

What's the Story?

Last updated: 2021/12/07, 02:02:03 EST

Principles of Complex Systems, Vols. 1 & 2
CSYS/MATH 300 and 303, 2021-2022 | @pocsvox

Prof. Peter Sheridan Dodds | @peterdodds

Computational Story Lab | Vermont Complex Systems Center
Vermont Advanced Computing Core | University of Vermont



The PoCVerse
What's the Story?
1 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
2 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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 On Instagram at [pratchett_the_cat](https://www.instagram.com/pratchett_the_cat) 

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
3 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Outline

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
4 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Story editor:

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
5 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Super Survival of the Stories:



The Desirability
of
Storytellers [↗](#),
The Atlantic,
Ed Yong,
2017-12-05.

- Study of Agta, Filipino hunter-gatherers.
- Storytelling valued well above all other skills including hunting.
- Stories encode prosocial norms such as cooperation.
- Like the best stories, the best storytellers reproduce more successfully.

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
8 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Major competing storytelling entities:

- News.
- Books, magazines.
- Art.
- Music industry.
- Television, movie studios, Netflix, HBO, Disney.
- Social media: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, ...
- All sport.
- Video games.
- Religions, ideologies, belief systems, Freemasons, ...
- Enduring coherent groups: Cultures, countries, cities, ...



Major competing storytelling entities:

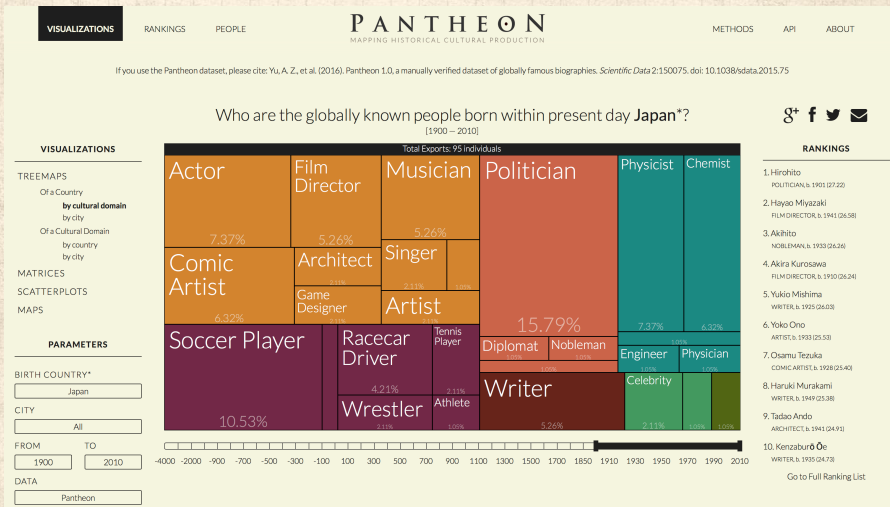
- 📦 News.
- 📦 Books, magazines.
- 📦 Art.
- 📦 Music industry.
- 📦 Television, movie studios, Netflix, HBO, Disney.
- 📦 Social media: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, ...
- 📦 All sport.
- 📦 Video games.
- 📦 Religions, ideologies, belief systems, Freemasons, ...
- 📦 Enduring coherent groups: Cultures, countries, cities, ...

Cultural products from Pantheon :

- 📦 Writers, artists, movie directors, video game directors.



The famous are storytellers—Japan:



For people born 1950–

http://pantheon.media.mit.edu/treemap/country_exports/JP/all/1900/2010/H15/pantheon

The famous are storytellers—United States:

VISUALIZATIONS

RANKINGS

PEOPLE

PANTHEON
MAPPING HISTORICAL CULTURAL PRODUCTION

METHODS

API

ABOUT

If you use the Pantheon dataset, please cite: Yu, A. Z., et al. (2016). Pantheon 1.0, a manually verified dataset of globally famous biographies. *Scientific Data* 2:150075. doi: 10.1038/sdata.2015.75

Who are the globally known people born within present day United States*?

[1900 – 2010]



VISUALIZATIONS

TREEMAPS
Of a Country
by cultural domain
by city
Of a Cultural Domain
by country
by city

MATRICES

SCATTERPLOTS

MAPS

PARAMETERS

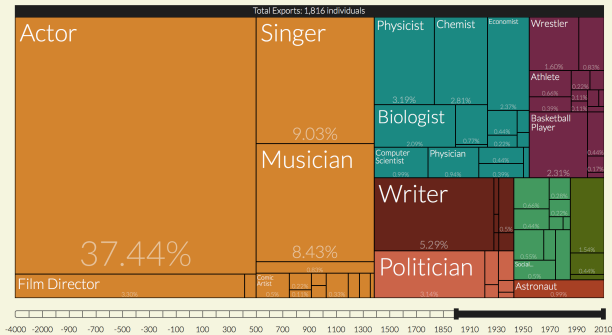
BIRTH COUNTRY*

CITY

FROM TO

DATA

INDEX



RANKINGS

1. Martin Luther King, Jr.
SOCIAL ACTIVIST, b. 1929 (28.6%)
2. Elvis Presley
SINGER, b. 1935 (28.6%)
3. Marilyn Monroe
ACTRESS, b. 1926 (28.3%)
4. Walt Disney
PRODUCER, b. 1901 (28.1%)
5. Jimi Hendrix
MUSICIAN, b. 1942 (27.9%)
6. Andy Warhol
ARTIST, b. 1928 (27.9%)
7. Bruce Lee
ACTOR, b. 1940 (27.8%)
8. Bob Dylan
MUSICIAN, b. 1941 (27.7%)
9. John F. Kennedy
POLITICIAN, b. 1917 (27.6%)
10. Stanley Kubrick
FILM DIRECTOR, b. 1928 (27.5%)

[Go to Full Ranking List](#)

For people born 1950–

http://pantheon.media.mit.edu/treemap/country_exports/US/all/1950/2010/H15/pantheon

The famous are storytellers—United States:

VISUALIZATIONS

RANKINGS

PEOPLE

PANTHEON
MAPPING HISTORICAL CULTURAL PRODUCTION

METHODS

API

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Who are the globally known people born within present day United States*?
[1950 – 2010]



VISUALIZATIONS

TREEMAPS

- Of a Country
 - by cultural domain
 - by city
- Of a Cultural Domain
 - by country
 - by city

MATRICES

SCATTERPLOTS

MAPS

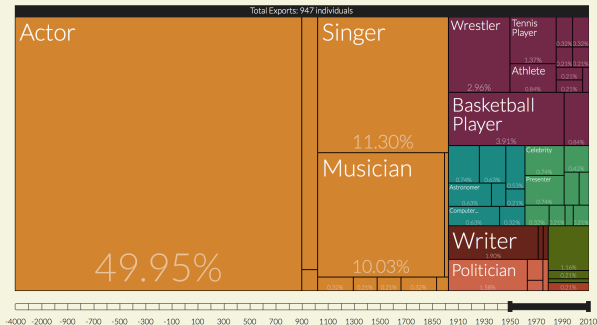
PARAMETERS

BIRTH COUNTRY*

CITY

FROM TO

DATA



RANKINGS

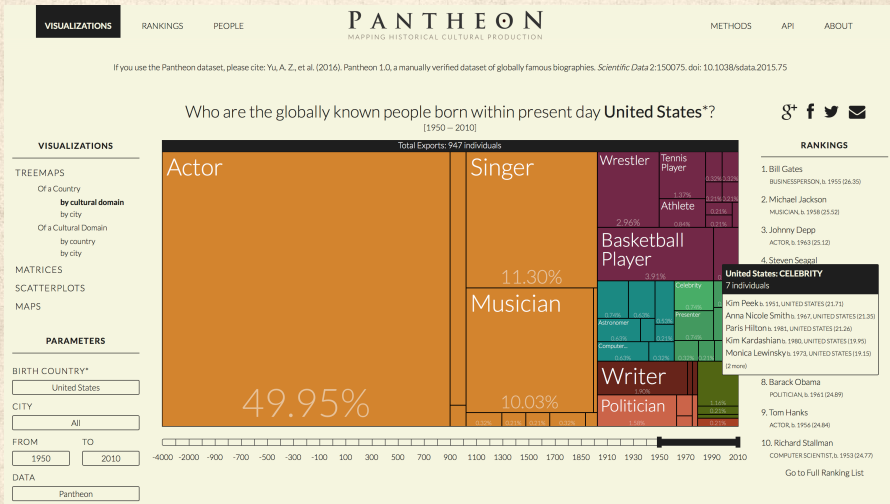
1. Bill Gates
BUSINESSPERSON, b. 1955 (26.35)
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MUSICIAN, b. 1958 (25.52)
3. Johnny Depp
ACTOR, b. 1963 (25.12)
4. Steven Seagal
ACTOR, b. 1952 (25.10)
5. Robin Williams
ACTOR, b. 1951 (25.08)
6. Stevie Wonder
SINGER, b. 1950 (25.02)
7. Brad Pitt
ACTOR, b. 1963 (24.89)
8. Barack Obama
POLITICIAN, b. 1961 (24.89)
9. Tom Hanks
ACTOR, b. 1956 (24.84)
10. Richard Stallman
COMPUTER SCIENTIST, b. 1953 (24.77)

[Go to Full Ranking List](#)

