

# Outline.

## Better Stories Are Transformational. (10 mins / 1,000 words)

*Have you ever struggled to write a speech or a story?* So has almost everyone else. Hands up – how many of you have suffered from “writers block” at some point when you’re trying to write an important presentation? Some studies suggest that 94% of us experience “*writers block*” at some point. (If you’re one of the 6%...!?!)

There’s nothing more *exciting* than a blank sheet of paper when you’ve got an important story to tell, and a friendly audience who you can’t wait to share it with. But there’s also nothing more *terrifying* than a blank sheet of paper, when that story has a deadline and several important executives are waiting for you to be inspired!

It’s an amazing feeling when you’re in the zone and words are just flowing effortlessly from your pen. Your *presentation* starts to feel more like a *performance*. You get excited about how your story will make your audience *feel*.

But there are days when you just don’t seem to have it. If you’re anything like me, that’s probably most days. It feels like you’re chasing inspiration with a stick and it just doesn’t want to get caught! Time is ticking away and you keep staring at the clock. You’ve got nothing. That’s when your *process* will save you. That’s when your story needs an **OUTLINE**.

The great American business *composer* W. Edwards Deming once said, “*If you can't describe what you are doing as a process, you don't know what you're doing.*”

There are many processes that will rescue you as a writer when you need to get it done. Structures that will save your story...

- Joseph Campbell’s classic Hero’s Journey from the 1950’s is one of them. It’s the foundation for every Star Wars movie and pretty much everything Marvel has ever created.
- Aristotle’s “*Poetics*” is another and its thousands of years old. It gave birth to the 3-act structure and is as relevant today as it was back in 335BC.
- Blake Synder’s *Save the Cat “Beat Sheet”* is taught in film schools all over the world. It’s been used to shape Hollywood blockbusters for decades, but it also works for business meetings which are around the same length as a movie, because of the way that our attention spans work.

There are dozens of frameworks which can shape your story. Each one works in a slightly different way, depending upon *what* story you want to tell and *how* you want to tell it.

I like the process that Da Vinci Code author Dan Brown uses when he’s not feeling inspired, but he’s got a story to tell and a deadline to deliver it. He calls it “*the contract, the clock and the crucible*”:

- “*Storytellers make a contract with their audience*” he says. “*We’re about to go on an adventure and someone is about to be transformed. If you stick with me, I promise I’ll tell you how everything works out.*”
- There is a *clock* to create urgency and drama. (A deadline with severe consequences if you don’t meet it).
- And then there’s the *crucible*. That’s the world that your story sits within. You should *only* include things that are relevant to your story - because as all great storytellers understand, what you leave out is more important than what you put in.

Over the last decade I’ve probably analysed over 50,000 stories, speeches, pitches and presentations. I’ve become *obsessed* with trying to understand why some stories work and others don’t, so that I can teach others how to tell better stories. When I think about the 10,000 hours or so that I’ve spent studying story outlines over the last 10 years, I think it all comes down to just 3 words.

### **Excite. Disturb. Assure.**

1. Somebody (the hero) want’s something (or to get somewhere) *really* badly, and they’re *excited* about it.
2. But there are *disturbing* obstacles and difficult challenges which stand in their way, likely to stop them from getting there.
3. And that’s when they meet a guide who *assures* them that they will arrive safely at their destination, *TRANSFORMED* for the better, if they work together.

The key word here is **TRANSFORMED**.

Many stories don’t work because they don’t show a *transformation*. In fact, if a “story” doesn’t include a *transformation*, then it’s not a story at all. No matter how dramatic a series of events might sound, a story without transformation is just a list of things that happened.

This matters because stories need to be transformational in order to make an audience *feel* something. And humans only *feel* something when a part of their brain that neuroscientists called the “limbic system” releases the hormones which create emotions. And those hormones are only triggered in a story when you include a “*conflict*” or a “*contrast*”. (This is one reason why people find it easy to remember *stories*, but they always struggle to remember *statistics*).

Here’s where our world could be... but here’s where the world is today... so here’s how we can get there together.

Excite. Disturb. Assure.

