

# Adapting Your Research to Your Audience

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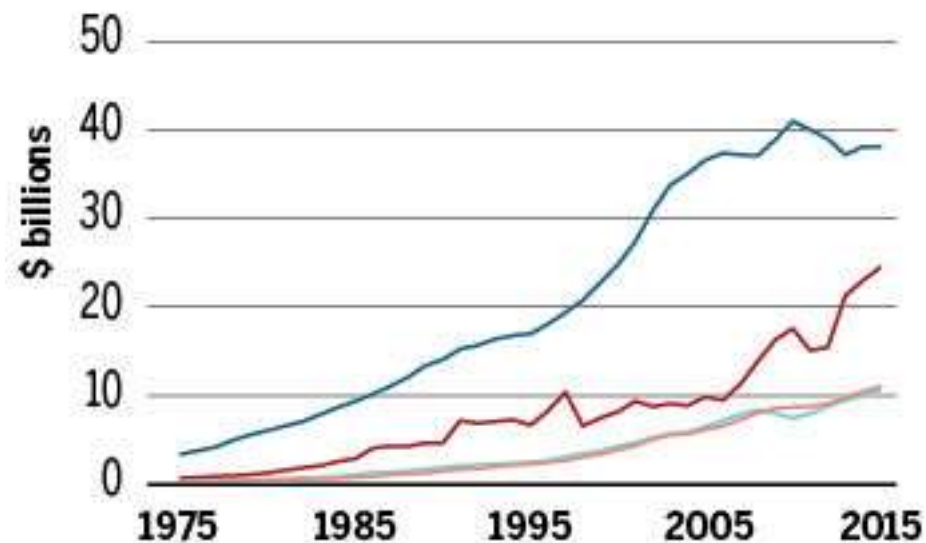
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## A basic shift

Federal agencies provided less than half of U.S. basic science funding in 2015, a result of stagnant budgets and rising investment by industry, universities, and philanthropies.

■ Federal ■ Corporate ■ University ■ Philanthropy



Graphic: D. Malakoff/Science

Data: National Science Foundation

- Budgets are decreasing, competitive funding environments are increasing so we have to convince people with the money as well as scientific peers
- Research is intertwined with social, philosophical, economic and political issues
- A democratic society requires its citizens to be informed about the issues that confront them

- Journalists
- Educated/interested general reader
- Unintended audiences (someone Googles prostate cancer and finds your reach website)
- Government/policy makers
- Patients
  - Low literacy
  - Expert patients

“I can’t write without a reader. It’s precisely like a kiss—you can’t do it alone.”

— John Cheever

# Elements of Good Arguments = Elements of Good Stories

**It's hard.....**

Audience

Diverse

Critical

Busy

Content is hard

Complex subject

Uncertainty and controversy

Curse of knowledge

Format is constraining

Goals are complicated

**Making it a little easier....**

1. Make your audience care about your research significance (you have to have a good “plot”)
2. Give your story a structure your audience can follow
3. Engage your audience with compelling language

## Plot (story?) - why

Characters?

Action? – how

Scene?

### *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*



STAR  
WARS  
THE LAST JEDI  
DECEMBER

“A new generation’s tale of the **struggles of light and dark**, virtue and evil has begun with the death of **Han Solo**. In a Galaxy where **First Order** and **the Resistance** are **fighting against each other** in a war, the heroine, **Rey**, had the Force awoken within her.

What will happen to **the galaxy** when Rey and the only remaining Jedi knight, **Luke Skywalker**, meet? **Kylo Ren** has fallen to the Dark Side of the Force and killed his father, Han Solo. As a successor of his grandfather, **Darth Vader**, and a high ranking enforcer in the First Order, where will his ambition lead him to?

Furthermore, **Kylo Ren’s mother**, the leader of the Resistance, **Leia, Poe, Finn, and BB-8**, will embark on a new mission! The story has finally begun and it will lead to a mysterious climax!”

