

# Storytelling Workshop:

## Business Analysts as Raconteurs in Dialogue

Business Analyst Managers Forum  
08/05/2026



# Introducing...



**Robert Decorum**  
**Rob Gurton**



**Dawn Parsons**

# Why are we talking about Storytelling?



**IMPACT**



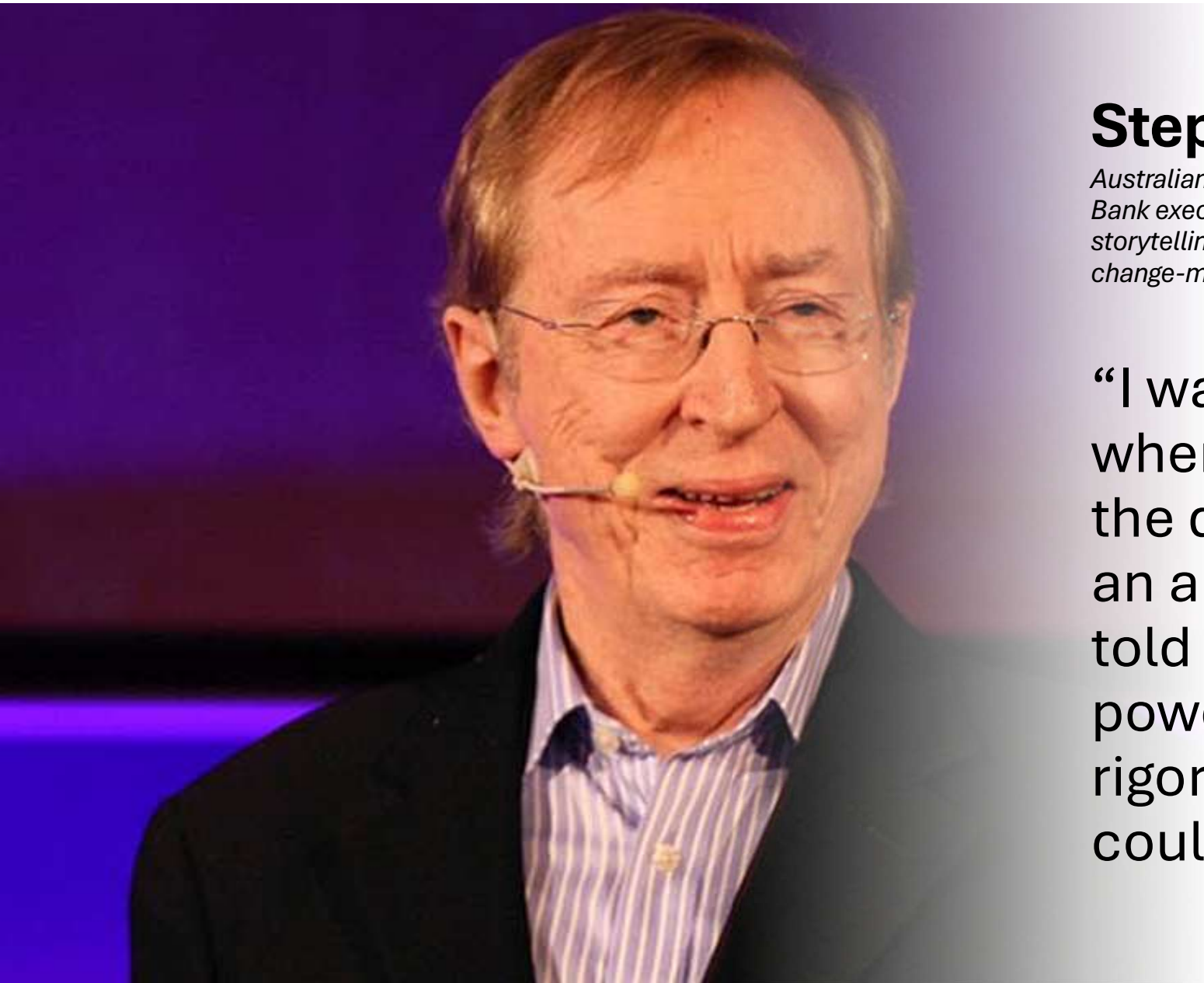
**CONFIDENCE**



**STAKEHOLDER  
SAVVY**



**INFLUENCE.**



## **Stephen Denning**

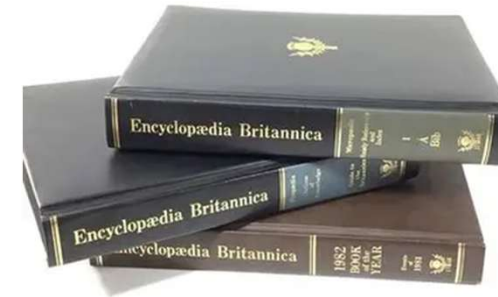
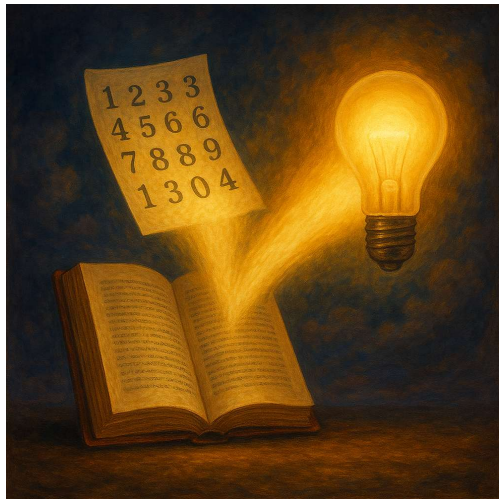
*Australian-born author and former World Bank executive pioneering the use of storytelling as a leadership and change-management tool.*

“I was startled when I stumbled on the discovery that an appropriately told story had the power to do what rigorous analysis couldn’t.”

