Applying Narrative Storytelling Approaches to Instructional Design

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TODAY ONLY!
TAKE A TRIP THROUGH TIME

EXPERIENCE LEARNING
FROM STORIES OF THE PAST
AND
CREATE
STORIES FOR THE FUTURE.

309: Applying Narrative Storytelling
Approaches to Instructional Design

Tour Guides:
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My eLearning Storyteller’s Journal
multistorymedia.com/journal

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DevLearn
"We do not remember days, we remember moments."

- Cesare Pavese
  Italian Poet and Novelist
Alright. Here I am, in San Jose at the DevLearn conference, waiting for the session to begin. Something about storytelling. Narratives. But the front of this thing says a trip through time...

I wonder if I picked the right session. It’s hard deciding, you know. Actually, I wonder if I’m even in the right room.

There are definitely some characters around this place. There’s this person in the back, and...the presenters. Sheesh.

One presenter, Laura, has a bizarre last name, Kr..at..toe chevilleish what? You’ve got to be kidding... Then there’s Carolyn, the other presenter, a tall girl who seems pleasant enough, but is probably a bit snarky on a bad day.

Of course, if I leave now, everyone will know I was in the wrong place. I guess I’d better stay and go on an “adventure.” Might even come out with a good story.

Narrative, right. I know what a story is. I’ve heard a few. Just heard one today at lunch, come to think of it. But I guess it is good to just mark the starting point, use the “You are Here” set up. So just for the record.

Story = Protagonist, a plot, and a turning point leading to a resolution.
2: Story 1: A Hero’s Journey

**Odyssey**: 800-600 BC- Homer’s Greek epic poem centers around a hero, Odysseus, and his long voyage home following the fall of Troy.

This story has been told in many different ways, using many different narrative elements, at many different intervals in history, such as:

- Ulysses (Novel)
- Oh Brother Where Art Thou? (Film)
- Forest Gump (Film)
- Numerous plays, books, lectures, radio programs, films, and even songs, etc., etc., etc., …

An in-depth discussion of this could take years off one’s life, and in some high schools and colleges this seems to happen. Useful years, but years nonetheless.

Some basic aspects of this adventure include:

- The trip is not easy. Decisions and consequences are sometimes good and sometimes bad, but you learn from them all.
- There are surprises along the way, and you want to find out what happens next.
- There are emotional ups and downs (humor, tragedy, etc.). You “feel” for this character and want him to reach his goals.
- Although Odysseus, Ulysses, and yes, even Forrest, travel to numerous locations and meet many characters, there’s a thread of consistency (theme) to help the observer navigate.
3: Story 2: The Dark Side

**Faust**: This is the story of a man who sells his soul to the devil in exchange for knowledge. While selling one’s soul is particularly old gossip, the historical figure of Faust and accompanying folklore date back to the early 1500’s. Goethe’s version (1800’s) is the most famous.

Faustian stories are often referred to as the anti-hero’s journey (an anti-hero is a protagonist who lacks traditional heroic attributes and may employ questionable intentions and methods). Famous anti-heroes include Dracula, Batman, Darth Vader, and Hannibal Lecter, to name a few.

Some Faustian stories include:

- The Devil Wears Prada (Movie)
- The Devil’s Advocate (Movie)
- Star Wars (Movie)
- Silence of the Lambs (Movie)
- The Picture of Dorian Gray (Novel)
- Liszt’s Faust-Symphony
- As well as numerous plays, books, lectures, films, and other media.

Some basic aspects of this adventure include:

- We’re not sure we want this character to win.
- The story gives you access to characters, cultures, and environments.
- You follow the protagonist as they make decisions that affect the course of events.
- There are emotional ups and downs (adventure, risk, tragedy, etc.). Even though you question whether or not you wish well for the main character, he/she has some intriguing qualities you understand or want to understand.
4: How Stories are Born

Though there are infinite ways to begin creating a story, one way is to follow a basic structure. The narrative arc is a broad outline of the high and low points in a story’s development, including key turning points and moments of tension. It is the foundation of the plot.

Act 1 Set-Up:
- **Initial situation:** It is the first incident that makes the story move.
- **First signs of problem:** A goal is revealed which the main character of the story has to achieve.
- **Rising action:** The presentation of obstacles to overcome.

Act 2 Climax:
- **Height of Conflict:** The highest point of interest/action where major conflicts occur.

Act 3 Resolution/Falling Action:
- A point of tension or change in perspective.
- We find out what happens to the character after overcoming obstacles or failing to achieve the desired result. The conclusion or end result of the climax.
5: WHY Go There?

Why look to stories as methods for developing e-Learning?

Reason 1: You’re a natural!

- Narrative is a fundamental structure of human meaning making (Bruner 1986, 2002; Polkinghorne 1988)

Reason 2: Stories keep us interested (the “what’s next factor”), we remember them, and we enjoy them.

- Stories are effective as educational tools because they are believable, memorable, and entertaining (Neuhauser 1993).

Reason 3: Stories take us to new places and we like it!

- Stories enable us to engage with new knowledge, broader perspectives, and expanded possibilities because we encounter them in the familiar territory of human experience (Rossiter 1999).

“Stories are easier to remember--because in many ways, stories are how we remember.”
Daniel H. Pink
Author, A Whole New Mind
6: The “e” factor

eLearning:
Do we have a brain (cognitive) and not a heart?