For people born 1950–

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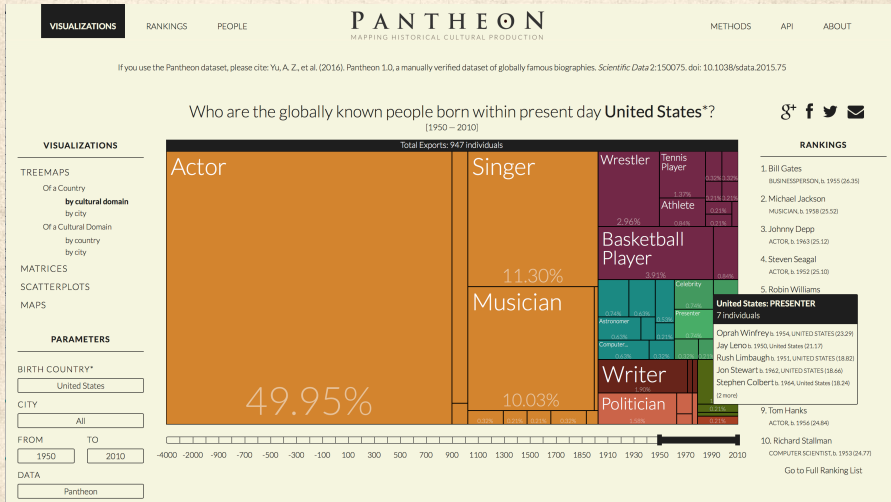
The famous are storytellers—United States:



For people born 1950–

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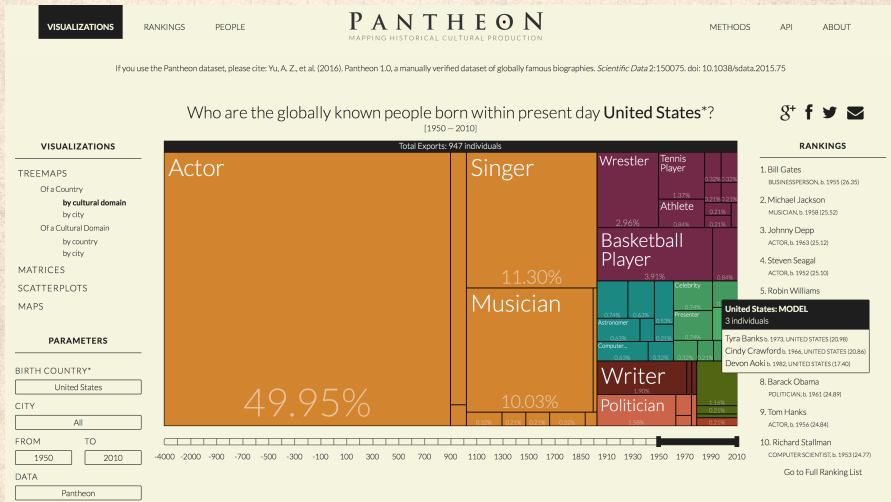
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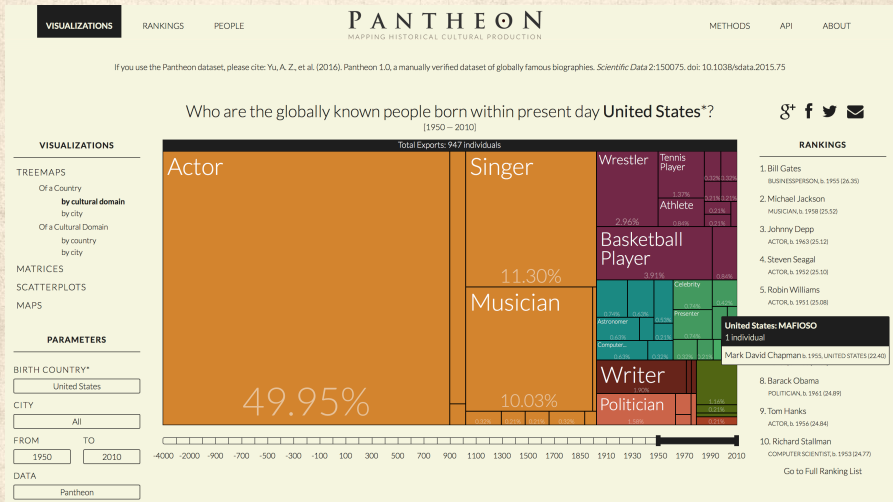
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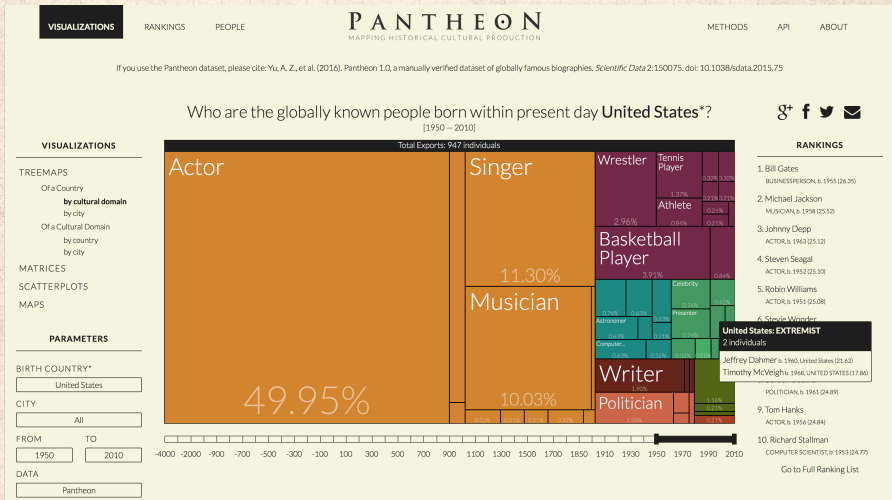
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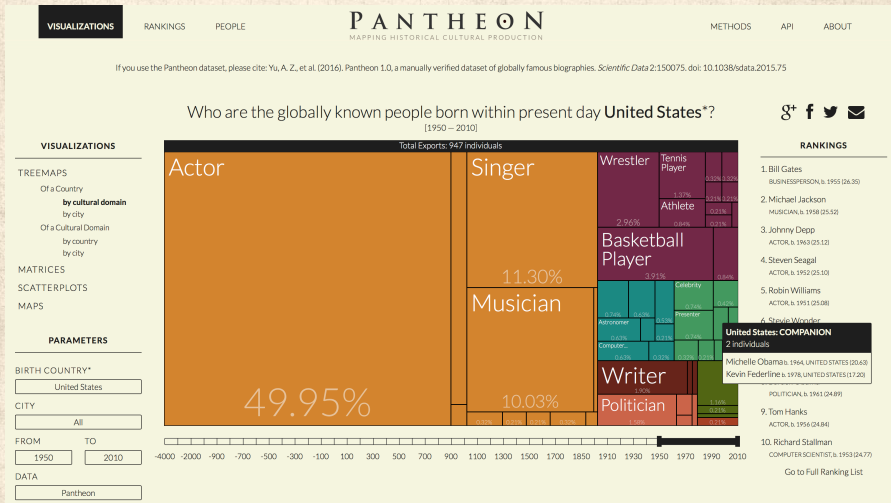
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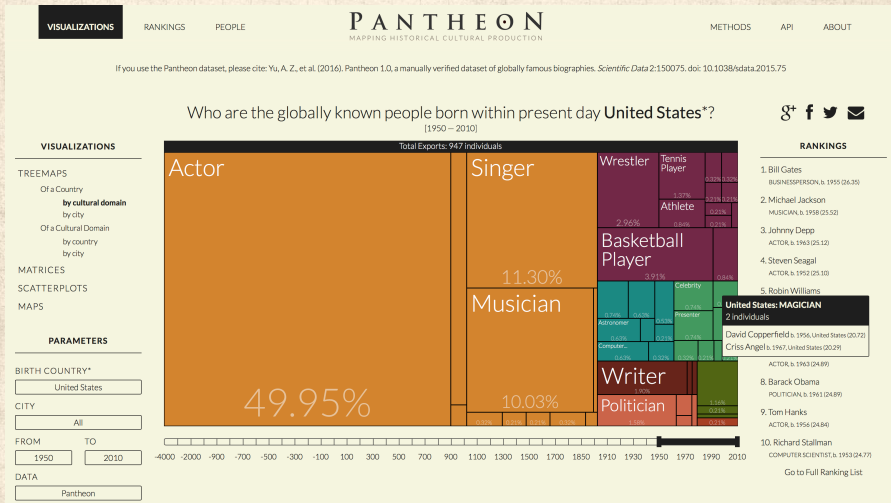
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The famous are storytellers—United States:

VISUALIZATIONS

RANKINGS

PEOPLE

PANTHEON
MAPPING HISTORICAL CULTURAL PRODUCTION

METHODS

API

ABOUT

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Who are the globally known people born within present day United States*?