# Analysis vs. Storytelling

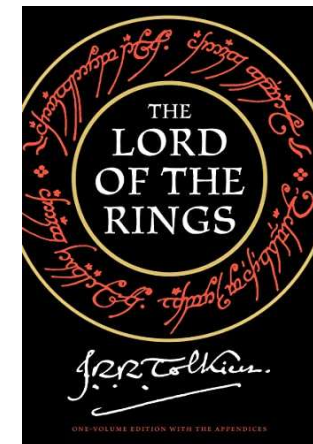
**Denning** contrasts storytelling with traditional management communication, his argument is:

**‘Facts inform and Stories transform’**



**Analysis** is like an encyclopaedia, it is logical, but often “inert” and hard to act on

**Storytelling** is like a novel, it is immersive, memorable and motivating





# YOUR IDEAS (collected from the workshop)

## Examples of storytelling in the business context

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- **Personal Performance:** “[name] saved the day“. Formal in reviews and informal word-on-the-street. Watch out for those **negative brand stories** (gossip and gripes) too!
- Also on a personal level this works in **interviews**: the candidate may showcase their skills in a compelling use-case while the interviewer may sell the opportunity in a natural and engaging form

- **A team story** – where have the BA Team come from? how are we changing? Where do we see our future? Extends into strategies – such as an **IT Strategy**. At its macro may encompass **the Enterprise story** – who is our company? What are we about? What factors have shaped our culture? What challenges do we face?
- **Project and Change narratives:** “burning platform” – a very strong driver to move away from current state; “promised land” – a desirable target state. How often is the **business case** presented in a compelling narrative?
- **Customer Journey** may be powerfully rendered in a narrative – landing the message of a positive or negative experience. This could encompass a big sweep across the **ecosystem** or **Value Stream** or focus in on a detailed **User Story/requirement specification**.
- But don’t limit yourself to customers – even **Technology Change** has an underlying narrative behind its purpose.
- Contexts include: **sales pitches, induction, training, project kick-offs and workshops**. In the latter the BA can make space for the SMEs and sponsors to tell their stories – its not just about our projection.

# YOUR IDEAS (collected from the workshop)

## Why should Business Analysts be good at it?

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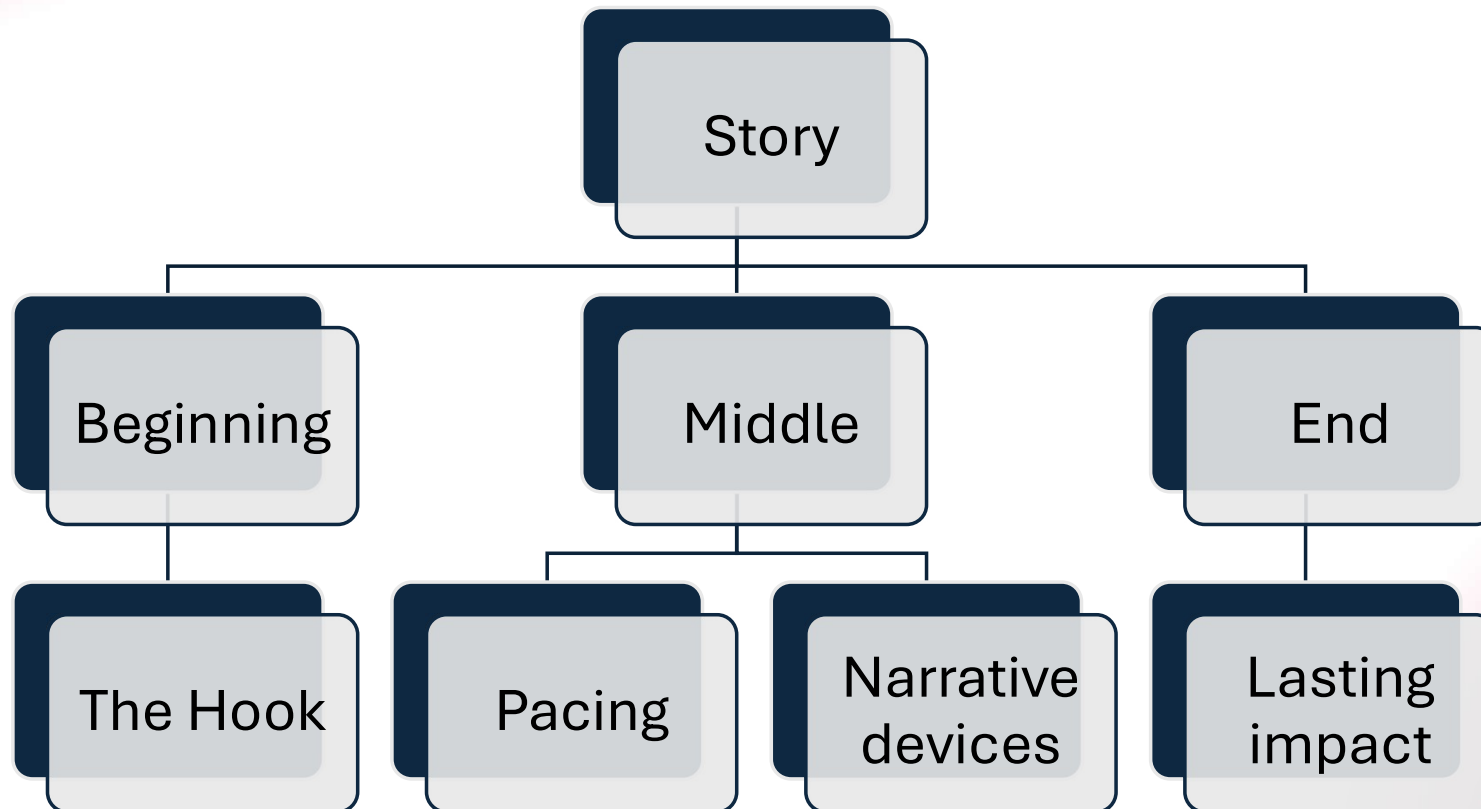


- “**Leadership from the centre**” by influence. Eg onboarding to the project team
- Playback is an **active listening** technique – demonstrates understanding
- **Negotiation and influence: Custodian of the narrative** is a source of power. By melding stakeholder narratives we become the one who tells the “bigger picture” story.
- **Build trust and confidence** among stakeholders by publicly representing their interests.

- **Elevator pitch:** sometimes you only have a moment for impact.
- **Bring a different perspective:** when Steve Jobs launched the iPhone he made it about solving global problems not about his company or the device.
- **Metaphor for motivation:** one exec positioned long term investment in change as like those in a coal mine who released the seam of coal for the next shift.
- **Stands out:** in an age of message-bombardment we remember how someone made us feel.
- Connects to **values** and reveals the **why**. As Rudyard Kipling’s poem:

*I keep six honest serving-men  
(They taught me all I knew);  
Their names are What and Why and When  
And How and Where and Who.*

# From “why?” to how?”



# THE HOOK

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## DIRECT

- Subject
- Tone

## IMMERSIVE

- Speech
- Verb
- Emotional heart
- Intrigue / Drama

## SHOW NOT TELL

- Behaviours
- Data



# Hook Example

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It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen.



