas Edison* invented the Kinetograph. Motion was now an important part of visual storytelling.

TV was invented in 1927 and the first television network was born at the 1939 World's Fair. As the technology advanced and cost decreased, it became common that every family have one TV.

Contemporary storytelling

The **Internet** has drastically changed how we tell stories. Many of our stories are now told digitally.

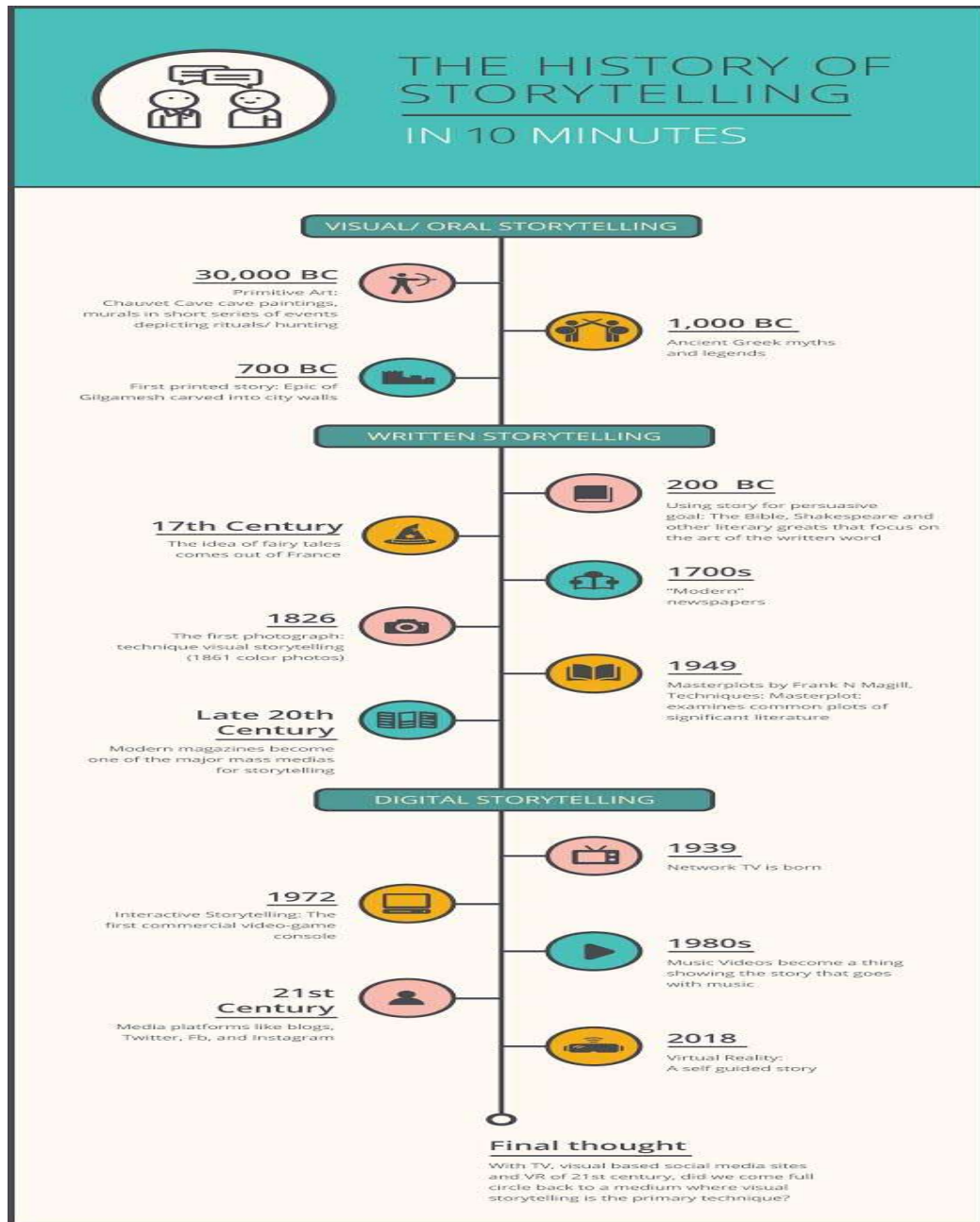
Platforms such as *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Twitter* and blogs have become the primary mode for sharing stories, expressing opinions and connecting with others.