[1950 – 2010]



VISUALIZATIONS

TREEMAPS

- Of a Country
 - by cultural domain
 - by city
- Of a Cultural Domain
 - by country
 - by city

MATRICES

SCATTERPLOTS

MAPS

PARAMETERS

BIRTH COUNTRY*

United States

CITY

All

FROM

1950

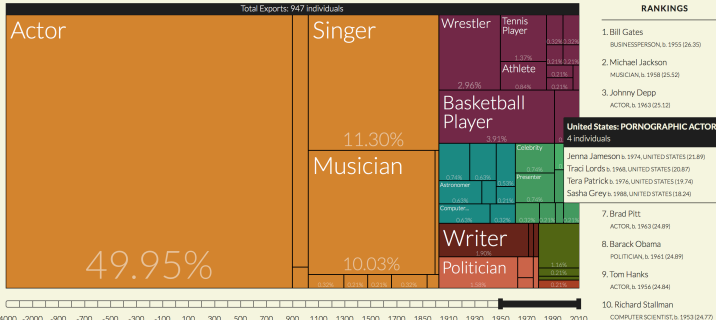
TO

2010

DATA

Pantheon

Total Exports: 947 Individuals



RANKINGS

1. Bill Gates
BUSINESSPERSON, b. 1955 (26.95)

2. Michael Jackson
MUSICIAN, b. 1958 (25.52)

3. Johnny Depp
ACTOR, b. 1963 (25.12)

United States: PORNOGRAPHIC ACTOR
4 Individuals

Jenna Jameson, b. 1974, UNITED STATES (21.89)

Traci Lords, b. 1968, UNITED STATES (20.87)

Tera Patrick, b. 1976, UNITED STATES (19.74)

Sasha Grey, b. 1988, UNITED STATES (18.24)

7. Brad Pitt
ACTOR, b. 1963 (24.89)

8. Barack Obama
POLITICIAN, b. 1961 (24.89)

9. Tom Hanks
ACTOR, b. 1956 (24.84)

10. Richard Stallman
COMPUTER SCIENTIST, b. 1953 (24.77)

[Go to Full Ranking List](#)

For people born 1950–

http://pantheon.media.mit.edu/treemap/country_exports/US/all/1950/2010/H15/pantheon

The famous are storytellers—United States:

VISUALIZATIONS

RANKINGS

PEOPLE

PANTHEON
MAPPING HISTORICAL CULTURAL PRODUCTION

METHODS

API

ABOUT

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VISUALIZATIONS

TREEMAPS

- Of a Country
- by cultural domain
- by city
- Of a Cultural Domain
- by country
- by city

MATRICES

SCATTERPLOTS

MAPS

PARAMETERS

BIRTH COUNTRY*

United States

CITY

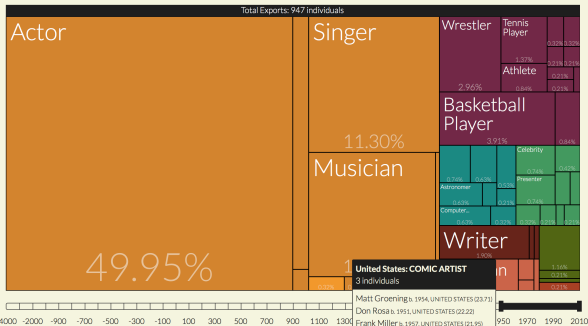
All

FROM TO

1950 2010

DATA

Pantheon



RANKINGS

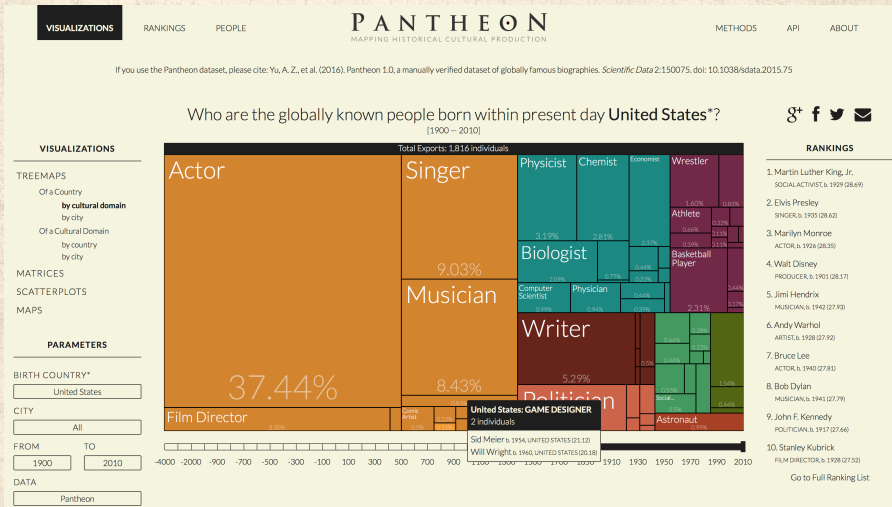
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ACTOR, b. 1956 (24.84)
10. Richard Stallman
COMPUTER SCIENTIST, b. 1953 (24.77)

[Go to Full Ranking List](#)

For people born 1950–

http://pantheon.media.mit.edu/treemap/country_exports/US/all/1950/2010/H15/pantheon

Storytellers win:



For people born 1900–

http://pantheon.media.mit.edu/treemap/country_exports/US/all/1900/2010/H15/pantheon

Storytellers win:

PANTHEON
MAPPING HISTORICAL CULTURAL PRODUCTION

METHODS API ABOUT

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Who are the globally known people born within present day United States*?
[1950 – 2010]



VISUALIZATIONS

TREEMAPS
Of a Country
by cultural domain
by city

Of a Cultural Domain
by country
by city

MATRICES

SCATTERPLOTS

MAPS

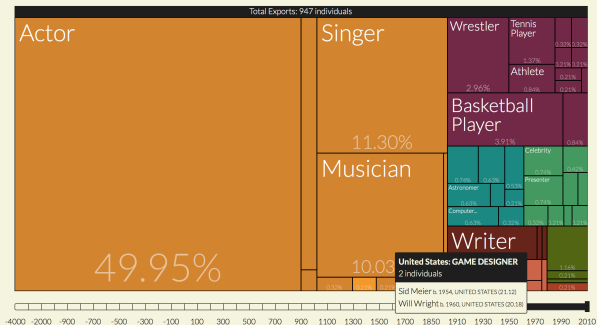
PARAMETERS

BIRTH COUNTRY*

CITY

FROM TO

DATA



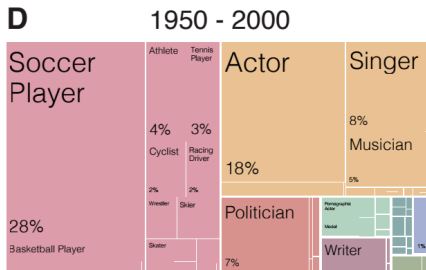
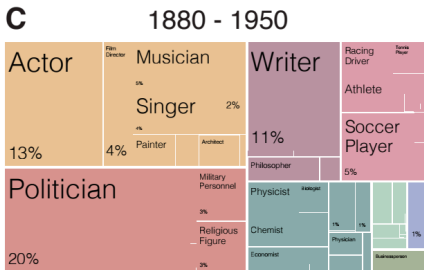
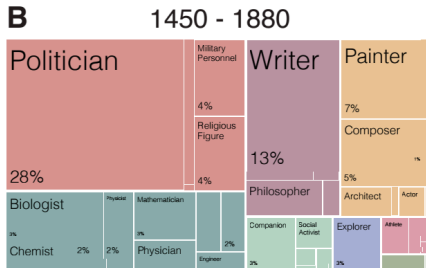
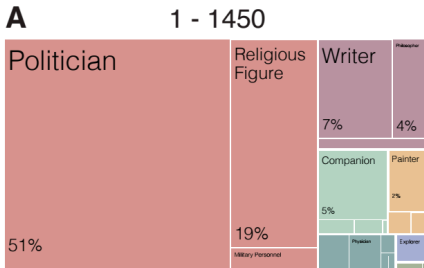
RANKINGS

1. Bill Gates
BUSINESSPERSON, b. 1955 (24.35)
2. Michael Jackson
MUSICIAN, b. 1958 (25.52)
3. Johnny Depp
ACTOR, b. 1963 (25.12)
4. Steven Seagal
ACTOR, b. 1952 (25.33)
5. Robin Williams
ACTOR, b. 1951 (25.06)
6. Stevie Wonder
SINGER, b. 1950 (25.02)
7. Brad Pitt
ACTOR, b. 1963 (24.89)
8. Barack Obama
POLITICIAN, b. 1961 (24.89)
9. Tom Hanks
ACTOR, b. 1956 (24.84)
10. Richard Stallman
COMPUTERSCIENTIST, b. 1953 (24.77)

[Go to Full Ranking List](#)

For people born 1950–

http://pantheon.media.mit.edu/treemap/country_exports/US/all/1950/2010/H15/pantheon



It's all about algorithms (stories):

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
14 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



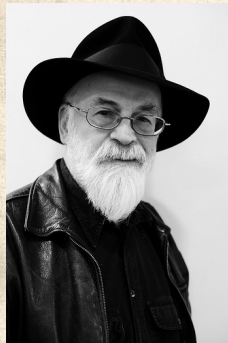
“On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction” [a](#) [↗](#)
by Brian Boyd (2010). ^[4]





“The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human” [a](#) [↗](#)
by Jonathan Gottschall (2013). ^[11]




(Sir Terry) Pratchett's Narrativium



 "The most common element on the disc, although not included in the list of the standard five: earth, fire, air, water and surprise. It ensures that everything runs properly as a story."

 "A little narrativium goes a long way: the simpler the story, the better you understand it. Storytelling is the opposite of reductionism: 26 letters and some rules of grammar are no story at all."