PENGUIN  
CLASSICS

George Orwell  
Nineteen  
Eighty-Four

# Your Turn..... (3 minutes)

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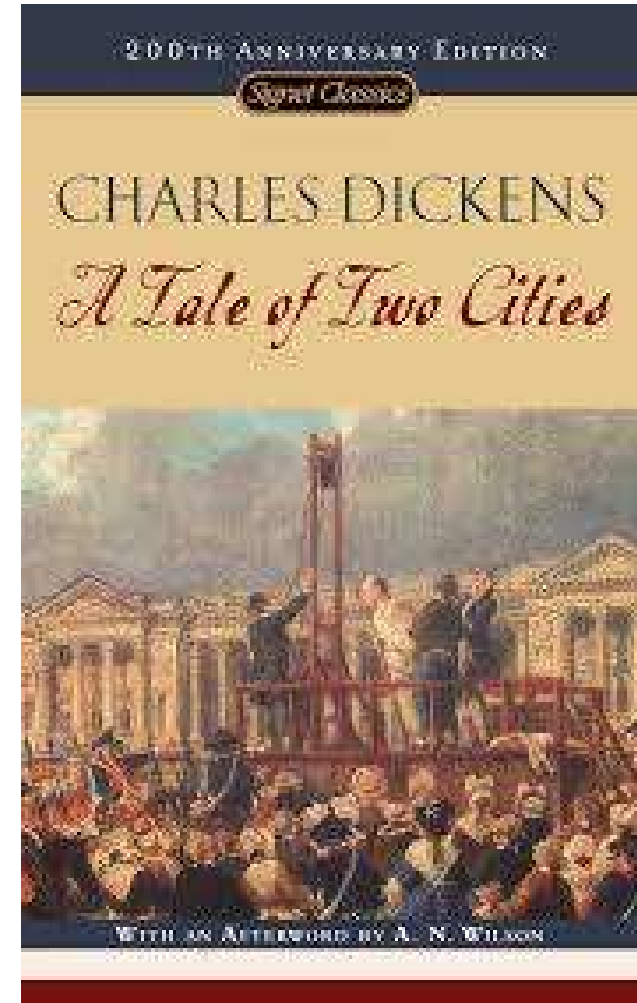
**Look at one example each.**

**What draws you in?**

# Charles Dickens

## *A Tale of Two Cities*

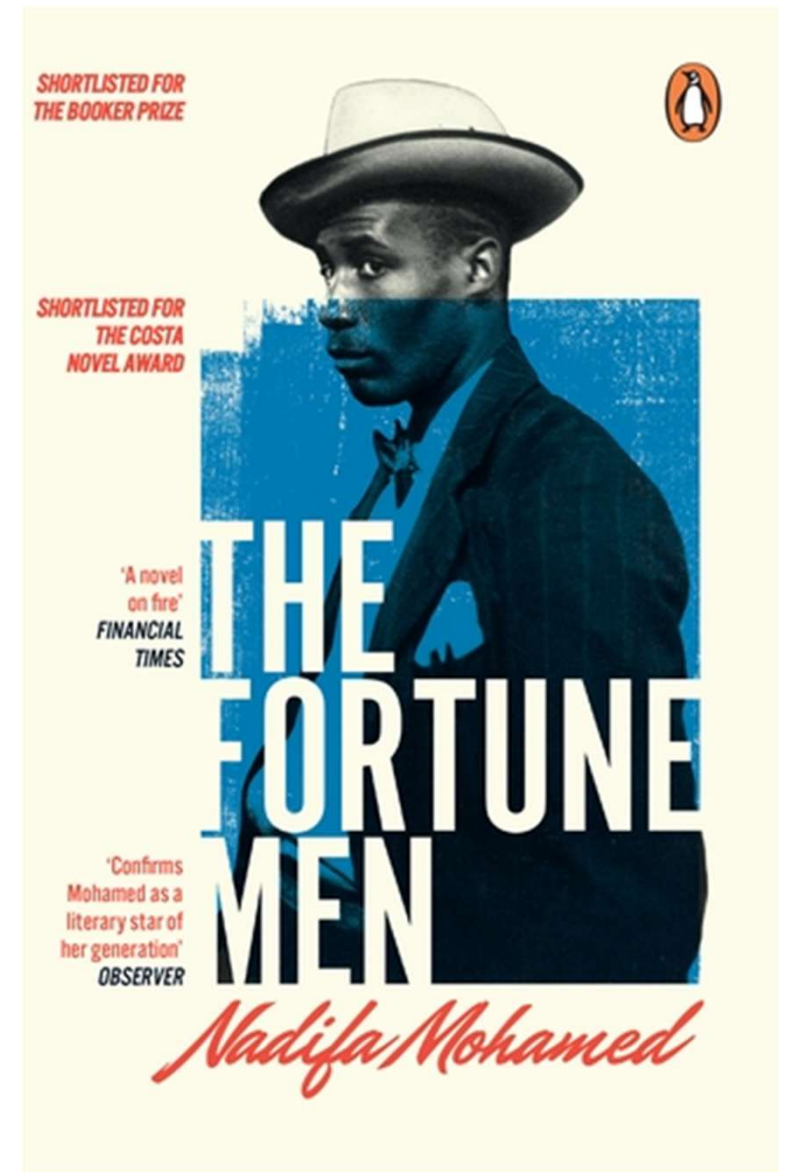
It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way--in short, the period was so far like the present period that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.



# Nadifa Mohamed The Fortune Men

'The King is dead.  
Long live the Queen.'

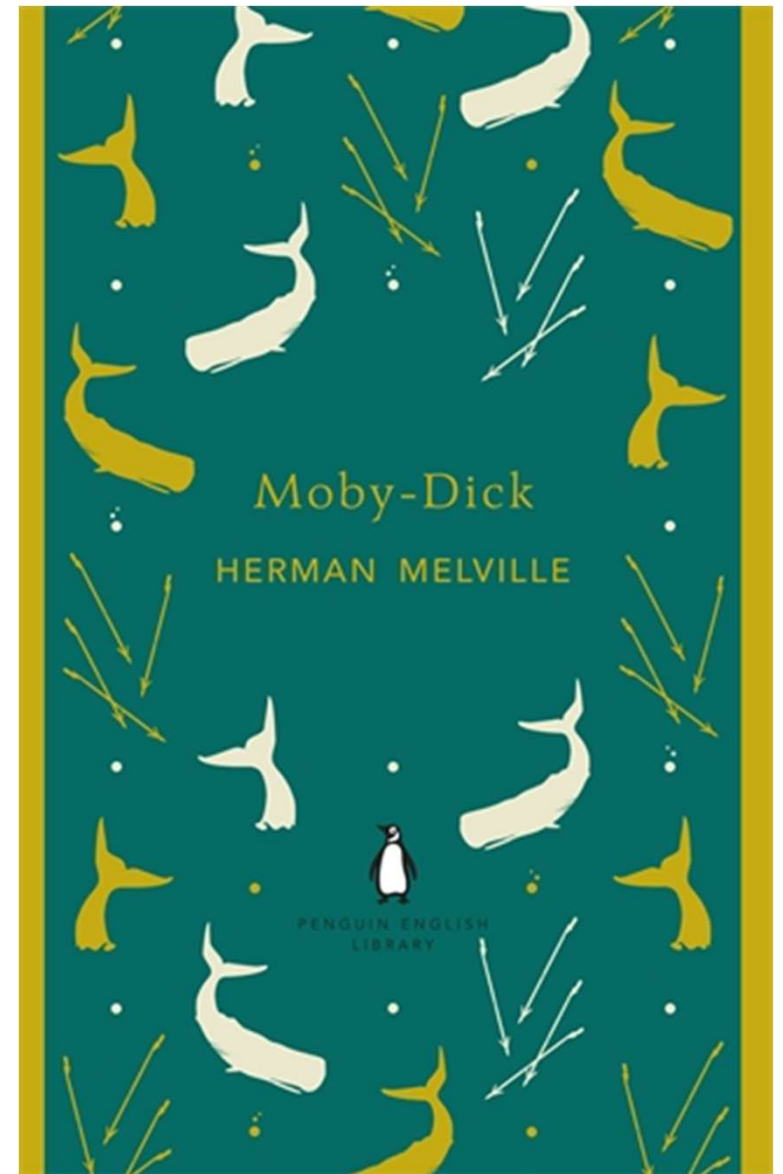
The announcer's voice crackles from the wireless and winds around the rapt patrons of Berlin's Milk Bar as sinuously as the fog curls around the mournful street lamps, their wan glow barely illuminating the cobblestones.