Today, we tell stories through multiple methods of illustrations, written word, and oral storytelling. What began in the early stages as cautionary tales or part of ceremonial practices, has evolved into a method of exploring emotion, developing vocabulary, and strengthening overall cognition. Storytelling is important in all cultures to not only hear, but also to tell.

Modern storytelling in addition to its traditional forms, has extended itself to representing history, personal narrative, political commentary and evolving cultural norms. Contemporary storytelling is also widely used to address educational objectives. New forms of media are creating new ways for people to record, express and consume stories.

Games and other digital platforms may be used to position the user as a character within a bigger world. Documentaries, including interactive web documentaries, employ storytelling narrative techniques to communicate information about their topic.

Self-revelatory stories, created for their cathartic and therapeutic effect, are growing in their use and application, as in Psychodrama, Drama Therapy and Playback Theatre. Storytelling is also used as a means by which to precipitate psychological and social change in the practice of transformative arts.



Different types of stories



1. **Myths** are usually understood as stories about gods or divine figures. The term 'myth' may be used more loosely to cover

whole cycles of tales. Sacred stories concerning the distant past, particularly the creation of the world; generally focused on the gods. Myths are often intended to explain the universal and local beginnings, natural phenomena, the origin of cultural conventions or rituals, and what lies outside a given society's boundaries of explanation.