 "Heroes only win when outnumbered, and things which have a one-in-a-million chance of succeeding often do so."

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
15 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Stories are everything:

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
16 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Stories are everything:

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
17 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Game of Thrones, S6E06: The Iron Throne

“What unites people?”

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
18 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Game of Thrones, S6E06: The Iron Throne

“What unites people? Armies?”

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
18 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Game of Thrones, S6E06: The Iron Throne

“What unites people? Armies? Gold?”

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
18 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Game of Thrones, S6E06: The Iron Throne

“What unites people? Armies? Gold? Flags?”¹

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
18 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Game of Thrones, S6E06: The Iron Throne

“What unites people? Armies? Gold? Flags?¹
Stories.

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
18 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Game of Thrones, S6E06: The Iron Throne

“What unites people? Armies? Gold? Flags?¹
Stories.

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
18 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



¹Character is the shortcut to story

Game of Thrones, S6E06: The Iron Throne

“What unites people? Armies? Gold? Flags?¹

Stories.

There’s nothing in the world more powerful than a good story.

The PoCSverse
What’s the Story?
18 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



¹Character is the shortcut to story

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“What unites people? Armies? Gold? Flags?¹
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There’s nothing in the world more powerful than a
good story.

Nothing can stop it.



The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
18 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



¹Character is the shortcut to story

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“What unites people? Armies? Gold? Flags?¹

Stories.

There’s nothing in the world more powerful than a good story.

Nothing can stop it.

No enemy can defeat it.”



The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
18 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



¹Character is the shortcut to story

Stories are the essence of ... oh no, no, no

...

Game of Thrones **IMDb**

Great Good Regular Bad Garbage

Episode

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	9.1	8.8	8.7	8.8	9.1	9.2	9.2	9.0	9.6	9.5
2	8.8	8.5	8.8	8.8	8.8	9.1	8.9	8.8	9.7	9.4
3	8.8	8.6	8.9	9.6	9.0	8.8	8.7	9.0	9.9	9.2
4	9.1	9.7	8.9	8.8	8.8	9.7	9.1	9.7	9.6	9.7
5	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.7	8.6	8.0	9.0	9.9	9.5	9.1
6	8.5	9.4	8.7	9.1	9.7	8.4	8.6	8.4	9.9	9.9
7	8.6	8.9	9.2	9.8	8.8	9.0	9.4			
8	7.5	7.8	7.4	5.4	5.9	4.0				

Series Heat for GoT 

Stories are the essence of ... oh no, no, no

...



Except for writers who destroy their own stories.

Game of Thrones **IMDb**

Great Good Regular Bad Garbage

		Episode									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Season	1	9.1	8.8	8.7	8.8	9.1	9.2	9.2	9.0	9.6	9.5
	2	8.8	8.5	8.8	8.8	8.8	9.1	8.9	8.8	9.7	9.4
	3	8.8	8.6	8.9	9.6	9.0	8.8	8.7	9.0	9.9	9.2
	4	9.1	9.7	8.9	8.8	8.8	9.7	9.1	9.7	9.6	9.7
	5	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.7	8.6	8.0	9.0	9.9	9.5	9.1
	6	8.5	9.4	8.7	9.1	9.7	8.4	8.6	8.4	9.9	9.9
	7	8.6	8.9	9.2	9.8	8.8	9.0	9.4			
	8	7.5	7.8	7.4	5.4	5.9	4.0				

Series Heat for GoT

Stories are the essence of ... oh no, no, no

...



Except for writers who destroy their own stories.



Also audiences. [↗](#)

Game of Thrones **IMDb**

Great Good Regular Bad Garbage

		Episode									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Season	1	9.1	8.8	8.7	8.8	9.1	9.2	9.2	9.0	9.6	9.5
	2	8.8	8.5	8.8	8.8	8.8	9.1	8.9	8.8	9.7	9.4
	3	8.8	8.6	8.9	9.6	9.0	8.8	8.7	9.0	9.9	9.2
	4	9.1	9.7	8.9	8.8	8.8	9.7	9.1	9.7	9.6	9.7
	5	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.7	8.6	8.0	9.0	9.9	9.5	9.1
	6	8.5	9.4	8.7	9.1	9.7	8.4	8.6	8.4	9.9	9.9
	7	8.6	8.9	9.2	9.8	8.8	9.0	9.4			
	8	7.5	7.8	7.4	5.4	5.9	4.0				

Series Heat for GoT [↗](#)

Stories are the essence of ... oh no, no, no

...



Except for writers who destroy their own stories.



Also audiences. [↗](#)



Basic word of mouth.

Game of Thrones **IMDb**

Great Good Regular Bad Garbage

		Episode									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Season	1	9.1	8.8	8.7	8.8	9.1	9.2	9.2	9.0	9.6	9.5
	2	8.8	8.5	8.8	8.8	8.8	9.1	8.9	8.8	9.7	9.4
	3	8.8	8.6	8.9	9.6	9.0	8.8	8.7	9.0	9.9	9.2
	4	9.1	9.7	8.9	8.8	8.8	9.7	9.1	9.7	9.6	9.7
	5	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.7	8.6	8.0	9.0	9.9	9.5	9.1
	6	8.5	9.4	8.7	9.1	9.7	8.4	8.6	8.4	9.9	9.9
	7	8.6	8.9	9.2	9.8	8.8	9.0	9.4			
	8	7.5	7.8	7.4	5.4	5.9	4.0				

Series Heat for GoT [↗](#)

Stories are the essence of ... oh no, no, no

...



Except for writers who destroy their own stories.



Also audiences. [↗](#)



Basic word of mouth.



And critics. [↗](#)

Game of Thrones **IMDb**

Great Good Regular Bad Garbage

		Episode									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Season	1	9.1	8.8	8.7	8.8	9.1	9.2	9.2	9.0	9.6	9.5
	2	8.8	8.5	8.8	8.8	8.8	9.1	8.9	8.8	9.7	9.4
	3	8.8	8.6	8.9	9.6	9.0	8.8	8.7	9.0	9.9	9.2
	4	9.1	9.7	8.9	8.8	8.8	9.7	9.1	9.7	9.6	9.7
	5	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.7	8.6	8.0	9.0	9.9	9.5	9.1
	6	8.5	9.4	8.7	9.1	9.7	8.4	8.6	8.4	9.9	9.9
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	3	8.8	8.6	8.9	9.6	9.0	8.8	8.7	9.0	9.9	9.2
	4	9.1	9.7	8.9	8.8	8.8	9.7	9.1	9.7	9.6	9.7
	5	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.7	8.6	8.0	9.0	9.9	9.5	9.1
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Character assassination works too.

Game of Thrones **IMDb**

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Season	1	9.1	8.8	8.7	8.8	9.1	9.2	9.2	9.0	9.6	9.5
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[Series Heat for GoT](#) [↗](#)

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



We see (certain kinds of) stories:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VTNmLt7QX8E?rel=0>

Heider and Simmel, 1944^[12]



Simple Definitions:

 Story: a laying out of a temporal sequence of events.

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
21 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence



Emotional Arcs


Moving ahead

References



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 "Time is a great storyteller" (Irish proverb)

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
21 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence





Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References







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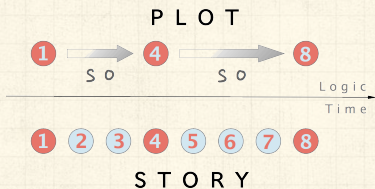
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-  Plot[↗]: Essential sequence of a story's elements.²



The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
21 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy


Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

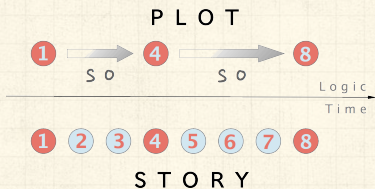
References



²By まとりよ しか — Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0,

Simple Definitions:

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🧱 Plot = Algorithm

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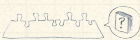
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=24054522>[↗]



Understanding the Sociotechnocene—Stories:



xkcd.com/904/



Goal: a Science of Stories.



Claim: Homo narrativus —we run on stories.



“What’s the John Dory?”



“They’ve lost the plot/thread”



Maybe: The narrative hierarchy and the Scalability of stories.

The PoCSverse
What’s the Story?
22 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

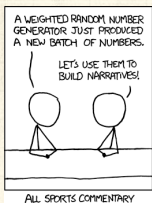
Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

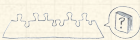
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Research: Extraction of metaphors, frames, narratives, and stories from large-scale text/corpora.

The PoCSverse
What’s the Story?
22 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

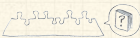
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Storywrangler, POTUSometer, ...

The PoCSverse
What’s the Story?
22 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References

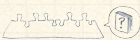


Understanding the Sociotechnocene—Stories:



ALL SPORTS COMMENTARY

xkcd.com/904/



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Storywrangler, POTUSometer, ...



Research: What’s the taxonomy of human stories?

The PoCSverse
What’s the Story?
22 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

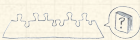
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Storywrangler, POTUSometer, ...



Research: What’s the taxonomy of human stories?



Maybe: Stories ↔ Algorithms

The PoCSverse
What’s the Story?
22 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References

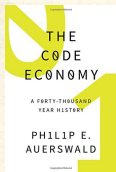


Algorithms are everywhere:

- Communication/Language.
- Economic systems
(Shiller: "Narrative Economics" [19])
- Legal systems.
- Social norms, customs, cultures.
- Food:
growing, harvesting, preparing, distribution, ...
- Safety codes and protocols
- Military.
- Stories ...