# Herman Melville

## *Moby-Dick*

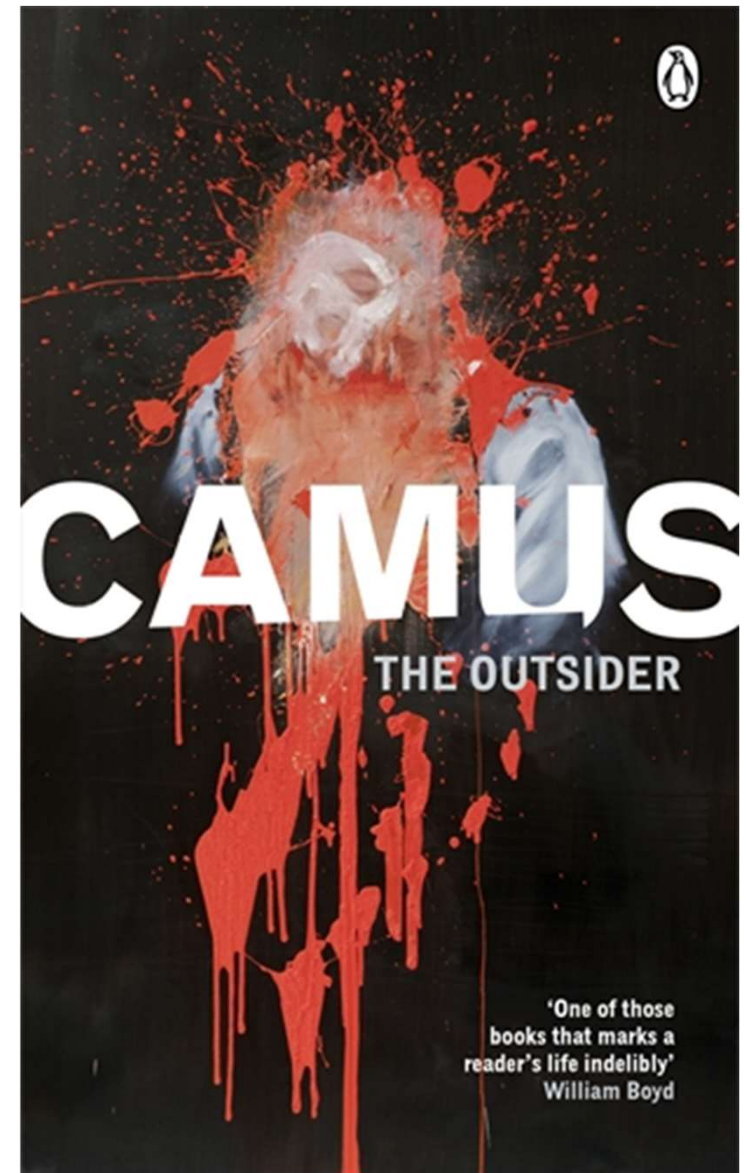
Call me Ishmael.



# Albert Camus

## *The Outsider*

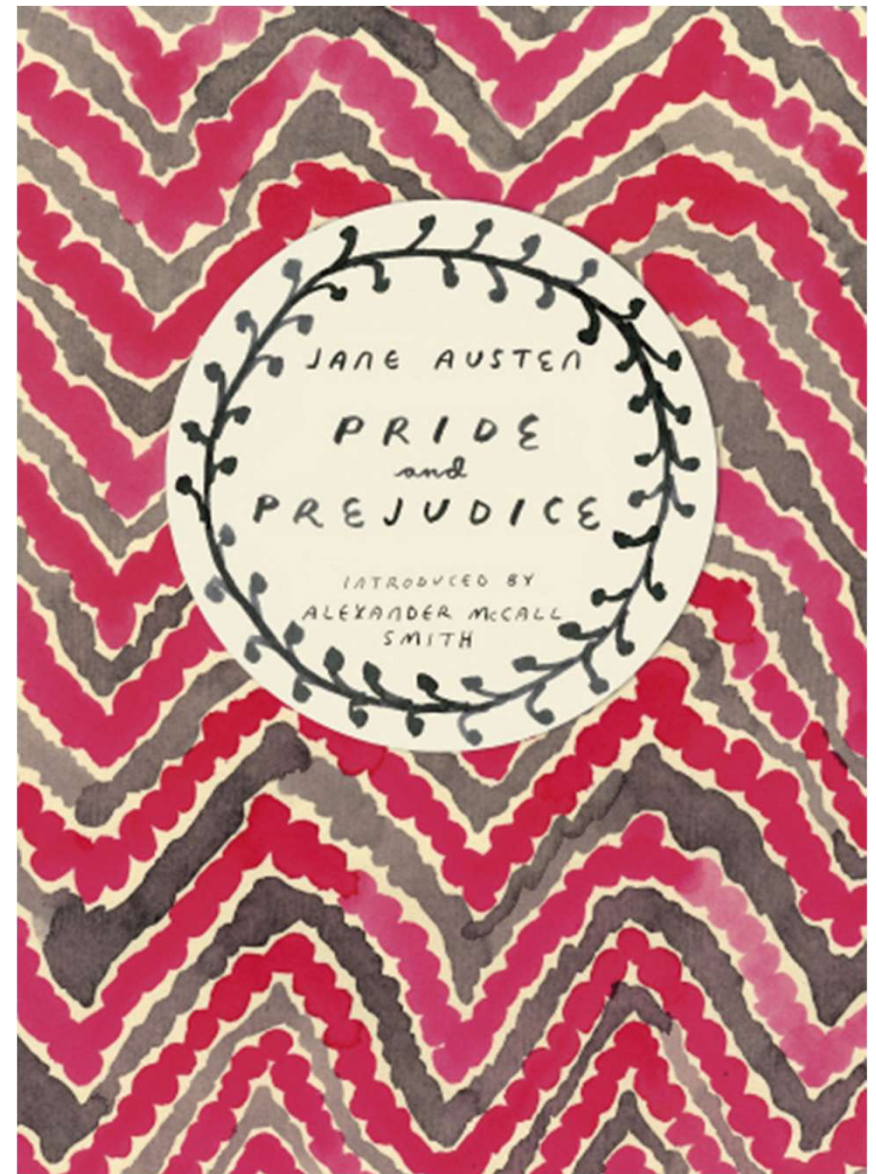
Mother died today.  
Or maybe, yesterday; I can't be  
sure.



