Be Engaging with ABT

LA DIA Webinar #2

28 July 2014

William Nuttle
Engage with your audience with:

– Structure – *Always Be Telling* stories
– Sympathy - Appeal to heart and gut
– Specifics
Narrative Structure - ABT Template

Use “And,” “But,” “Therefore” to assemble ideas into a narrative.


Example:
[Researcher produces a totally unexpected result] And [His work inspires a middle school science fair project] But [The press reports focus on the science fair student] Therefore [Researcher is confused and resentful.]
Origin of ABT

Randy Olson –
author of “Don’t Be Such a Scientist”
and “Connection: Hollywood Storytelling Meets Critical Thinking”
ABT Narrative Structure

- Defines a beginning, a middle, and an end
- Parallels classic narrative pattern
- Thesis, antithesis, synthesis
- Appeals to thought pattern “hardwired” in the human brain
ABT my thesis:

- [Saltmarshes are among the most productive ecosystems on earth]
- And [Odum hypothesized that the export of organic matter from marshes subsidizes the food chain in adjacent marine waters]
- But [no one knew how big the water fluxes responsible for the export flux are or possibly could be]
- Therefore [I quantified physical processes responsible for the exchange of water between saltmarsh sediments and estuarine surface waters].
ABT my thesis:

• [ ]
• And [ ]
• But [ ]
• Therefore [ ].
Sympathize – Head, Heart, Gut

Olson – Humanize your story by moving down the vertical axis from head to heart and gut.

Graphic: http://www.michaelhampson.toucansurf.com/h012.html
Connecting with the gut

John Barry –
author of “Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America”
“Humphreys and Eads were the two most powerful and influential engineers ever to work on the Mississippi River. [And] Both intended to leave a mark on the river and on the land and the people beside it.

But each wanted to leave his mark, and only his. And they disagreed over nearly everything involving the Mississippi.

[...Therefore] Their fight turned bitter with hatred, [...] split the Mississippi valley and put technical engineering arguments on the front pages across the nation. The consequences of their fight are still felt on the Mississippi today.”
Make it specific

Carl Sagan –

[Diagram of the human brain with Broca's area highlighted]
Make it specific

Carl Sagan, the author of "Broca's Brain: Reflections on the Romance of Science."

... [And] ... [And] ... [And] ...

"[But] While scanning the collections amid such ruminations, my eye was caught by the label on one of the many low cylindrical bottles. [Therefore] I took the container from the shelf and examined it more closely. The label read P. Broca. In my hands was Paul Broca's brain."
ABT in scientific writing

Charles Darwin – 
author of “On the Origin of Species” (1859)
When we look at the plants and bushes clothing an entangled bank, we are tempted to attribute their proportional numbers and kinds to what we call chance.

**But** how false a view is this! Every one has heard that when an American forest is cut down, a very different vegetation springs up; but it has been observed that the trees now growing on the ancient Indian mounds, in the Southern United States, display the same beautiful diversity and proportion of kinds as in the surrounding virgin forests [...]

**[Therefore,...]** many different checks [...all concur] in determining the average number or even the existence of the species [...]

ABT in scientific writing
James Hansen –
Hansen et al., 2008. Target atmospheric CO2: Where should humanity aim?
“United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [sets] the objective of stabilizing GHGs in the atmosphere at a level preventing ‘dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.’

Hansen et al. [5] argued for a limit of 1 degree C global warming [... which, based on earlier modeling and analysis] implies maximum CO$_2$ ~450 ppm.

Paleoclimate data and ongoing global changes indicate that ‘slow’ climate feedback processes no included in most climate modes [...] may begin to come into play on time scales of centuries or less...

Our current analysis suggests that humanity must aim for an even lower level of GHGs.”
Bonus - Where to start

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movie</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Start of Tension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Airport (1975)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outbreak (1995)</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contagion (2011)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What we have learned

Engage with your audience by:
– Telling stories
– Appealing to heart and gut
– Being specific
– Getting started quickly

ABT group on facebook:
https://www.facebook.com/ABTshare/info

Randy Olson, letter to Science Magazine:
http://www.sciencemag.org/content/342/6163/1168.1.full.pdf
Assignment

• 1 pager
• Aug 11 deliverable