Image source: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2527336/>

# General Audiences Appeal and Engagement

Appeals of  
wonder



Appeals of  
practicality

# Typical Research Structure

## Introduction

Theoretical framework

Previous work

**Research question**

**Hypothesis**

## Methods

Design

Techniques

## Results

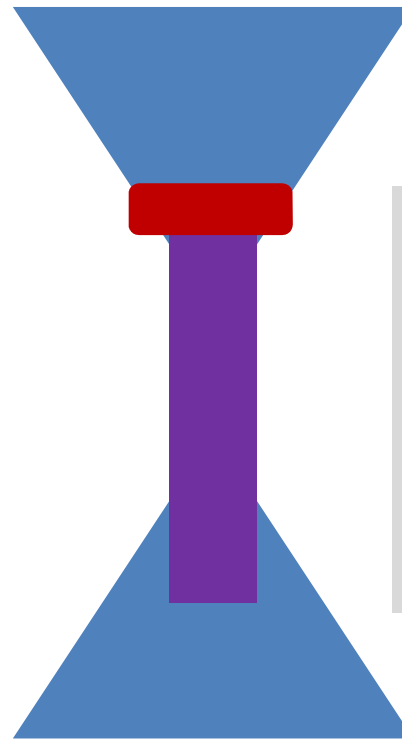
## Discussion

Summary

Interpretation

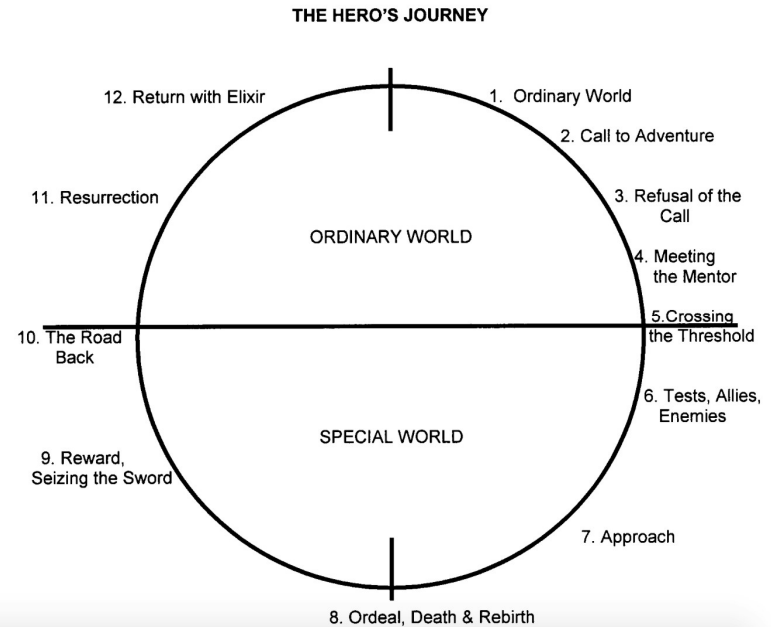
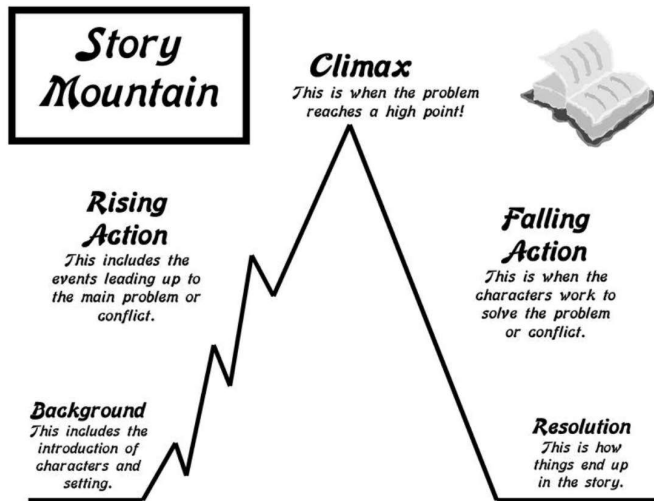
Criticism

Implications

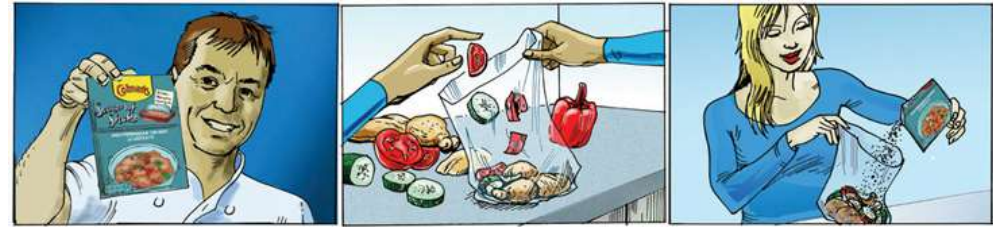


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# Story Structures







# Mini-Stories: Paragraphs

- Write coherent paragraphs with a strong topic sentence (or sentences)
- Maintain a constant perspective and/or shift perspective with linked sentences
- Types of paragraphs
  - List with constant subject
  - Story with linked subjects

# Example of Linked Subjects

Best-selling novels are often described as “page turners.” Best-cited papers and best-funded proposals are the same. They draw readers in and lead them through the story – they flow. A break in that flow can derail a reader and abruptly change a piece from a “page turner” to a “re-turner” with a rejection letter attached.

-Schimel, J. Writing Science. Oxford, 2012.

# Compelling Language



- Choose direct words that clearly convey your ideas (cut the jargon)
  - Start with the familiar and move to the new/unfamiliar
1. Make your audience care (you have to have a good “plot”)
  2. Give your story a structure your audience can follow
  3. Engage your audience with compelling language

# Adapting Content for General Audiences

- Narration
  - Set the scene/give context
- Metaphors
  - Don't mix
- Examples
  - Should logically support your point
- Definition
- Analysis
  - Use division to unpack complicated concept
- Comparison
- Graphics

“Offshore, the *Helicobacter* feast; having drawn the immune system into battle, the bacteria now loot the provisions.”

-- Excerpt from “Marshall’s Hunch” (Monmaney 1993)

# Design

## CRAP

(contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity)

- **Contrast** focuses our attention and should be used to highlight the most important points that the audience should take away (use of bold, font size, and so forth)
- **Repetition** ties objects or images together (1<sup>st</sup> level headings)
- **Alignment** indicates organization
- **Proximity** creates relationships between texts and graphics such as figures or tables

# How can you make these audiences care about your research?

1. **In the LOI Example:** Find the plot and revise to make us care.
2. **In the LOI Example:** Give the story a structure your audience can follow. How would you improve the structure?
3. **In the Description Example:** Rewrite a few sentences using techniques to engage a more general audience (clear, limited jargon, definition, comparison).