Oscar-winning Showrunner Aaron Sorkin puts it another way, “*Stories are just about intention and obstacle. And until you’ve used the words ‘but’, ‘except’, ‘and then’ you don’t have a story.*” So, the next time you’re staring at a blank page, struggling for inspiration and not sure where to start, try this:

- **ACT I:** Write down something that will *excite* your audience, based on the ONE THING you think they *really* want (and where they want to go).
- **ACT II:** Then write down a few things that might *disturb* them. (Include a few stories *and* statistics which will make them realise they can’t get there on their own).
- **ACT III:** Outline a plan (based on your unique knowledge and personal experience), which shows them how you can get there together; *assuring* them that everything will be ok in the end.

Because everything *will* be OK in the end. And like Oscar Wilde said, “*If it’s not OK, it’s not the end.*”

# Outline.

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## ACT I: THE BLANK SHEET

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It’s an amazing feeling when you’re in the zone and words are just flowing effortlessly from your pen. Your presentation starts to feel more like a performance. You get excited about how your story will make your audience *feel*.

## ACT II: THE PROCESS

But there are days when you just don’t seem to have it. If you’re anything like me, that’s probably most days. It feels like you’re chasing inspiration with a stick and it just doesn’t want to get caught! Time is ticking away and you keep staring at the clock. You’ve got nothing. That’s when your *process* will save you. That’s when your story needs an **OUTLINE**. The great American business *composer* W. Edwards Deming once said, “*If you can’t describe what you are doing as a process, you don’t know what you’re doing.*” There are many processes that will rescue you as a writer when you need to get it done. Structures that will save your story...

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## ACT III: THE OUTLINE

Over the last decade I’ve probably analysed over 50,000 stories, speeches, pitches and presentations. I’ve become *obsessed* with trying to understand why some stories work and others don’t, so that I can teach others how to tell better stories. When I think about the 10,000 hours or so that I’ve spent studying story outlines over the last 10 years, I think it all comes down to just 3 words: Excite. Disturb. Assure.

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← EXCITE

01:30

(155 Words)

← DISTURB

04:00

(395 Words)

← ASSURE →

04:30

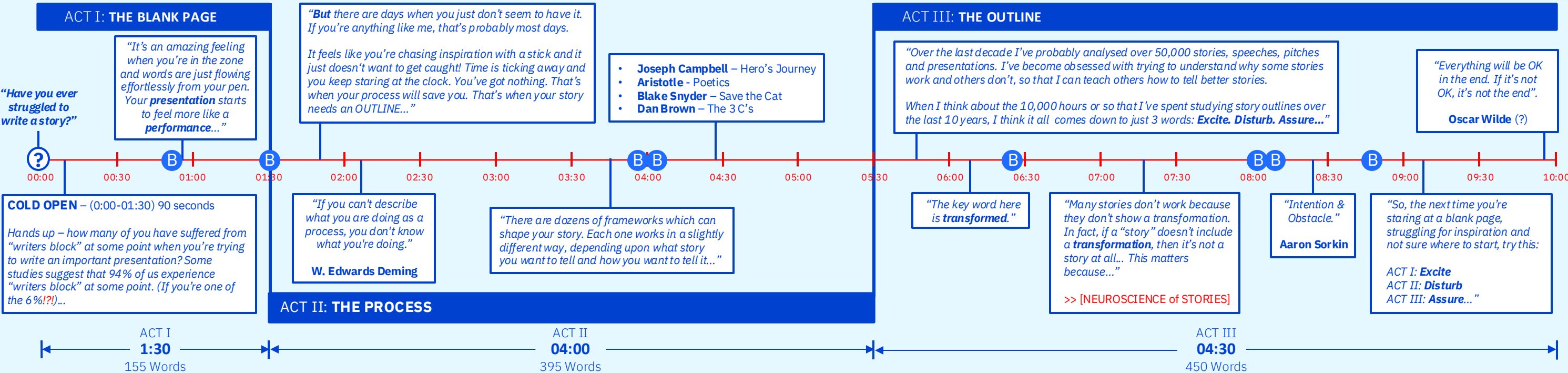
(450 Words)