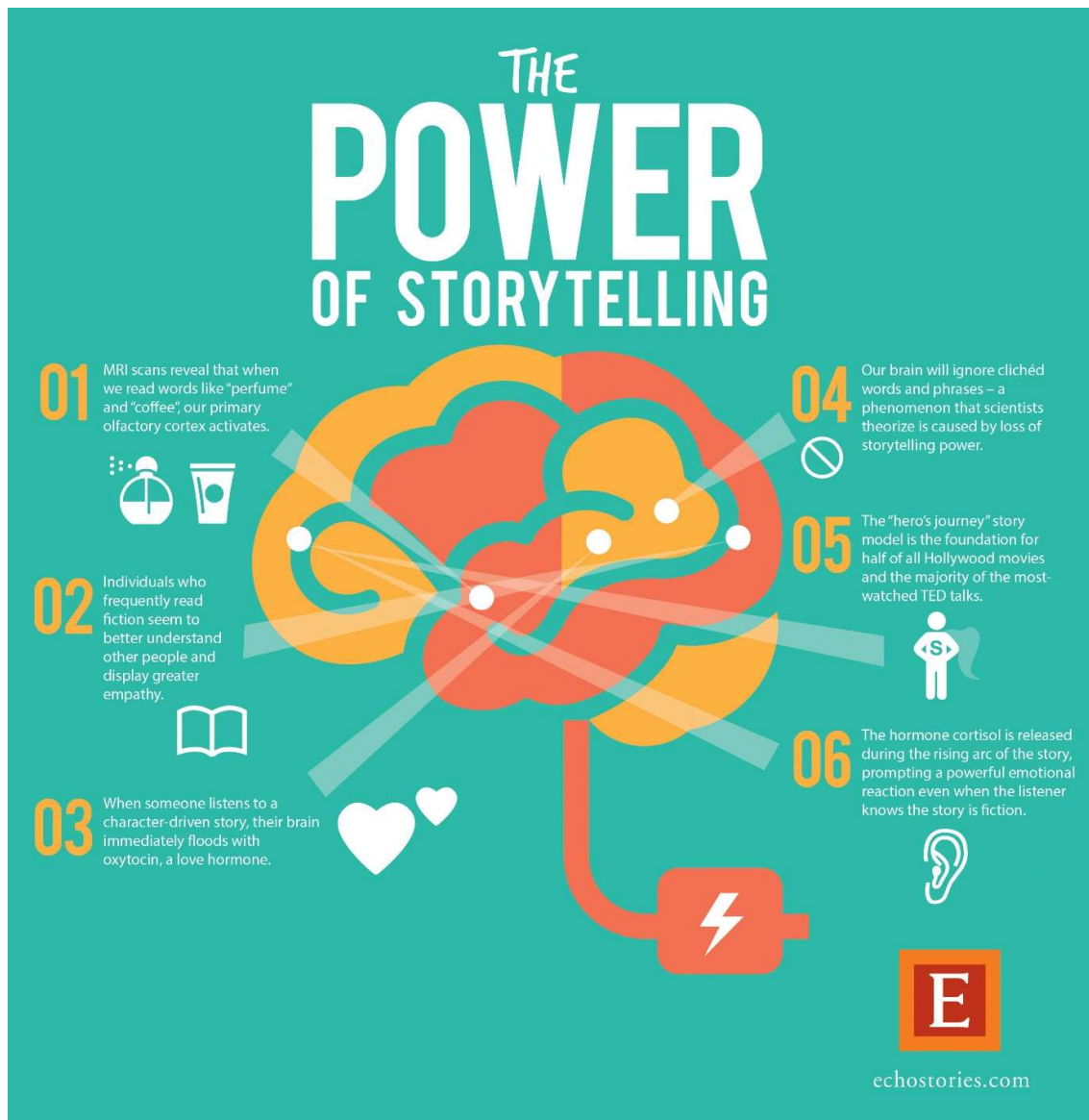
2. **Legends** deal with heroes, imagined as human or superhuman. Sometimes there is a semi-historical basis for these stories. Legends usually have a close connection with a particular place. Stories about the (usually more recent) past, which generally include, or are based on, some historical events and are generally focused on human heroes.
3. **Folklore** covers a range of belief. They contain motifs which are commonly found in other stories told around the world, or they tap into beliefs.
4. **Fable** means a fictitious or untrue story. Myths, in contrast, are not presented as fictitious or untrue. Fables, like some myths, feature personified animals or natural objects as characters. Unlike myths, however, fables almost always end with an explicit moral message, and this highlights the characteristic feature of fables—namely, that they are instructive tales that teach morals about human social behaviour. Myths, by contrast, tend to lack this directly didactic aspect, and the sacred narratives that they embody are often hard to translate into direct prescriptions for action in everyday human terms. Another difference between fables and myths relates to a feature of the narratives that they present. The context of a typical fable will be unspecific as to time and space—e.g., “A fox and a goose met at a pool.” A typical myth, on the other hand, will be likely to identify by name the god

or hero concerned in a given exploit and to specify details of geography and genealogy—e.g., “Oedipus was the son of Laius, the king of Thebes.”

5. **Fairy tales** are normally about an individual, almost always young, who confronts strange or magical events; examples are “Jack and the Beanstalk,” “Cinderella,” and “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.” The modern concept of the fairy tale seems not to be found earlier than the 18th century in Europe, but the narratives themselves have earlier analogues much farther afield, notably in the Indian *Katha-saritsagara* (The Ocean of Story) and in *The Thousand and One Nights*.

Etiologic tales are very close to myth, and some scholars regard them as a particular type of myth rather than as a separate category. In modern usage the term etiology is used to refer to the description or assignment of causes (Greek *aitia*). Accordingly, an etiologic tale explains the origin of a custom, state of affairs, or natural feature in the human or divine world. The etiologic theme often seems to be added to a mythical narrative as an afterthought. In other words, the etiology is not the distinctive characteristic of myth.

Importance of storytelling



Stories are shaping the society

Myths and Legends are important to understanding the **societies of the past**. And that is still important to society today. A lot can be learned from the past, and from that learning we can grow to understand ourselves.

Not only did myths and legends explain the **origin** of man and Earth, but gave the people alive at the time a model on how to lead their lives. All civilizations have been formed on the basis of laws. **Laws** are based on moral codes and ethics. Where do moral codes and ethics come from? Gods/Goddesses/Heroes. This includes how people lived, who was in charge, what was expected of men, what was expected of women, levels of education etc.

