

Story telling in a nutshell

Story telling has been used for centuries as part of human culture. The act of storytelling allows us to explore and strengthen our minds, as well as giving each person a voice.

History and methods of storytelling

Throughout the years, there have been many different methods used to tell stories.

The oldest forms of storytelling use visual and oral communication. Around 30,000 BC, we have found records of primitive art that tells stories. These simple drawings show series of events that come together to make a story. More recently, we have verbal stories of myths and legends that have been passed down through generations.

By about 200 BC, there is evidence of written storytelling. Everything from fairy tales, newspapers, novels and plays, were written down for others to enjoy. In modern times, we've also reintroduced more visual storytelling through the use of cameras and social media.

Storytelling techniques

It doesn't matter what creative form you use to tell a story; every story is important. Some methods you could use to tell your story include:

- Writing/reading
- Speaking
- Singing
- Drawing
- Photography
- Poetry
- Dancing

Consider your passion and the intended audience to work out which method is going to be most effective.

Requirements for a story

Every story needs a few basic things to portray a message. Using these can help you create your basic framework.

Characters – Who are they? Why are they in that situation? Whose journey are we following?

Setting – Where are they? What world are they on?

Situation – What has just happened? What needs to happen?

Objective – What do the characters want to achieve? What journey are they going to go on?

When you've got those, you can start exploring the next area of storytelling, where you put all of your ideas into a structure.

Structure

Most stories follow a similar structure where the tension slowly increases to a climax, then the characters find a resolution. Within that basic framework, there are several different ways you can structure your story. Try exploring the following:

- Story mountain
- The hero's journey
- Three Act structure
- Seven-Point Story structure

These instructions will use Anne Lamott's story structure ABDCE, because it's simple to follow and is a great structure for shorter stories.

Action – Get the audience's attention by having the character do something that sets the story in motion. This is also known as the inciting incident.

Background – Describe what has happened previously that put the characters in this situation.

Development – Explore what events the character is going to go through during the course of the story. Each of these events should slowly build the tension and take the characters towards the next part.

Climax – This is the highest point of tension in the story. Often this is where everything goes wrong, they face off with the bad guy, or they don't know what to do next. A twist happens here so that the impossible starts to feel possible. The character now has hope and a way to solve everything.

Ending – Finally, you need to resolve the conflicts and answer any remaining questions. If you have any themes or messages, this is where you highlight those so the meaning is brought home.

Composing

This is the fun part! Once you've finished the plan, you get to start putting the story together. It doesn't matter what medium you're using, just have fun with the opportunity and don't worry about getting it correct.

At the end, don't forget to celebrate your achievement!

Editing and refining

Once you've got your first draft finished, it's time to put it away for a while. Have a break, let your mind reset. Do this as often as you need during the editing process so you are looking at your work with fresh eyes.

When you feel you're ready, you can start exploring the editing process. Sometimes stories can remain a bit rough, especially if it was written for fun, but if you're writing

a book to sell, more editing might be needed. There are four stages to in-depth editing of written work, and these can also be adapted for other mediums.

Structural editing – This is where you look at the bigger picture. Are you happy with the plot, settings, characters etc.

Line editing – This is where you go through the story line by line to ensure the story is consistent. Explore the tone and style to ensure it portrays the mood you've intended.

Copyediting – This is where you go through correcting grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Proofreading – This is the final check to make sure everything is as you'd intended. You may want to ask a family member or friend to read through it here for feedback, too.

Once you've finished editing, you can start formatting and presenting your work. Maybe you want to get your short story printed, or maybe you want to book a dance performance. Have fun at this point and take great pride in your work

So! Hopefully, you'll now have some guidance on how to start telling your story. We can't wait to hear what you've been getting up to. Who knows, maybe we'll see your book up on a library shelf one of these days!