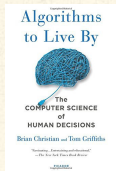


Algorithms, recipes, stories, ...



“The Code Economy: A Forty-Thousand Year History” [a](#) [↗](#)

by Philip E Auerwald (2017). [2]



“Algorithms to Live By” [a](#) [↗](#)

by Christian and Griffiths (2016). [8]



“Once Upon an Algorithm” [a](#) [↗](#)

by Martin Erwig (2017). [10]

Also: Numerical Recipes in C [16] and How to Bake π [7]

The PoCVerse
What's the Story?
24 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References





Adjacent narratives —why mistruths and conspiracy theories exist and flourish:

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
26 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

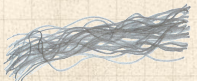
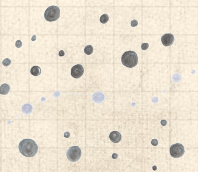
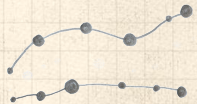
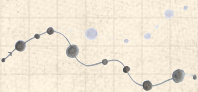
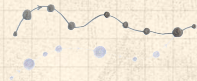
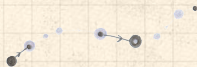
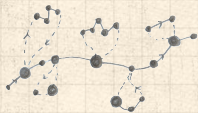
Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

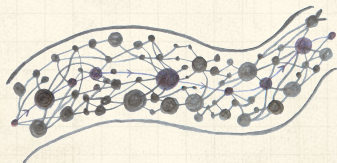
Moving ahead

References



Why adjacent narratives exist and untrue stories flourish:

1/4. A real story is never recorded and retold completely



The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
27 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs


Moving ahead

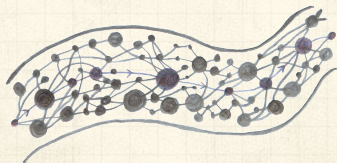
References



Why adjacent narratives exist and untrue stories flourish:

1/4. A real story is never recorded and retold completely

 Impossible to record every detail.



The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
27 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

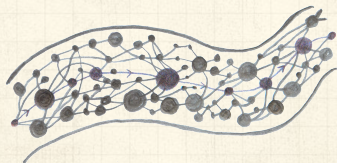
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Why adjacent narratives exist and untrue stories flourish:

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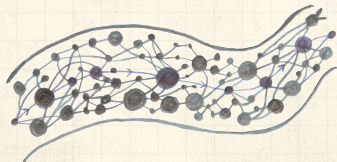
- Impossible to record every detail.
- Recording entails compression to scale of medium (narrative hierarchy).



Why adjacent narratives exist and untrue stories flourish:

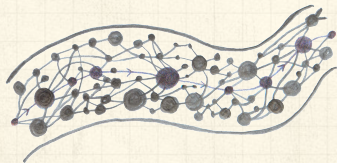
1/4. A real story is never recorded and retold completely

- Impossible to record every detail.
- Recording entails compression to scale of medium (narrative hierarchy).
- Story logic will be favored, and seemingly irrelevant aspects discarded.



Why adjacent narratives exist and untrue stories flourish:

2/4. The infinitude of adjacent stories will afford “better” stories



The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
28 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs


Moving ahead

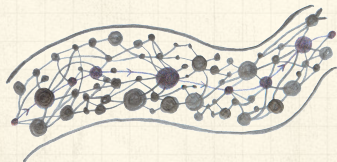
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Why adjacent narratives exist and untrue stories flourish:

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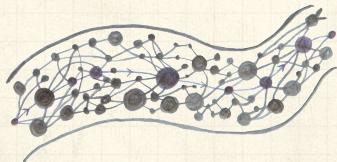
 Better = More engaging, more motivating to spread, more durable under spreading.



Why adjacent narratives exist and untrue stories flourish:

2/4. The infinitude of adjacent stories will afford “better” stories

- 🧱 Better = More engaging, more motivating to spread, more durable under spreading.
- 🧱 Better stories exist for truthful recorders and retellers (journalists).



Why adjacent narratives exist and untrue stories flourish:

3/4. The infinitude of adjacent stories means “better” stories exist for those who would disinform



The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
29 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs


Moving ahead

References



Why adjacent narratives exist and untrue stories flourish:

3/4. The infinitude of adjacent stories means “better” stories exist for those who would disinform

 Adjacent stories may be truth-limited and/or falsehood-bearing.



Why adjacent narratives exist and untrue stories flourish:

3/4. The infinitude of adjacent stories means “better” stories exist for those who would disinform

- Adjacent stories may be truth-limited and/or falsehood-bearing.
- There may exist adjacent stories that conform to a world view/ideology.



Why adjacent narratives exist and untrue stories flourish:

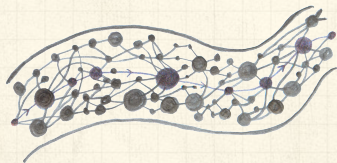
3/4. The infinitude of adjacent stories means “better” stories exist for those who would disinform

- Adjacent stories may be truth-limited and/or falsehood-bearing.
- There may exist adjacent stories that conform to a world view/ideology.
- Even the seemingly non-adjacent must have some plausibility (Pizzagate).



Why adjacent narratives exist and untrue stories flourish:

4/4. Character is the short cut to story



The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
30 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs


Moving ahead

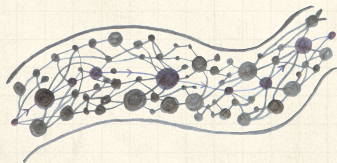
References



Why adjacent narratives exist and untrue stories flourish:

4/4. Character is the short cut to story

 The barely implausible can be believed if the character can make it so.



The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
30 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

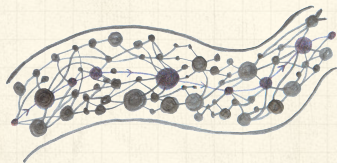
References



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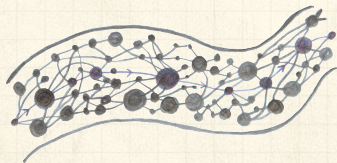
- 🧱 The barely implausible can be believed if the character can make it so.
- 🧱 A believe-to-be evil character can do anything.




Why adjacent narratives exist and untrue stories flourish:


4/4. Character is the short cut to story

- 🧱 The barely implausible can be believed if the character can make it so.
- 🧱 A believe-to-be evil character can do anything.
- 🧱 Iterate between character and story to make the character fixed.



1999 Gallup poll: [↗](#)

 6% of Americans said the lunar landings were fake.

 5% were undecided.

 Video replay [↗](#) (The Comments).

Buzz Aldrin has enough:

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
31 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Storytellers

Stories

Power


Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References

JK Rowling doesn't exist: conspiracy theories the internet can't resist , [The Guardian, 2017-10-27](#):

Highlights:

 The Earth is flat. <https://www.tfes.org> .



Storytellers

Stories

Power


Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs


Moving ahead

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 -  A. "Yes. Yes it is."



Storytellers

Stories

Power



Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References

 Phantom time hypothesis :



Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy


Essence


Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References





Phantom time hypothesis 

 The years 614–911 AD never existed.








Phantom time hypothesis

-  The years 614–911 AD never existed.
-  Straight up jump of 297 years orchestrated by a first millennium cabal.









Phantom time hypothesis

-  The years 614–911 AD never existed.
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-  The year 2017 AD is really 1820 AD.










Phantom time hypothesis

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-  The year 2017 AD is really 1820 AD.
-  Good to know.





Phantom time hypothesis

-  The years 614–911 AD never existed.
-  Straight up jump of 297 years orchestrated by a first millennium cabal.
-  The year 2017 AD is really 1820 AD.
-  Good to know.
-  Holy Roman Emperor Otto III (@TheBoss37), Pope Sylvester II (@PSly2) wanted to live in 1000 AD, legitimize power.





Phantom time hypothesis [↗](#):

- ❏ The years 614–911 AD never existed.
- ❏ Straight up jump of 297 years orchestrated by a first millennium cabal.
- ❏ The year 2017 AD is really 1820 AD.
- ❏ Good to know.
- ❏ Holy Roman Emperor Otto III (@TheBoss37), Pope Sylvester II (@PSly2) wanted to live in 1000 AD, legitimize power.
- ❏ Crushed by reality: Records of solar eclipses, comets, dendrochronology.



Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Finland does not exist:



Stories influence people, for good or bad:

- 🧱 [Parasocial relationships](#) ↗ (Cosplay)
- 🧱 [Allusionist 82. A Novel Remedy](#) ↗
- 🧱 Agatha Christie type murder mysteries: A salve post the Great War.
- 🧱 Representation matters—possible future paths (narrative hodology)












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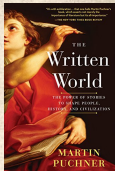
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-  [Aurora, Colorado shooting](#)  (Joker)





“The Written World: How Literature Shaped Civilization” [a](#) [🔗](#)

by Martin Puchner (2017). [17]

We are what we read [🔗](#) (NYT)

“Storytelling is as human as breathing. When **fabulation** intersected with writing, stories were empowered to propagate themselves in society and around the world as civilization-forming “foundational texts.” ”

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
36 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

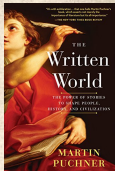
Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References






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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
36 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

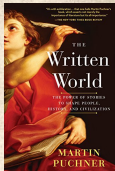
Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References







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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
36 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

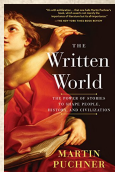
Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References








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-  Not lighting up Google Scholar [↗](#)

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
36 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

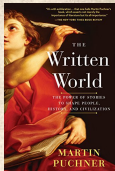
Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References









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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
36 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

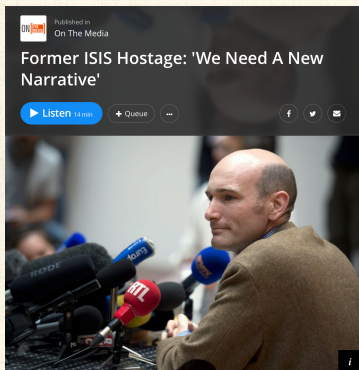
Emotional Arcs




Moving ahead

References



Story Wars:



 Nicholas Hénin 
French Journalist,
held captive for 10
months .

The PoCverse
What's the Story?
37 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
38 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
38 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
38 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
38 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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Stories make us do all kinds of things:

The Comet Ping Pong Gunman Answers Our Reporter's Questions: [↗](#)



🗑️ “According to court documents, Mr. Welch said he had come armed to help rescue the children.”

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
39 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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- 📦 “According to court documents, Mr. Welch said he had come armed to help rescue the children.”
- 📦 “ “The intel on this wasn’t 100 percent,” he said.”

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
39 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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- ☰ “According to court documents, Mr. Welch said he had come armed to help rescue the children.”
- ☰ “ “The intel on this wasn’t 100 percent,” he said.”
- ☰ He said he did not believe in conspiracy theories, but then added that the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks needed to be re-examined. He has listened to Alex Jones, whose radio show traffics in conspiracy theories and who once said that Mrs. Clinton “has personally murdered and chopped up” children. “He’s a bit eccentric,” Mr. Welch said. “He touches on some issues that are viable but goes off the deep end on some things.” ”

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
39 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



The Attack on the United States Capitol



Photo: Evelyn Hockstein for The Washington Post

Washington Post's massive analysis Red Flags, Bloodshed, Contagion

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
40 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



The Attack on the United States Capitol



Photo: Evelyn Hockstein for The Washington Post

Washington Post's massive analysis [↗](#)
Red Flags, Bloodshed, Contagion

Senate Chaplain Barry Black:

"These tragedies have reminded us that words matter, and that the power of life and death is in the tongue."

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
40 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs


Moving ahead

References




Massive informational misdirection as a cognitive denial of story:



“How the Chinese government fabricates social media posts for strategic distraction, not engaged argument” 

King, Pan, and Roberts,
American Political Science Review, , ,
Forthcoming. ^[15]

 Make the truth a needle in a haystack

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
41 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs


Moving ahead

References






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 Make the truth a needle in a haystack

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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
41 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs


Moving ahead

References



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“Surkov turned Russian politics into a bewildering constantly changing piece of theater. He sponsored all kinds of groups, ...no one was sure what was real or fake. ...it is a strategy of power that keeps any opposition constantly confused.”



Stories generated the first surveillance state:



 Low tech, low cost.

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
42 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Stories generated the first surveillance state:



Low tech, low cost.



Infrastructure maintained in the Social Wild by storytellers and storybelievers.

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
42 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs




Moving ahead

References



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-  Low tech, low cost.
-  Infrastructure maintained in the Social Wild by storytellers and storybelievers.
-  Omnipresence and omniscience: The end of privacy.

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
42 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Defend the Story:

The Ten Commandments:

I am the LORD thy God
No other gods before me
No graven images or
likenesses
Not take the LORD's name in
vain
Remember the sabbath day

Honour thy father and thy
mother
Thou shalt not kill
Thou shalt not commit
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Operating systems:

Windows: "No other installations before me"



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Propaganda

"If you're looking to understand what's actually happening in this country, always assume the opposite of whatever they're telling you on the big news stations," — Tucker Carlson



Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References

Defend your mind:

If a storyverse—whether it be through storytellers, groups, books, movies—tells you that all other stories are wrong, then that storyverse is false.



Book (story) burning ↗ (451 °F)



The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
45 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References

The American Dream = Rags to Riches



Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy


Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead


References


The American Dream = Rags to Riches

 The story that anyone can become King or Queen.



The American Dream = Rags to Riches

 The story that anyone can become King or Queen.

 Story of individual, not the collective.



The American Dream = Rags to Riches

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🧱 But we know about fame and success:



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🧱 But we know about fame and success:
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The American Dream = Rags to Riches

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🧱 Stories of societies can only hold if they have been and remain believable.

🧱 “Entertaining beliefs in economic mobility”: Effort to understand if rags to riches stories in popular culture affect people’s lives. [14]



If not Trump, what? [↗](#), David Brooks, New York Times, 2016-04-29:

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
47 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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"We'll probably need a new national story.

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
47 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead


References



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"I don't know what the new national story will be, but maybe it will be less individualistic and more redemptive."




If not Trump, what? , David Brooks, New York Times, 2016-04-29:

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"I don't know what the new national story will be, but maybe it will be less individualistic and more redemptive. Maybe it will be a story about communities that heal those who suffer from addiction, broken homes, trauma, prison and loss, a story of those who triumph over the isolation, social instability and dislocation so common today."



Claim: Stories must have “real” substance to endure over generations³

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
48 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs


Moving ahead

References



³Reality is being tested harshly

Claim: Stories must have “real” substance to endure over generations³

 Enormous disasters: Fabrications of real experiences.




³Reality is being tested harshly

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Enormous disasters: Fabrications of real experiences.

Plain old making stuff up: A million little pieces 

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
48 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References




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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
48 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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- ❏ Self-plagiarism and more standard badness: [Jonah Lehrer](#).



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Amazingly: Made up Bob Dylan quotes.
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 - Wikipedia's has a list of [famous fake memoirs](#).
 - Expansive plagiarism: [How Opal Mehta Got Kissed, Got Wild, and Got a Life](#). #kudos
 - Self-plagiarism and more standard badness: [Jonah Lehrer](#). Amazingly: Made up Bob Dylan quotes.
 - Lance Armstrong. Also got to meet Oprah.
- Enormous power: Fiction that speaks to real experiences.



³Reality is being tested harshly



"The game story space of professional sports: Australian Rules Football" ↗

Kiley, Reagan, Mitchell, Danforth, and Dodds.

Physical Review E, **93**, 052314, 2016. [13]

The PoCVerse
What's the Story?
49 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

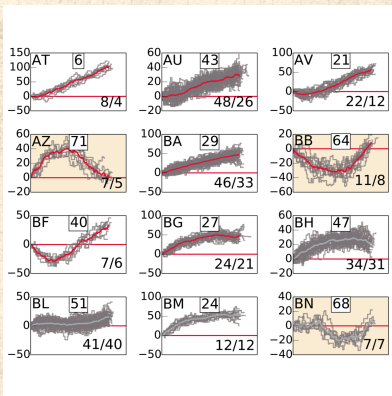
Taxonomy

Essence

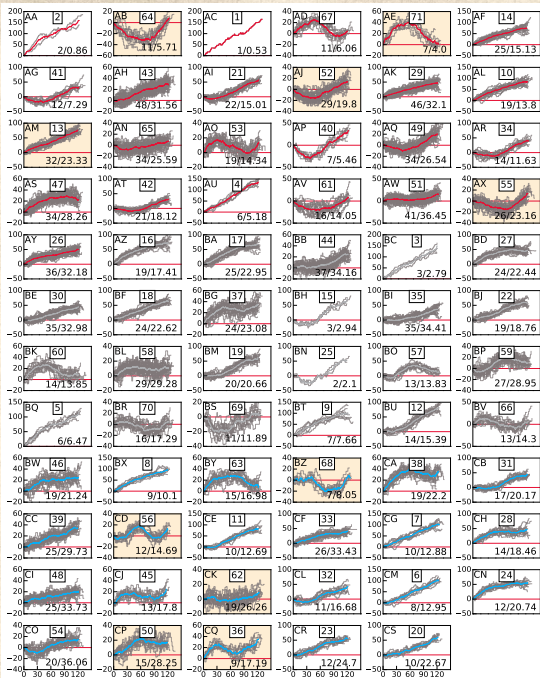
Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Sports = Spontaneous story producing systems



The PoCverse
What's the Story?
50 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs



Moving ahead

References



The story trap by Philip Ball, 2015-11-12



-  “We use neat stories to explain everything from sports matches to symphonies. Is it time to leave the nursery of the mind?”
-  “...we might wonder if the ultimate intelligibility of the universe will be determined not so much by the capacity of our minds to formulate the appropriate concepts and equations, but by whether we can find a meaningful story to tell about it.”

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
51 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References




Competitive Punning, The Economist, 2017-08-12



The quip and the dread

Why English is such a great language for puns

Gamers now even take part in world champunships

 Punster pseudonym: “Punder Enlightening”

Being funny, a grand challenge for AI:

 Wired (2014-04-01): It's Comedian vs. Computer in
a Battle for Humor Supremacy . Myq Kaplan
pun-off.

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
52 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References




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 Pun-free paper title: “Generating Novel Puns and Plays of Word with Machine Learning”

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
52 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References




Competitive Punning, The Economist, 2017-08-12



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 “Warning: This paper may cause the reader to groan to death.”