Myths and legends are important because they help historians piece together the past.

Why legends are shared?

The explanation for these internationally shared tales may be that they are rooted in general human experience. Our shared biology and universally similar life-cycles, from birth, marriage, child-rearing, ageing and death, may generate broadly similar stories: about true love or the perils of raising children, or futile attempts to surmount the barrier between life and death. Such dilemmas and difficulties are common to humans wherever they live, giving rise to universal patterns in the world's store of traditional tales. Experts are divided about exactly how stories develop and spread from place to place, but it is clear that myths and legends have always had important roles in our culture. They explain why small children shouldn't be allowed to stray near a dangerous body of water or why it may be a bad idea to go up into the mountains alone. Groups that know how to pass on such stories

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children. Traditional tales often hinge on ethical or moral issues, or they permit insight into the way other people think. So they insist that you should keep your promises – and should avoid making rash ones; that courage and perseverance will be rewarded and that the wicked do not prevail in the end. It's not always the big, beefy hero that is lauded in such tales; cunning and quick-wittedness, associated very often with the youngest child, or with a poor person can solve the immediate problem and win the day for the hero.

Formation of myths

Myths are generated by many cultural needs. Myths authorize the cultural institutions of a tribe, a city, or a nation by connecting them with universal truths. Myths justify the current occupation of a territory by people, for instance. All cultures have developed over time their own myths, consisting of narratives of their history, their religions, and their heroes. The great power of the symbolic meaning of these stories for the culture is a major reason why they survive as long as they do, sometimes for thousands of years.

Where do we see storytelling?



STORYTELLING

Storytelling and human body

Oxytocin is a peptide (amino acid-based) neurochemical made by the hypothalamus, a part of the brain. It has numerous functions, including the stimulation of uterine contraction during labor, as well as the ejection of milk during nursing. Beyond this, it also has a role in prosocial behavior. Simply put, oxytocin is heavily involved in motivating positive reciprocal behavior.

Additionally, studies have shown that a well-crafted story about a person, even a fictional character, can increase the levels of oxytocin in a person's brain, and elicit empathy and subsequent cooperation in the listener. In other words, an emotionally charged story can inspire people to perform an action, partly as a result of the release of oxytocin.

Storytelling and marketing

When there are sufficient details and authentic emotions in the tale, the listener or reader is able to connect to a story easily—and brands can use this device to make people understand how their products add value to their lives.

Here are some of the primary reasons why storytelling is an absolute necessity for marketing:

- It helps to build a deeper and stronger connection with the audience.
- It adds a human element to your content and, thus, brand.
- It lets businesses engage with customers in a fragmented media world.
- Stories help share your brand vision in the most pleasant manner.
- A business with a great story is able to defeat its competitors easily.

Myths and literature

Mythological themes are very often consciously employed in literature, beginning with Homer. The resulting work may expressly refer to a mythological background without itself being part of a body of myths. The medieval romance in particular plays with this process of turning myth into literature.

Methods of narration



What is narration?

Narratives are works that provide an account of connected events. To put it simply, a narrative is a story. There are many types of literature that are considered narratives, including novels, dramas, fables, folk tales, short stories, and poetry. In addition to literature, narratives are found in cinema, music, and theatre.

Narrative techniques provide deeper meaning for the reader and help the reader use imagination to visualize situations. Narrative literary techniques are also known as literary devices. Before we look too closely at narrative techniques, it's important to understand that literary elements in narratives include such things as the setting, plot, theme, style or structure, characters, and perspective, or voice of the story, since literary techniques are best understood in the context of one of these elements.

Poetry is a vast subject, as old as history and older, present wherever religion is present, possibly under some definitions (the primal and primary form of languages themselves).

Narrative Methods and Devices of prose

In writing any of the prose works enumerated above, the writer makes use of different devices to narrate his story. He knows the nature of his narration and therefore, stands a better chance to choose what suitable narrative devices that will best convey his message to the readers, The main narrative methods include the following:

A. Autobiographical

This method tells a story in the first person: "I and we." The narrator is the person who has experienced or witnessed the event he narrates.