# 1. Outline: Better Stories Are Transformational.

**JEREMY CONNELL-WAITE** (9<sup>th</sup> September 2024)

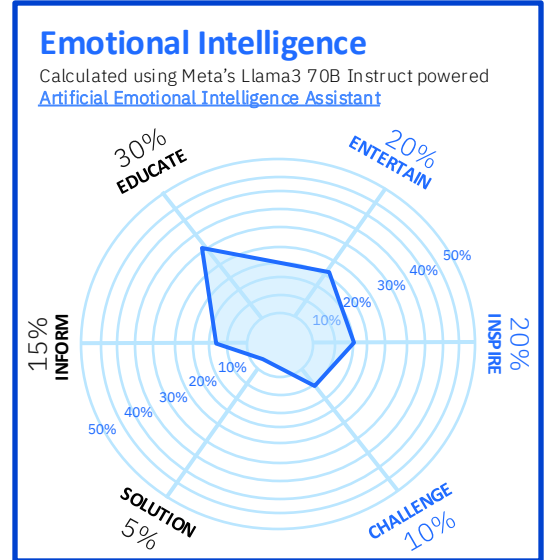
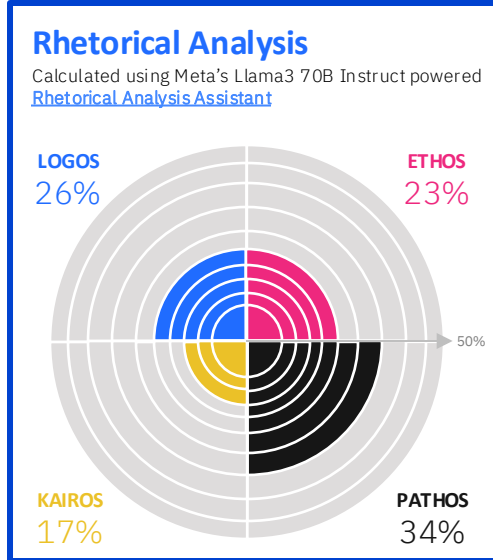
[www.BetterStories.org](http://www.BetterStories.org)

Personality Type (MBTI)  
**INFJ** **GB**



Time:	<b>9:59</b>
Words:	<b>1,000</b>
Speaking: (Words per Minute)	<b>100</b>
Readability Score (GFI)	<b>8.73</b>
Lexical Density	<b>45.91</b>

Problem	The main problem being addressed is writer's block and the struggle to create engaging stories, presentations, and speeches. The speaker is trying to help the audience overcome this problem by providing a framework and process for storytelling.
UVP	What stands out is the speaker's use of storytelling techniques and frameworks from various sources (e.g., Joseph Campbell, Aristotle, Blake Snyder, Dan Brown) to create an engaging and informative talk. The speaker's conversational tone and use of humour also make the talk more approachable and relatable.
Surprise	The statistic "94% of us experience 'writers block' at some point" might be surprising to some audience members, as well as the mention of specific storytelling frameworks and techniques used in Hollywood blockbusters. The use of quotes from famous authors and experts also be unexpected and add to the sense of surprise and wonder.
Urgency	The mention of deadlines and the importance of meeting them ("several important executives are waiting for you to be inspired!") creates a sense of urgency. The speaker is encouraging the audience to take action and start creating their stories using the provided frameworks and techniques.
"But"	<b>B</b> 8X (1:75 secs) "There's nothing more exciting than a blank sheet of paper... <b>BUT</b> there's also nothing more terrifying than a blank sheet of paper..." This creates a contrast between the excitement and terror of facing a blank page.
Credibility	Speaker establishes credibility: "probably analysed over 50,000 stories..." They also mention spending "10,000 hours or so" studying story outlines, which demonstrates their expertise and dedication to the field. Quotes and references from well-known authors and experts (e.g., Dan Brown, Oscar Wilde, Aaron Sorkin) also adds to their credibility.



These responses were generated using Meta's Llama-3 powered [Mission Critical Script Assistant](#) on [watsonx](#).