The PoCSverse
What’s the Story?
52 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

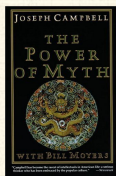
Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

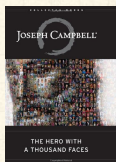
References



The "I wonder who wrote this?" Great Man Theory:



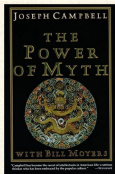
"The Power of Myth" [a](#) [↗](#)
by Campbell and Moyers (1991). [6]



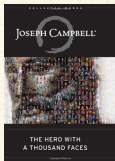
"The Hero with a Thousand Faces" [a](#) [↗](#)
by Joseph Campbell (2008). [5]



The "I wonder who wrote this?" Great Man Theory:



"The Power of Myth" [a](#) [↗](#)
by Campbell and Moyers (1991). ^[6]



"The Hero with a Thousand Faces" [a](#) [↗](#)
by Joseph Campbell (2008). ^[5]

Highly influential but it's a trap! [↗](#)



Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence



Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References

How to write a screenplay:



"Save the Cat!"  
by Blake Snyder (2005). ^[20]





9 acts.



How to write a screenplay:



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9 acts.





Someone important to the main characters gets toasted in the second act, blah, blah.



How to write a screenplay:



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Believes irony is key.



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Logline = one or two sentence summary.



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9 acts.



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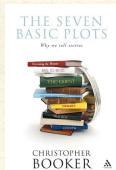
Logline = one or two sentence summary.



Logline fails to be a summary of logline.



Seven "good" stories?:



"The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories" [a](#) [↗](#)
by Christopher Booker (2005). ^[3]

- 🧱 Seven Gateways to the Underworld (?)
- 🧱 Overcoming the Monster ×2 and the Thrilling escape from Death (plot).
- 🧱 Rags to Riches (plot).
- 🧱 The Quest (plot).
- 🧱 Voyage and Return (plot).
- 🧱 Comedy ×2 (plot but really structure).
- 🧱 Tragedy ×3 (plot).
- 🧱 Rebirth (plot).
- 🧱 The Dark Power: From Shadow into Light (master structure).

The PoCVerse
What's the Story?
55 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs


Moving ahead

References



The taxonomy of stories:


- **ANIMAL TALES** 1-299
 - Wild Animals 1-99
 - The Clever Fox (Other Animal) 1-69
 - Other Wild Animals 70-99
 - Wild Animals and Domestic Animals 100-149
 - Wild Animals and Humans 150-199
 - Domestic Animals 200-219
 - Other Animals and Objects 220-299
- **TALES OF MAGIC** 300-749
 - Supernatural Adversaries 300-399
 - Supernatural or Enchanted Wife (Husband) or Other Relative 400-459
 - Wife 400-424
 - Husband 425-449
 - Brother or Sister 450-459
 - Supernatural Tasks 460-499
 - Supernatural Helpers 500-559
 - Magic Objects 560-649
 - Supernatural Power or Knowledge 650-699
 - Other Tales of the Supernatural 700-749
- **RELIGIOUS TALES** 750-849
 - God Rewards and Punishes 750-779
 - The Truth Comes to Light 780-799
 - Heaven 800-809
 - The Devil 810-826
 - Other Religious Tales 827-849
- **REALISTIC TALES** 850-999
 - The Man Marries the Princess 850-869
 - The Woman Marries the Prince 870-879
 - Proofs of Fidelity and Innocence 880-899
 - The Obstinate Wife Learns to Obey 900-909
 - Good Precepts 910-919
 - Clever Acts and Words 920-929

Folkloristics: 



Academic area formally started around 1900.




Aarne-Thompson classification systems 



Motif-based taxonomy.



Online classification database 

The PoCVerse
What's the Story?
56 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence


Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead


References






"Computational folkloristics" 
Abello, Broadwell, and Tangherlini,
Communications of the ACM, **55**, 60–70, 2012. ^[1]







Motivation: "As a simple, historical example from the Danish materials, no one has yet classified (according to the ATU index) the several thousand fairy tales in the collections of the Danish Folklore Archive (<http://www.dafos.dk> ) , nor does it seem anyone ever will."





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 'Imagine a system in which the complexities of a folklore corpus can be explored at different levels of resolution, from the broad perspective of "distant reading" down to the narrow perspective of traditional "close reading." 





"The phylogeny of Little Red Riding Hood"

Jamshid J. Tehrani,
PLoS ONE, **8**, e78871, 2013. [21]

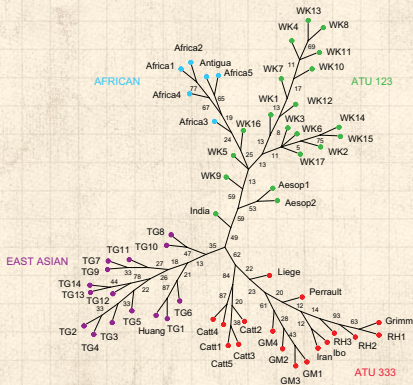


Figure 2. Majority-rules consensus of the most parsimonious trees returned by the cladistic analysis of the tales. Major groupings are labelled by region or ATU international type and indicated by the coloured nodes. Sub-types are indicated in the taxa labels (RH = Little Red Riding Hood; GM = Story of Grandmother; Catt = Catterinella; WK = The Wolf and the Kid; TG = Tiger Grandmother). Variants by particular authors, or from countries/ethnic groups that are discussed in the text have individual labels. Numbers beside the edges represent the level of support for individual clades returned by the bootstrap analysis.
doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0078871.g002

The PoCverse
What's the Story?
58 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs


Moving ahead

References



The taxonomy of stories:

Fundamental arcs:

 Kill the Monster.

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
59 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs



Moving ahead

References



The taxonomy of stories:

Fundamental arcs:

-  Kill the Monster.
-  Rags to Riches (and Riches to Rags—*Metamorphosis*).

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
59 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs




Moving ahead

References



The taxonomy of stories:





Fundamental arcs:

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-  Rags to Riches (and Riches to Rags—*Metamorphosis*).
-  Journey/Odyssey: Search for a salvation, a “Holy Grail”.



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-  Narratives in Left Nullspace: Again, All Stories of The Many.



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What about comedies?



The taxonomy of stories:

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- 🧱 Romance.
- 🧱 Narratives in Left Nullspace: Again, All Stories of The Many.

What about comedies?

- 🧱 Comedies are not in themselves a story, but a way of telling stories.



Stories are algorithms for life:

Homo narrativus:

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
60 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs


Moving ahead

References



Stories are algorithms for life:

Homo narrativus:

 Provide dynamic paths and trajectories.

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
60 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs


Moving ahead


References



Stories are algorithms for life:

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 Provide dynamic paths and trajectories.

 If this, then that.

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
60 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Stories are algorithms for life:

Homo narrativus:

- Provide dynamic paths and trajectories.
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- Convey and reinforce how to behave, how not to behave.

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
60 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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Homo narrativus:

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- Full ecology of stories =
Competing, self-defending operating system for people's minds.



Stories are algorithms for life:

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Proverbs as algorithms (hero: Wolfgang Mieder):



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Proverbs as algorithms (hero: Wolfgang Mieder):

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- "A stitch in time saves nine."



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- "A stitch in time saves nine."
- "Look before you leap."



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- "Anti-aphorism: The one who hesitates is lost."



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- "A stitch in time saves nine."
- "Look before you leap."
- "Anti-aphorism: The one who hesitates is lost."
- Understanding randomness: "Shirt happens"



Hatchings, Matchings, and Dispatchings:

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
61 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



The boiled-down essence of stories:

The three fundamental events of (non-clone) life:

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
62 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs


Moving ahead

References



The boiled-down essence of stories:

The three fundamental events of (non-clone) life:

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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
62 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



The boiled-down essence of stories:

The three fundamental events of (non-clone) life:

- 🧱 Hatchings, Matchings, and Dispatchings.
- 🧱 Stories encode survival algorithms.

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
62 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs




Moving ahead

References



The boiled-down essence of stories:

The three fundamental events of (non-clone) life:

-  Hatchings, Matchings, and Dispatchings.
-  Stories encode survival algorithms.
-  Survival algorithms for individuals and groups.

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
62 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs





Moving ahead

References



The boiled-down essence of stories:

The three fundamental events of (non-clone) life:

-  Hatchings, Matchings, and Dispatchings.
-  Stories encode survival algorithms.
-  Survival algorithms for individuals and groups.
-  Dynamic paths: the true, the possible, the unlikely.

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
62 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs






Moving ahead

References



The boiled-down essence of stories:

The three fundamental events of (non-clone) life:

-  Hatchings, Matchings, and Dispatchings.
-  Stories encode survival algorithms.
-  Survival algorithms for individuals and groups.
-  Dynamic paths: the true, the possible, the unlikely.
-  The unifying theme of existence is existence.

