



Data Narratives

Narrative – the telling of a story

Creating a narrative : Aristotle introduced basic structure in Poetics in the 4th Century BC

Act 1: Exposition: setting the scene
Act 2: Conflict: a question builds suspense
Act 3: Resolution: an ending

In the cicada's cry

No sign can foretell

How soon it must die.

Matsuo Bashō
(松尾 芭蕉, 1644–1694)
Edo period Japan



Lyristes Plebejus

Conflict is usually the heart of any story, building up questions in the audiences mind, creating suspense until the resolution.



Documentary storytelling

Let the data tell the story.

If there are human characters in the story are they a main or a secondary element?

Very often the characters we present will be abstract entities described by data.

Even so the same rules of story will help you engage and inform your audience.

<http://www.sheilacurranbernard.com/documentary-storytelling.html>

Free chapter from which is here:

http://www.sheilacurranbernard.com/uploads/1/0/2/7/10273986/else_ch19_docstory2nded.pdf

Narrative Structure

Constructing a data story (Knaflic):

Act 1: set the context, main (data) character(s) and the questions that will be answered.

Act 2: what is the data, what are the possible conclusions, what are the difficult questions.

Act 3: proposed conclusion and a call to action.

You can see her video here:

<https://youtu.be/8EMW7io4rSI>

Legal argumentation

What would a reasonable person think?

Start by stating the conclusion (good rule in all rhetoric)

State the general rule you will use to support your conclusion

Marshal evidence and apply the rule to the facts.

Summarize the case and come to a conclusion.

Burden of proof (facts) vs burden of rejoinder (fallacies).

e.g. see <http://www.franks.org/fr01123.htm>

John Snow

A story about Deaths from Cholera and Data Visualization