Twitter Thread by Sahil Bloom



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Storytelling is a superpower.

A key to unlocking growth in your writing, startups, marketing, business, or career.

THREAD: 10+ principles of effective storytelling (that you can start using today):

Clarity of Purpose

The best storytellers always define a clear purpose prior to crafting their story.

What is the story trying to achieve? What does success look like with this story?

Commit to answering these key questions before doing anything else.

Define the Audience

Every great story begins with a well-defined audience.

Who is the audience? What do they consciously (or subconsciously) want from the story?

Be deliberate with this exercise.

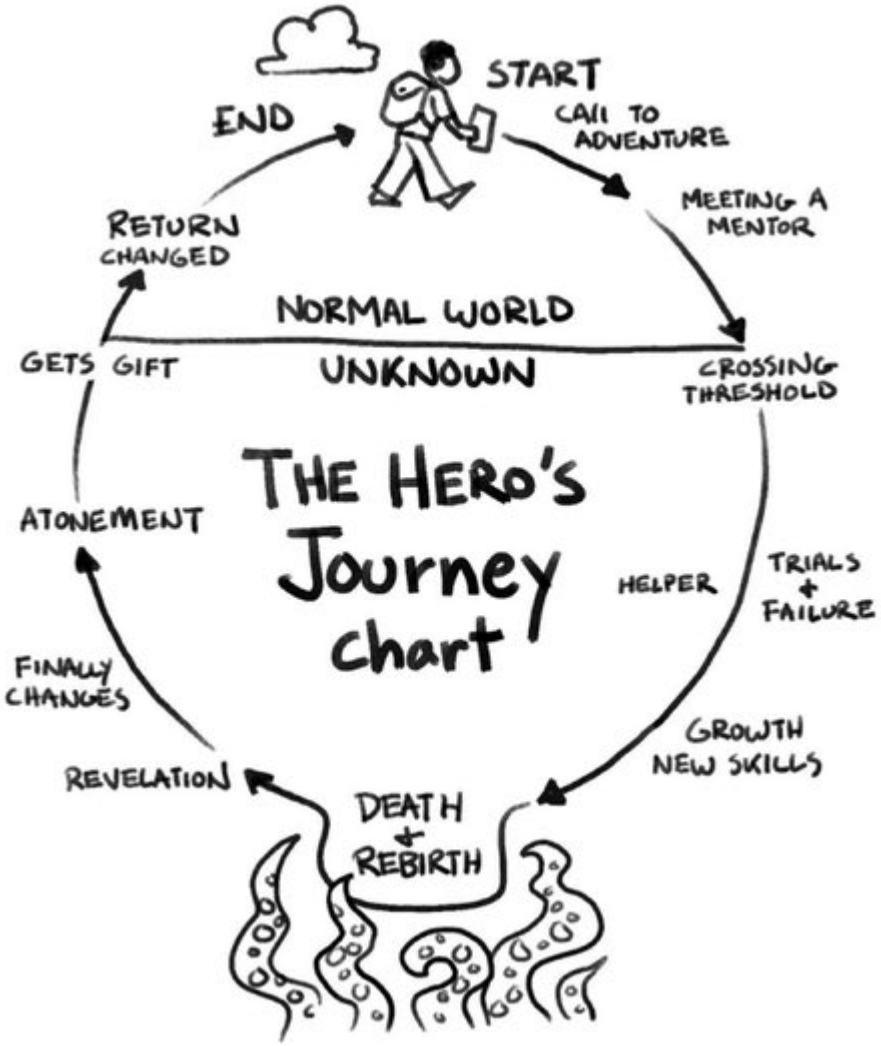
Be honest with yourself. The audience may look different than you expect.

Establish Structure

“People have forgotten how to tell a story. Stories don’t have a middle or an end any more. They usually have a beginning that never stops beginning.” – Steven Spielberg

Stories need structure.

Clear narrative arcs (like Pixar’s “hero’s journey”) work well.