An example of a work written in autobiographical narrative is *Old School* by Tobias Wolff.

B. Stream of Consciousness

This is the method that is used to explore and reveal the inner flow of thought of the characters. It is also called the internal monologue method which expresses or shows those thoughts and feelings which pass through the mind.

C. Dialogue

Dialogue is a common device that is used by a story teller or novelist. We must however, note that the fact that dialogue is an integral part of drama. Therefore, novelists often employ dialogue in prose in order to deliberately make their narrative a bit dramatic.

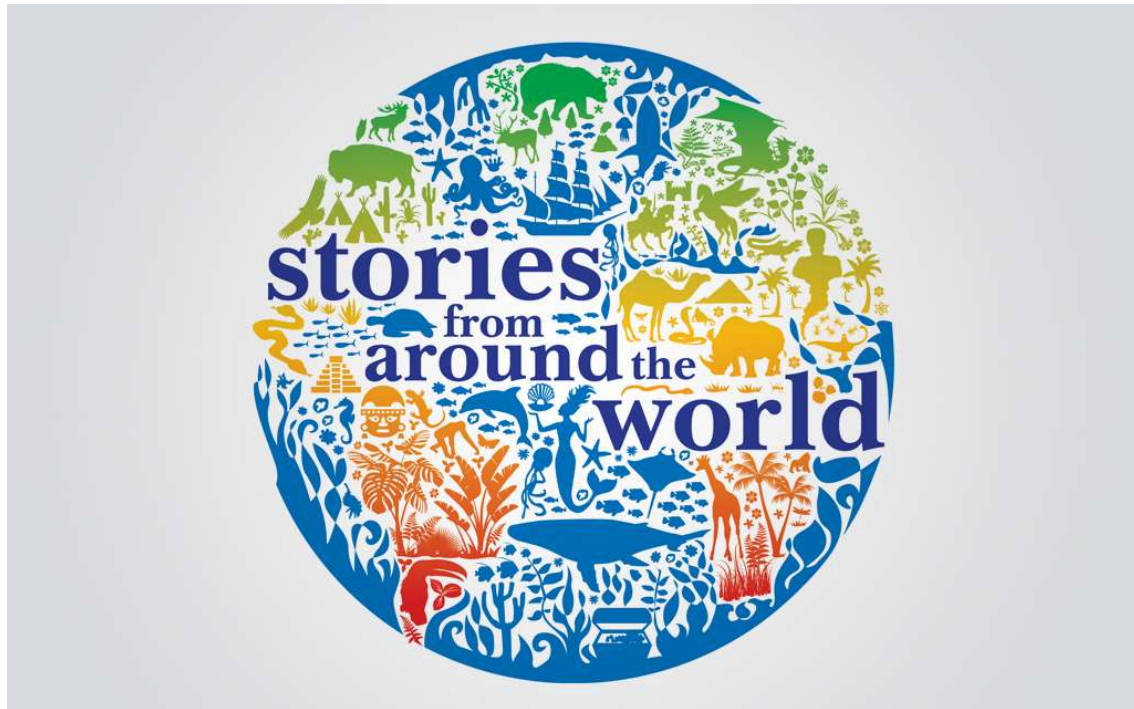
How to narrate a story?!

The narrative mode encompasses the set of choices through which the creator of the story develops their narrator and narration

- **Narrative point of view, perspective, or voice:** the choice of grammatical person used by the narrator to establish whether or not the narrator and the audience are participants in the story; also, this includes the scope of the information or knowledge that the narrator presents
- **Narrative tense:** the choice of either the past or present grammatical tense to establish either the prior completion or current immediacy of the plot

- **Narrative technique:** any of the various other methods chosen to help narrate a story, such as establishing the story's setting (location in time and space), developing characters, exploring themes (main ideas or topics), structuring the plot, intentionally expressing certain details but not others, following or subverting genre norms, and using various other storytelling devices and linguistic styles.