# Jane Austen

## *Pride and Prejudice*

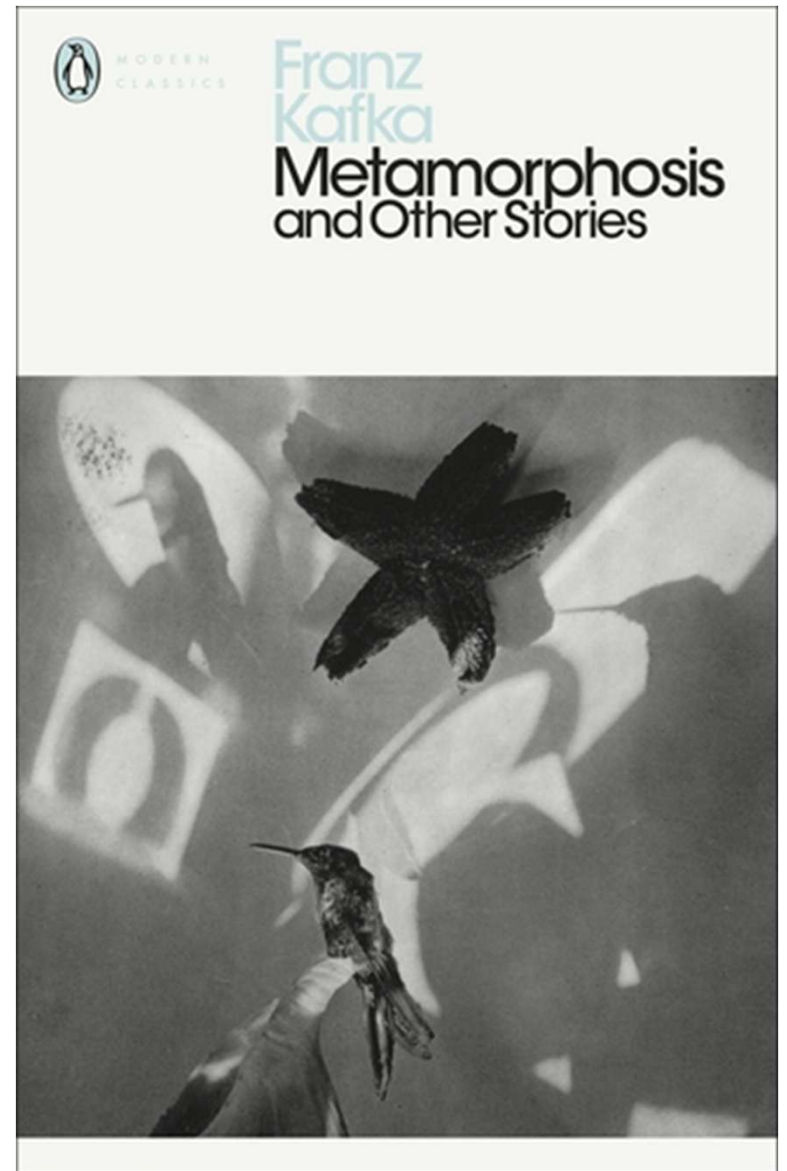
It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.



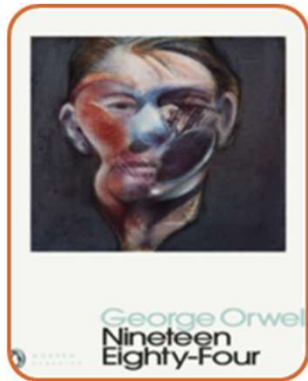
# Franz Kafka

## *Metamorphosis*

As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect.