“People change as a result of a profoundly joyful, tragic, or otherwise emotional experience has encouraged them to see themselves in a new light.” (Chapnick and Meloy, 2005).

Movies, online videos, games, commercials, songs, books, and blogs make a point of including emotional, story-based content to grab attention, connect, and keep the audience hooked into the story to see what happens next.

“We [eLearning developers] typically present learners with a list of objectives at the start.

YET we do a bad job of presenting those objectives in terms that make the learners understand that this is information they need and that make the learners eager to achieve the outcome.”

7: The Creative Age Economy

Everyone can do an eLearning course, but can they do it as creatively as I can?

Today, creativity is seen more and more as an economic driver for the application of knowledge in novel ways.

Aspects of a creative economy:

- Based on ideas that are generated by human capital.
- Includes knowledge, skills and abilities in cultural, fine, or applied arts.
- Concentration on creating, teaching, generating technical innovations.
- Drive, design, and cultivate change.

(Global Creative Economy Convergence Summit, Philadelphia, 2006: http://www.ipphila.com/creativeeconomy/)

As an eLearning professional:

- Work with individuals with “other” backgrounds and experiences beside the typical instructional design experiences (theatre, creative writing, communications, art, etc.).
- Do creative interviewing…see how people react to more creative, not “out-of-the-box” Instructional Systems Design methods.
- Take a graphic design, theatre, creative writing class.
- “Research” others that develop for online delivery (movie sites, Design sites, Museums on the Web, Communication Arts).
8: So Now What?

Stories:
- Are a natural method to communicate
- Use and can support a multitude of delivery methods and media modes
- Support the development of strong, creative competitive edge to in eLearning

But how do I REALLY use them in my eLearning instructional designs?

On my trip I collected some tools and saw some samples that can support storytelling eLearning design activities...
Types of Conflict
- Person vs. Self
- Person vs. Person
- Person vs. Nature
- Person vs. Fate
- Person vs. Circumstance

Narrative Components

Types of Stories
- Fiction/nonfiction
- Reality-based experience
- Heroic (myth, epic)
- Fairy Tales, Fables
- Historic

Sample Delivery Mediums
- Audio, Visual, Text
- Text (books, hypertext, etc.)
- Video
- Graphics
- Music
- Conversation, Presentation

Settings/Context
- Theme
- Metaphor
- Atmosphere
- Environment
- Time/Place
Stories in Instructional Design

A

D

D

I

E

Design

Document

Storyboard

Story Creation

Scripting

Media

Interactive Story Path

Design

Development

Story Samples

Prototypes
Interactive Story Paths

1 = Act 1 (Set Up)
2 = Act 2 (Climax)
3 = Act 3 (Resolution)

String of Pearls

Hub and Spoke

Funnel (shown) or Pyramid

Diamond

Hour Glass

Adapted from Digital Storytelling a Creator’s Guide to Interactive Entertainment by Carolyn H. Miller
# eLearning Storyteller Board

## Course Title

### Act 1 (Set Up): Section Title

*Should include:*

- **Initial situation:** It is the first incident that makes the story move.
- **First signs of problem:** A goal is revealed which the main character of the story has to achieve.
- **Rising action:** The presentation of obstacles to overcome.

### Section Overview

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<td>Rising Actions</td>
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### Storyboard

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### Act 2 (Climax/Height of Action): Section Title

**Should include:**

*Height of Conflict:* The highest point of interest/action where major conflicts occur.

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### Act 3 (Resolution/Falling Action): Section Title

*Should include:*

*A point of tension or change in perspective.*

*We find out what happens to the character after overcoming obstacles or failing to achieve the desired result. The conclusion or end result of the climax.*

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Just a few books we like on this stuff...

A Picture is Worth 1,000 Words by Phillip Sexton (2007) FW Publications, Windsor, Australia.
This is fun little book that acts as a creative “muse” for idea generating. It is made up of simple exercises to invigorate ideas about what a picture really might or could say. Fun, fun, fun, fun, fun! This book could foster a great group activity just to get you to think a little differently.

An interesting take on at looking old, open, dynamic texts—such as the I Ching, where the reader has to perform actions to generate a literary sequence and link it with digital literature and games.

This is a wonderful (and really nice looking) book with interviews from the stars of interaction design. Even has a great web site (and CD) with video interviews about computers, design and everything in-between. See: http://www.designinginteractions.com

This book goes into great detail exploring digital storytelling across interactive media. It delves into the historic foundations of the narrative and brings them into the digital based stories, such as games, online movies and other entertainment.


Written for the stand-up storyteller performer, this book gives you some great insight on the secrets to what makes a good storyteller. It has some very interesting perspectives on expressions, characterization, time, and images.

This book covers six key qualities to having an idea that sticks. These stickiness factors include Simplicity, Unexpectedness, Concreteness, Credibility—and our two favorite…Emotional and Stories!

A favorite of ours, this book really takes you through the connections (or why there should be more of them) between stories, and dramatic elearning design and development. Focuses on ways to get more emotion and passion into your elearning and have fun doing it.

The Everything Creative Writing Book. by Carol Whiteley (2002) F+W Publications, Avon, MA
This is a fun, easy to read book with some great pointers on making what you write a little more worth reading.
Handout References:


For links and more resources visit multistorymedia.com/journal