Storytelling around the world



Achilles and the Trojan War

While there is no historical record of these events, most scholars, and most people for that matter, believe there really was a place called Troy and a Trojan war which took place on the western shores of Turkey some time around 1200 B.C. Many important archaeologists, Heinrich Schliemann among them, have devoted their lives to discovering the sites of these ancient events.

The real Trojan War, then, was the incident worth repeating, and Achilles was the greatest warrior fighting on the Greek side. It is controversial whether someone named Homer, the accredited author of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, the famous legendary accounts of this war, actually existed, but assuming he did, the true story of the Trojan War had already spent four hundred years in the oral tradition before he put his poetic stamp on it, and another three or four hundred years in the oral tradition after his contribution before it was actually written down. In that time it had evolved from the real incidents worth repeating into a truly miraculous tale in which the swift-footed Achilles has become the nearly immortal and invincible son of Thetis, a sea goddess. All of the other gods, including Zeus, have taken sides and are playing active roles in the war and all manner of miraculous things are occurring. These immortal characters and miraculous occurrences have a psychological significance which goes far beyond anything a factual account of the real incidents could ever have conveyed. They do, in fact, reveal an excellent picture of the human psyche in transformation. And, more specifically, the consequences of anger on that transformation. All things we would have difficulty finding in a real account of that war.



El Dorado

Where the Legend Originated: Present-day Sesquilé, Colombia
Upon arriving in South America, 16th-century Spanish explorers headed for the Andes Mountains in search of Lake Guatavita. Located in present-day Colombia, they believed the lake was chock-full of gold thanks to an ancient induction ceremony performed by the Muisca tribe.

When a new chief rose to power, the tribe covered him in gold, and treasures of all sorts were dumped into Lake Guatavita to commemorate his first day on the job. Hoping to find the lake, the Spaniards began referring to the Muisca chief as El Dorado or "the gilded one." Sadly, the explorers never met El Dorado, but in 1545, they found Guatavita. After draining the lake, they pocketed some gold, but the treasures alas were nowhere to be found.



Kadu Qelqelezan ("Rolling Pumpkin")

On the edge of a small village lived a farmer and his wife. Even with their comfortable life, they wished and wished for a little daughter. One day, when the wife was working in the garden, she pulled a big orange pumpkin from the earth and laughed to her husband, 'I would even love a daughter who looked like a pumpkin!'

The next year, the wife gave birth to a little baby girl with bright sapphire eyes and a wide smile. The farmer would come in from the fields to stare into his baby girl's eyes while her mother sat beside her. But one day, he found his daughter had turned into a pumpkin! Screaming in horror, he ran through the front door and away from home forever, leaving his wife to care for the little pumpkin baby.

Despite her looks, the mother loved her daughter more than anything. She treated her just like any other child and taught her that she was beautiful inside and out. She sewed her beautiful dresses and rolled her around the village where the pumpkin girl clumsily bumped into the village houses and made all the other girls laugh. Despite everything, the little pumpkin girl grew up to be a funny and carefree young woman!

One day, the Mayor's son saw the pumpkin rolling down the street and decided to follow it. He watched as it passed the other girls, making fun of the pumpkin's awkward shape, into a field. He became so enamored by the pumpkin's fun-loving spirit and frolicking that he wanted to see her every day. Finally, he worked up the courage to ask for her hand in marriage, but as he gripped it, she rolled away. All that was left was her ring.

After that, the young man searched high and low for the young woman. He asked his father, the Mayor, to bring every young woman to the center of town to find the owner of the ring. When the village girls heard the news, they clamored to be the girl who fit the ring. Some girls stopped eating for days to make their fingers thinner. But none of them fit the ring. The Mayor and his son went to the farm at the village's edge to see if there was a young woman inside who could fit the ring. The mother answered the door and shamefully told them that, by her own wish, her beautiful daughter had turned into a pumpkin. Then, to her amazement, she saw a hand appear out of the pumpkin—the perfect fit for the ring! Everyone shouted in happiness and began to celebrate the new couple. A few days later, with the whole village laughing behind them, the Mayor's son married the bright orange pumpkin—and they lived happily ever after.