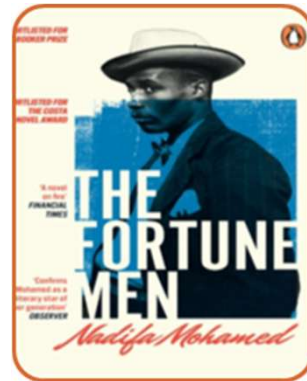


# Hook devices from Literature



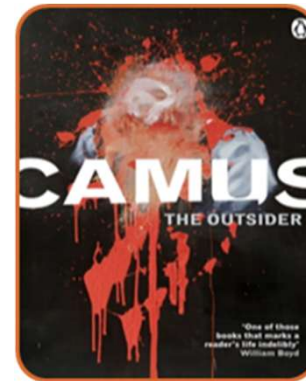
**CONCISE**

**SHOW NOT TELL**

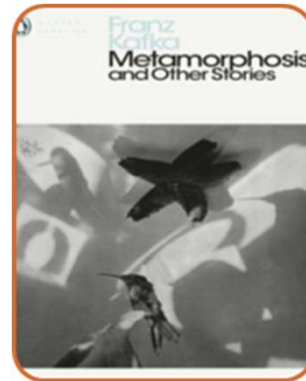


**THEME**

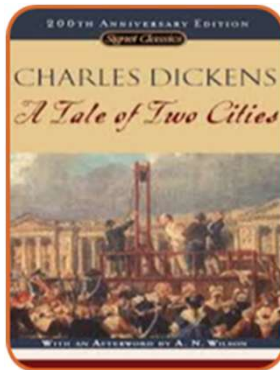
**PLACE**



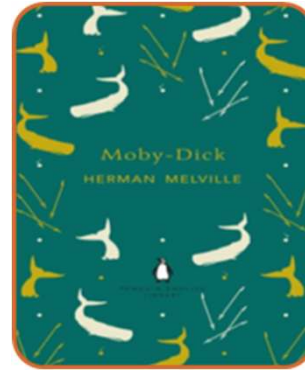
**CHARACTER**



**DIRECT**

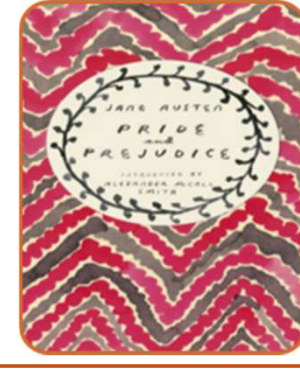


**MACRO-CONTEXT**



**CRISP**

**CRYPTIC**



**THEME**

**tone**

**CHARACTER**

**SET UP AND PLAYBACK**

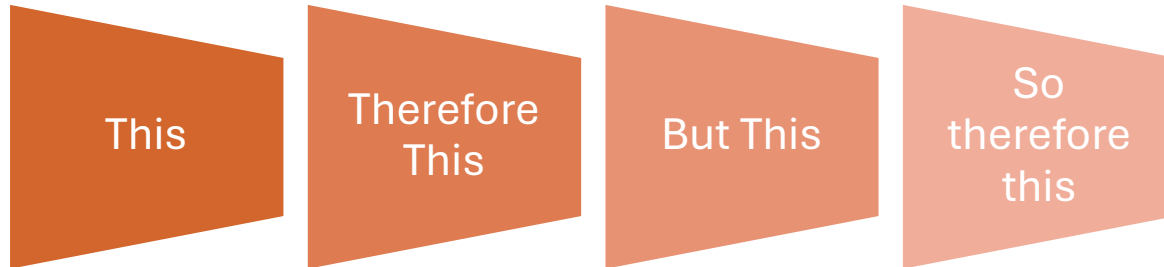
## Your Turn..... (5 minutes)

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Compose the first line of a story following these ideas. Introduce the narrative hook, set the tone, bring us to the centre of the action, leave us intrigued wanting more ...

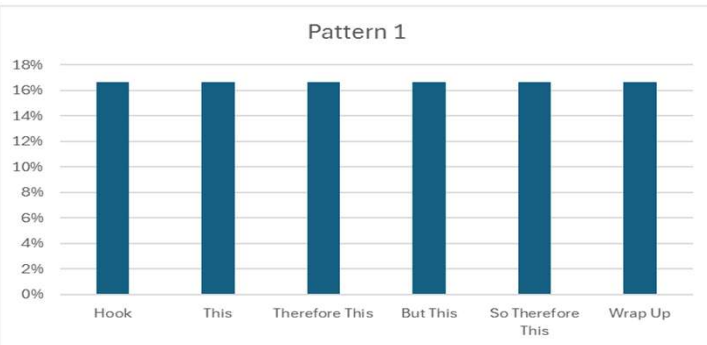
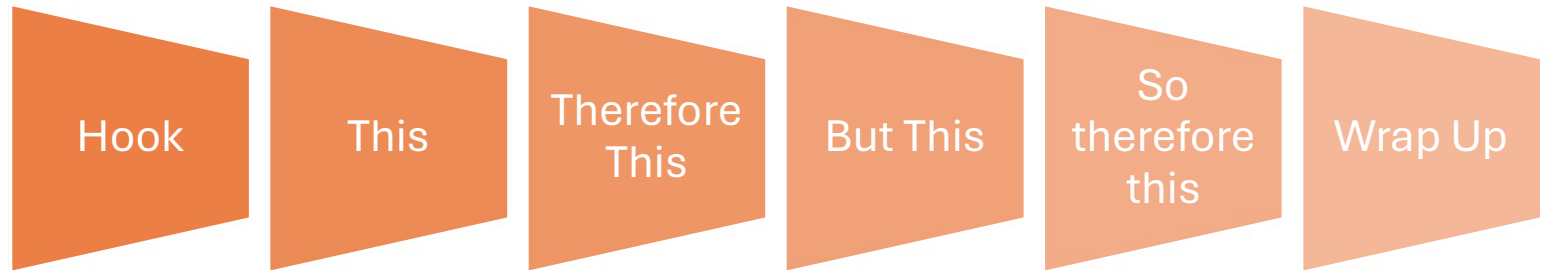
Share in groups of 3 (to 5 max)

# Structure

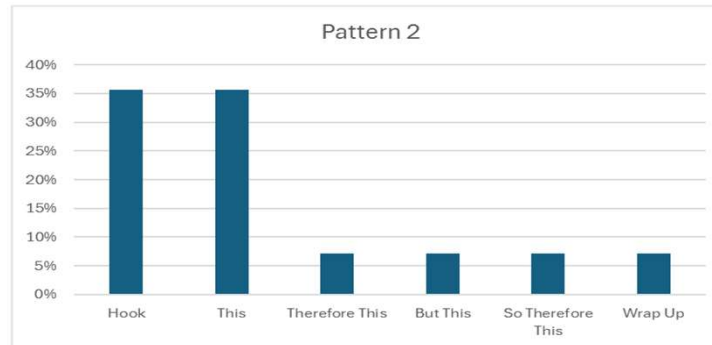


# Pacing

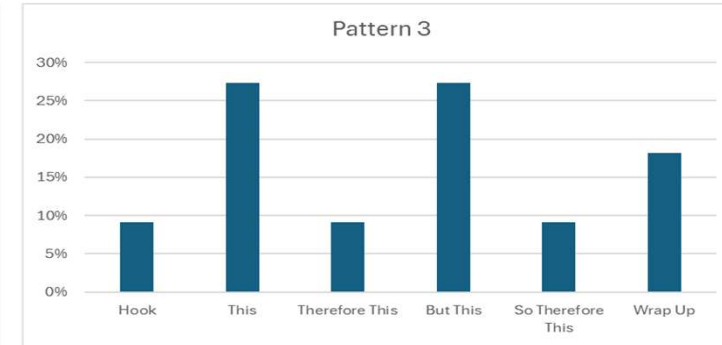
Following this narrative here are three patterns of pacing. What is best and why?



