

## Spotting a Narrative Thread: Resources

February 2019

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### Key elements of narrative

- A central question drives the story
- The needs and desires of a character propel the story forward, through a series of scenes that show action

### Narrative is not all-or-nothing

You don't need a complete narrative to do narrative storytelling. In fact, science stories seldom have a complete narrative thru-line.

### Questions to ask yourself when sussing out a story's narrative potential

- What is the central driving question? Can you state it in one sentence?
- Why does this question matter *now*, for *this audience*?
- Who are the stakeholders? Who has the most at stake?
- What is the main character's their central need/want (as it relates to this story)?
- How does your main character drive the story?
- Are they compelling and relatable?
- Do you have the resources—time, money, skill, access—to report and write this story as a narrative?
- What key scenes can you witness or reconstruct?
- How do they relate to the central driving question?
- What action will/did take place in those scenes?
- How will this action move the story forward?
- What will your scenes will reveal about your character(s)?

- What sensory details will convey the appropriate information + mood?

### **Narrative in small doses**

- Anecdotes that reveal character through actions, scenic detail
  - Scenes that show how some process unfolds
  - Gestures or behaviors that reveal character
  - Snippets of dialogue that reveal character, advance action, and put readers into the scene
  - Sensory details that establish a mood and immerse readers in a different reality
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### **Recommended books and websites for studying narrative**

*Storycraft*, by Jack Hart

*Writing Tools*, by Roy Peter Clark

*Telling True Stories*, edited by Mark Kramer and Wendy Call

Nieman Storyboard ([Niemanstoryboard.org](http://Niemanstoryboard.org))

*The Open Notebook* ([Theopennotebook.com](http://Theopennotebook.com))

Poynter Institute ([Poynter.org](http://Poynter.org))