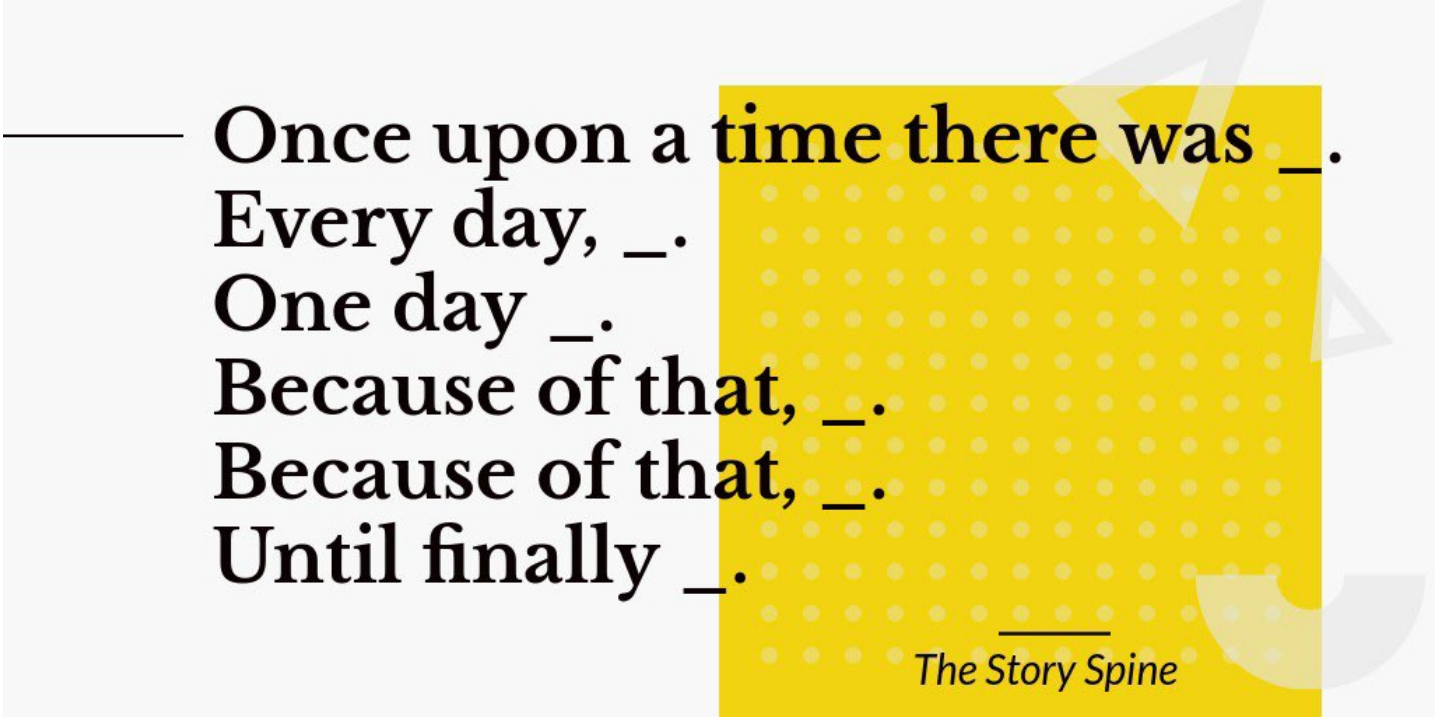


The Story Spine

Playwright Kenn Adams created a neat framework - “the story spine” - for establishing structure:

Once upon a time there was [blank]. Every day, [blank]. One day [blank]. Because of that, [blank]. Until finally [bank].

Fill it in and watch your story take shape.



Weave in the Emotion

Emotion is what makes great stories stick with you.

Think about your favorite stories. How did they make you feel?

It’s a safe bet that they elicited a strong emotional response.

Learn from this. Weave emotion into the foundational fabric of every story.

Infuse Novelty

Every great story is infused with novelty.

Novelty comes in many different forms:

Fresh, new perspectives. Surprising insights. Shock-and-awe moments. Unexpected twists.

The goal is to make your audience say: “Oh, wow!”

If you’re falling short, dig deeper.

Create Contrasts

Storytelling expert @nancyduarte coined the “what is vs. what could be” framework.

First, describe the reality (“what is”).

Next, describe the potential future (“what could be”).

This framework forces you to create contrasts to craft a captivating narrative.

Suspend Reality

Disney is the greatest storytelling empire of all time.

Walt Disney was famous for his focus on suspending reality for his audiences - allowing them to experience his new reality while still being in their reality.

Take a lesson from the best. Suspend reality.



Keep It Simple

“Make it simple, but significant.” - Don Draper

A good story may be complex, but a great story is always simple.

Try to elevator pitch the story to an uninformed party. Are they able to understand it? If not, you still have work to do.

When in doubt, simplify!

Foster Community

Shared community is an insanely powerful force.

The best stories (and the best storytellers) foster community - they elicit a sense of shared purpose, shared membership in a group, or shared experience.

Stories that build communities last forever.

Shareable

Stories are meant to be shared.

The story “K-factor” - a viral marketing metric for growth - should be high.

This requires high shareability.

To enhance it: Keep it simple and make it easy to “take down” into shorter, alternative versions.

Draft Fast, Edit Slow

Most great writers and storytellers agree on one thing: starting is the hardest part.

There is nothing more daunting than a blank page.

So start fast - get a draft down (and don’t worry about how bad it is).

Then slow down - write & rewrite as necessary.

Those are 10+ principles of effective storytelling that you can start using today.

If you start using them, I guarantee you’ll unlock growth across the diverse realms of your life.

Enjoy this post? Follow me @SahilBloom for more writing on writing, business, and mental models.

I will be turning this thread into a longer-form piece for my newsletter, where I will explore and cover these topics in greater depth.

The piece will be released in the coming days.

Subscribe below so you don’t miss it! https://t.co/qMB8i60ney

And if you are a job seeker looking to leverage improved storytelling to advance your career, check out my curated job board, where I share unique roles at high-growth companies in finance and tech.

New roles added every single week! https://t.co/UhW76VmjrH