**WHAT WE IMAGINE WE SHOULD DO**



**WHAT WE OFTEN END UP DOING**



**WHAT WE SHOULD PROBABLY DO**

## Narrative Devices

Character  
and plot

A sense of  
place

Set up and  
payback

Emerging  
past

Story arc

**Are there any of these techniques you might use in business storytelling?**

# How do we end?

**Close a sale**



**Conclude a narrative**



**Reveal the “real story”**

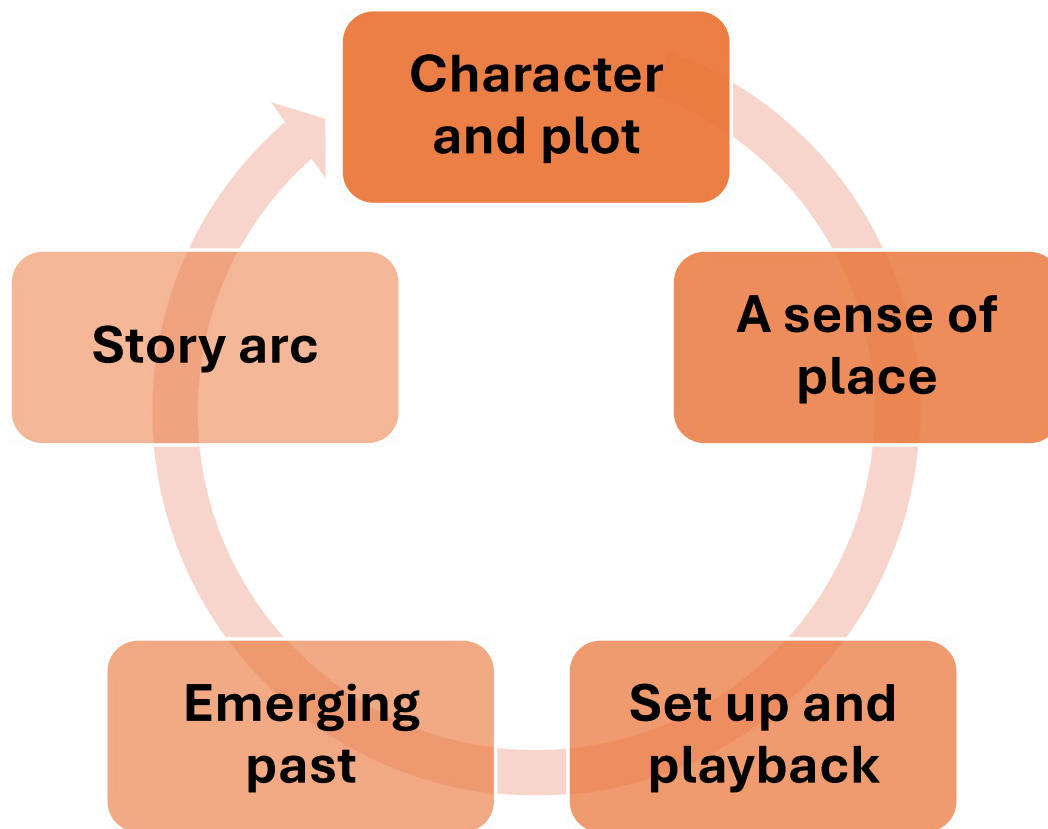


**Leave a question**



**Twist**

# Narrative Devices



**Storytelling tools that help you turn analysis into a clear, persuasive story**

# Narrative Devices

## Character and plot

**Character** = Anyone who is affected by the problem and/or benefits or loses from the outcome e.g. Stakeholders, Users, Customers etc.

**Plot** = What's happening and why it matters. Current state, Problem, What opportunity exists.

**Why do these work together?**

**Character** gives your story relevance; **plot** gives it direction.



# Narrative Devices

## A sense of place

This helps you specify where something is happening /occurring.

Compare: *“Users are dropping off.”* to *“Users are dropping off on the payment page of the mobile app during peak evening hours.”*

This helps to point to where the change should happen.

### Why is this important?

- Improves stakeholder alignment
- Makes solutions more actionable



# Narrative Devices

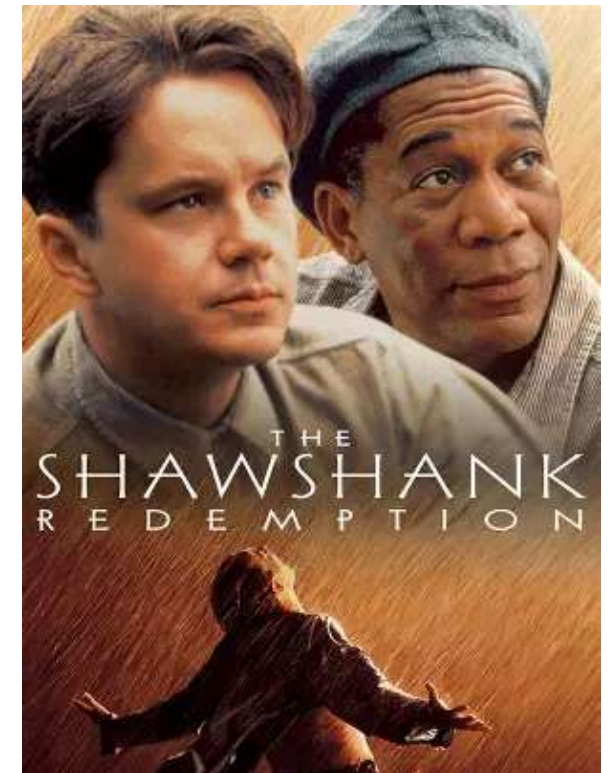
## Set-up & Playback

**Set-up** = Introduce the important elements your audience will need later. E.g. What should the audience pay attention to? What facts are important? Etc.

**Playback** = When you return to that earlier information and show why it matters. It connects the dots and delivers the insight or recommendation.

**Why do these work together?**

**Set-up** tells your audience what to notice, **Playback** shows them why it matters.



# Narrative Devices

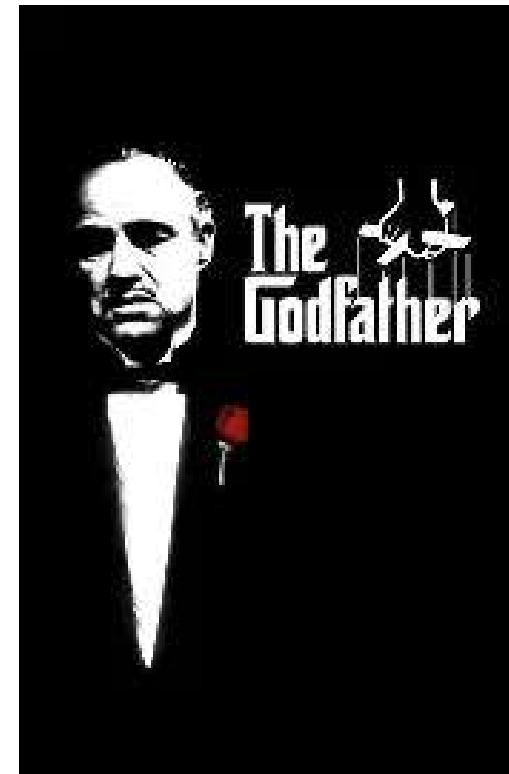
## Emerging Past

It strengthens cause-and-effect reasoning. Timing is everything; when you introduce past events right before or alongside insight, the connection feels clear and logical.