1. **Native Hawaiian Storytelling:** Traditionally, Native Hawaiian storytellers, who knew history and genealogy, were honored members of society. Hawaiian storytelling was not limited to words alone—it included talking but also encompassed mele (song), oli (chant), and hula (dance). Hawaiians valued the stories because they were not only entertaining, but they also taught the next generation about behavior, values, and traditions.
2. **Western African Storytelling:** The people of sub-Saharan Africa have strong storytelling traditions. In many parts of Africa, after dinner, the village congregates around a central fire to listen to the storyteller. As in other cultures, the role of the storyteller is to entertain and educate.
3. **The Jewish People and the Passover Seder:** On Passover, families of Jewish faith celebrate the exodus of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt. The Passover celebration includes a storytelling ritual known as the seder, or order. During a meal, the story of the Exodus is told, an oral tradition passed down through generations to educate the young. An important part of the ceremony is “four questions” asked by the youngest children present, which are the impetus for telling the story.
4. **Irish Storytelling:** The seanchai were the traditional Irish keepers of story. They would travel from village to village, reciting ancient lore and tales of wisdom. They told the old myths as well as local news and happenings. Prominent in the Irish oral tradition are tales of kings and heroes.
5. **Greek Storytelling:** Because of storytellers like *Aesop* and *Homer*, the ancient Greeks were familiar with stories from as early as the 12th century BCE. These two famous bards thrilled their audiences with oral tales. Their stories were told from

memory; only later were they preserved in writing from the memory of storytellers generations later. Therefore, literature does not exist that can be tied directly to *Aesop* or *Homer*. Who knows how much was lost (or added) in each retelling! Ancient Greek bards would often accompany their storytelling with music or actors to help transmit the often long passages. The use of actors and music would help the audience understand the message and add a level of interest.

Conclusion

It is in our nature to tell stories and inform others of our life events. Storytelling, whether factual or fictional, is an intrinsic human characteristic. However, the way we communicate with others has changed drastically over time. Storytelling originated with visual stories, such as cave drawings, and then shifted to oral traditions, in which stories were passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. There was then a shift to words formed into narratives, including written, printed and typed stories.

Due to the use of advancing technologies such as the printing press, the camera and the internet and its social media platforms, the way we tell others stories and keep ourselves informed about current topics has shifted to a more all-encompassing experience. Technology has allowed humans to utilize all forms of storytelling through the years: visual stories in photographs, spoken stories in videos and recordings and written words on blogs and statuses.

We use myths and legends for: understanding the societies of the past, explain the origin of man and Earth, gave the people model on how to lead their lives, helping historians piece together the past

All civilizations have been formed on the basis of laws. Laws are based on moral codes and ethics. Depending on who was in charge, who was calling the shots, power shifts could occur in these mythological worlds and change the moral codes of people.

Narration is a way to tell stories to our audience, convey a message to our later descendant, and other goals that has been built through mankind history. Narration is a human made product which can grow more and more with people's imagination.

Each narration includes many aspect and each aspects have techniques which is unique to each author and artist.

Prose and poems have different ways of narration or in other words "different methods of conveying messages". Both of their techniques and structures, plot, point of view, characters and setting and different types. They have the same base but not the same development.

There are many literary techniques, but for this lesson, we will examine literary techniques relevant to style, plot, and narrative perspective, or point of view. Common techniques relevant to style, or the language chosen to tell a story, include metaphors, similes, personification, imagery, hyperbole, and alliteration. Common techniques relevant to plot, which is the sequence of events that make up a narrative, include backstory, flashback, flash-forward, and foreshadowing. Common techniques relevant to narrative perspective, or who is telling the story, include first person, second person, third person, and third-person omniscient.

keywords

Folktales, narrating, storytelling, myths, legends, past and present, plot, style, visual storytelling, oral story telling, style, point of view, history, information.

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examples of myths all around the world

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