E.g. “This happened → which led to this → which explains what we’re seeing now”.

### **Why is this important?**

This makes your analysis more convincing by telling us “What from the past do we need to understand right now?” keeping your analysis sharp and relevant, without unnecessary history.



# Narrative Devices

## Story Arc

What's  
happening  
now?

What's going  
wrong / what  
opportunity  
exists?

What does the  
analysis  
reveal?

What's the key  
insight?

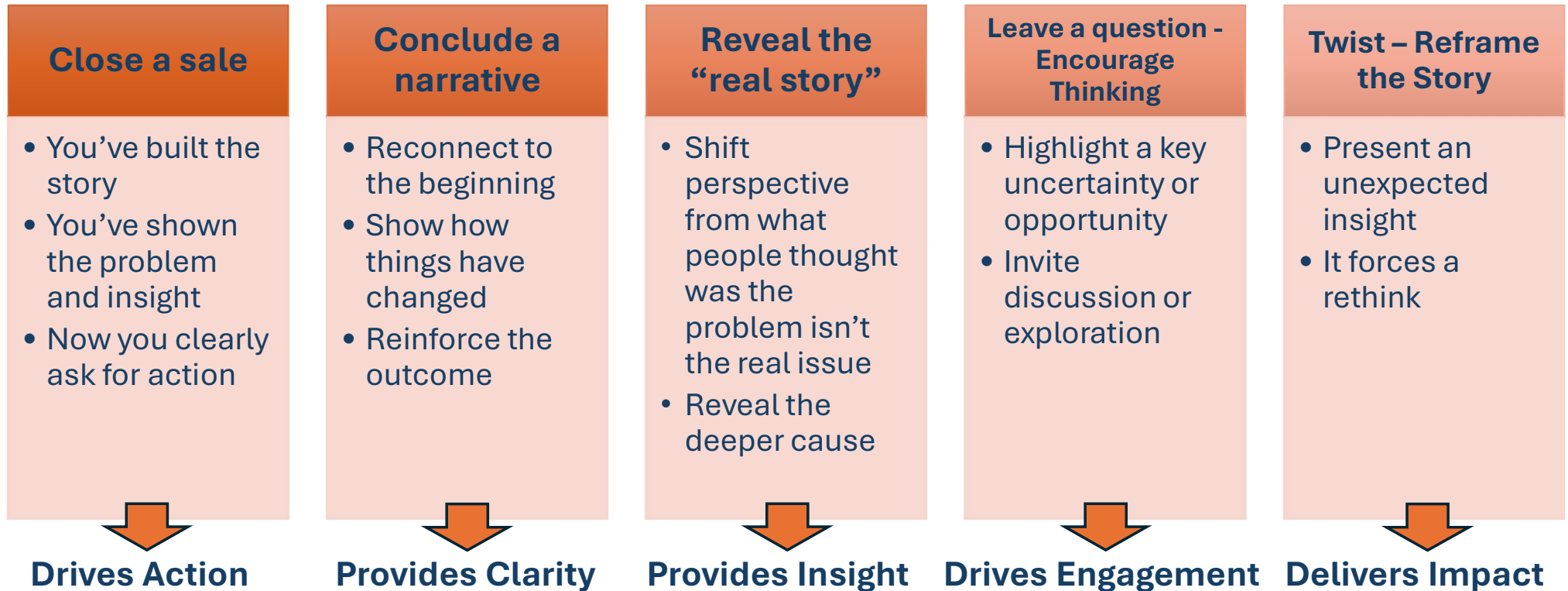
What should  
we do about it?

**What a Story Arc looks like in  
Business Analysis**

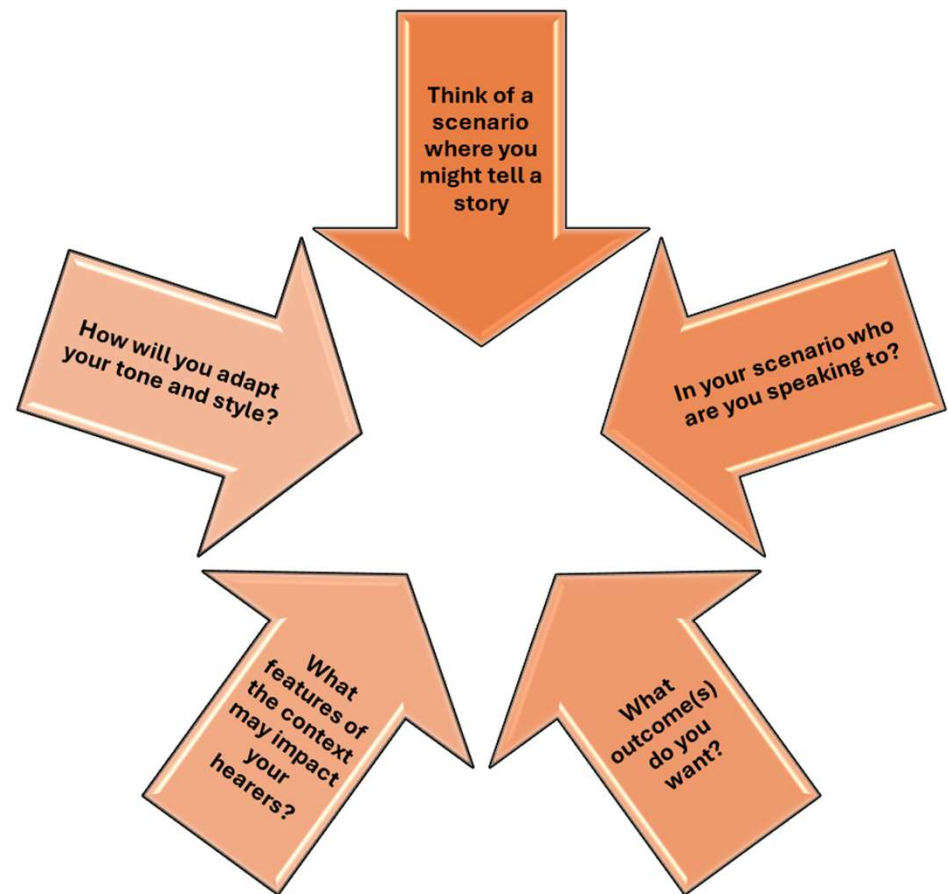


# 5 ways to end a story

There are different ways to land your message depending on your goal.  
Each one answers, “how do we finish so people act or think differently?”



# Context is King





## **Stella Adler**

*Actress & Acting Teacher*  
1901-1992

**“NEVER BE  
BORING  
DARLINGS”**