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
62 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Storytellers

Stories

Power


Taxonomy


Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References

Kurt Vonnegut on the Shapes of Stories 

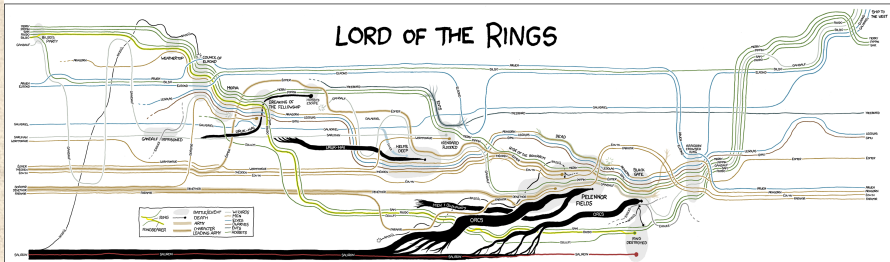
Longer piece  with bonus stories (Metamorphosis and Hamlet).



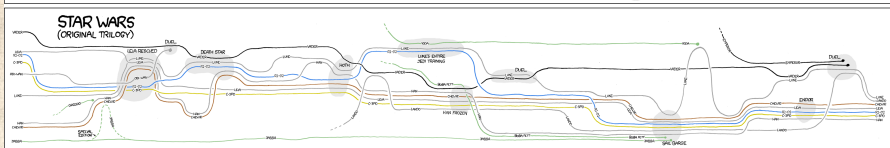
Emotional arcs are not plots. Neither are character paths:

THESE CHARTS SHOW MOVIE CHARACTER INTERACTIONS.
THE HORIZONTAL AXIS IS TIME. THE VERTICAL GROUPING OF THE
LINES INDICATES WHICH CHARACTERS ARE TOGETHER AT A GIVEN TIME.

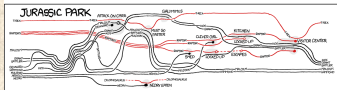
LORD OF THE RINGS



STAR WARS (ORIGINAL TRILOGY)



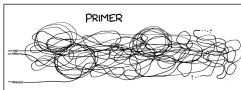
JURASSIC PARK



12 ANGRY MEN

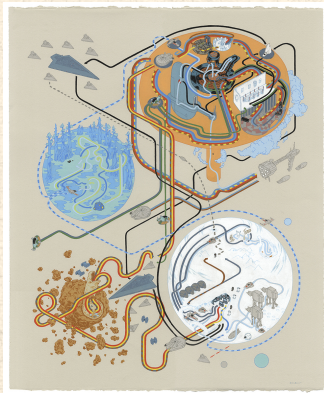


PRIMER





“Plotted: A Literary Atlas” [a](#) [↗](#)
by Andrew DeGraff (2015). ^[9]



The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
65 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



<http://www.andrewdegraff.com/moviemaps/> [↗](#)

Storytellers

Stories

Power

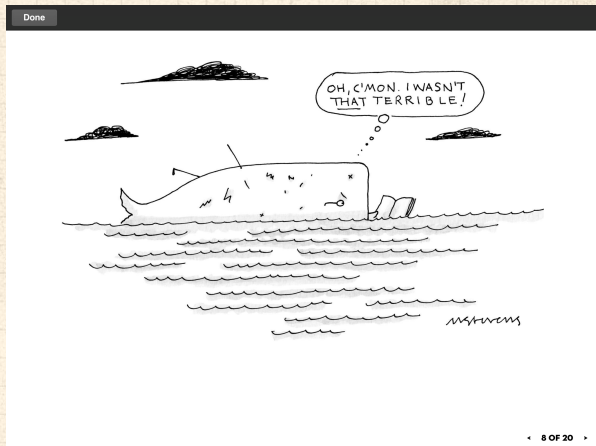
Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



The New Yorker, December 16, 2013, p. 56.



Ron Swanson on metaphors:

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
67 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References

🧱 "I hate metaphors. That's why my favorite book is Moby Dick. No frou-frou symbolism.



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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
67 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References

🧱 "I hate metaphors. That's why my favorite book is Moby Dick. No frou-frou symbolism. Just a good, simple tale about a man who hates an animal."



Aside: From a 2013 Believer Magazine [↗](#)
interview with Maurice Sendak [↗](#):

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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
68 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
68 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
68 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
68 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
68 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
68 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

[Emotional Arcs](#)

Moving ahead

References



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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
68 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
68 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
68 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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The PoCVerse
What's the Story?
68 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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The PoCVerse
What's the Story?
68 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
68 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead


References



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The PoCVerse
What's the Story?
68 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead


References




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 The essential (true) Colbert interview: [Pt. 1](#) and [Pt. 2](#).

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
68 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

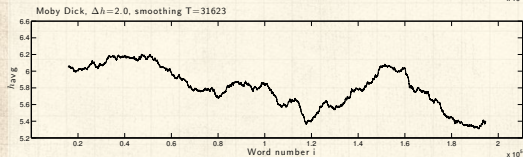
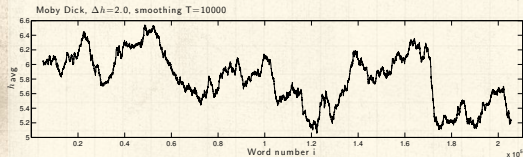
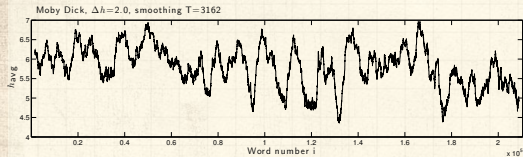
Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References

The emotional shapes of stories—Moby Dick:



Ⓒ $h_{avg}(\text{Last } 10\%)=5.69$
 $< h_{avg}(\text{First } 25\%)=6.20$



The PoCVerse What's the Story?

70 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

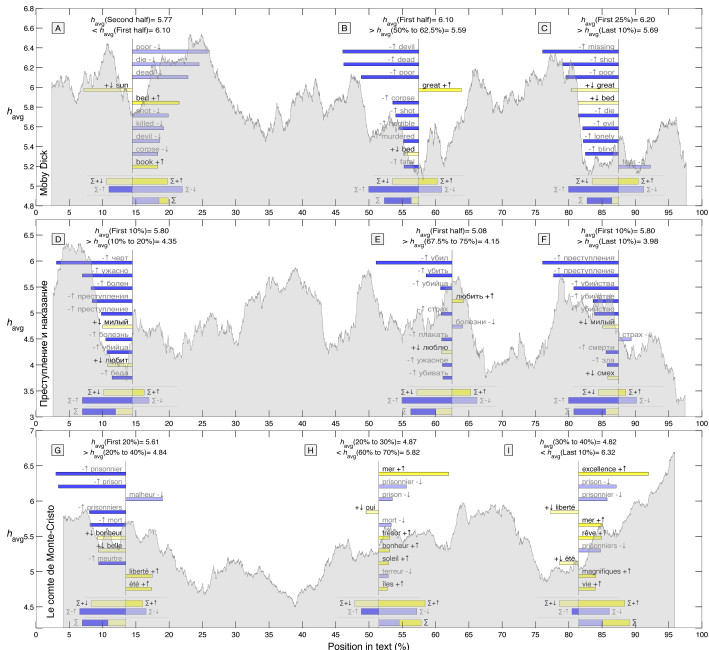
Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



Online, interactive Emotional Shapes of Stories for 10,000+ books:

Frankenstein; Or the Modern Prometheus [\(wiki\)](#)

by Mary Shelley

Search Gutenberg Corpus

by Title ▾

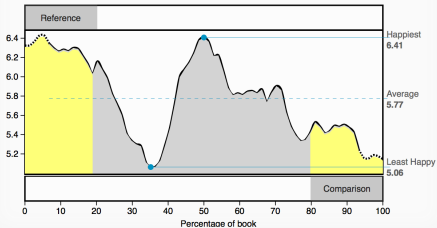
Classics ▾

Harry Potter ▾

Random

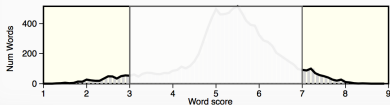
Book happiness time series:

Explore the work's emotional dynamics by sliding and resizing the reference and comparison sections.



Lens (for advanced users):

Slide and resize the stop-window to change the lens:

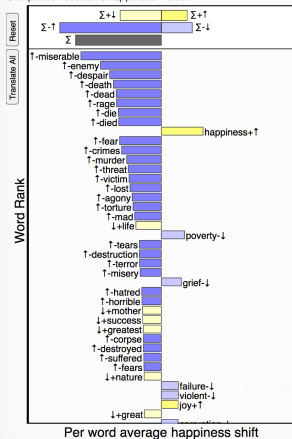


Word Shift:

Why comparison section is less happy than the reference one

Reference sections's happiness = 6.31

Comparison section's happiness = 5.35



Online, interactive Emotional Shapes of Stories for 10,000+ books:

Harry Potter (all books together)

by J.K. Rowling

Search Gutenberg Corpus

by Title ▾

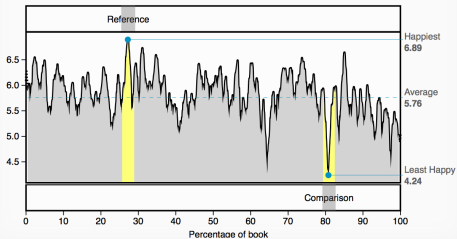
Classics ▾

Harry Potter ▾

Random

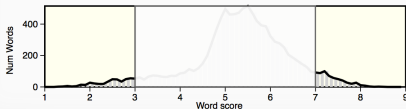
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Explore the work's emotional dynamics by sliding and resizing the reference and comparison sections.



Lens (for advanced users):

Slide and resize the stop-window to change the lens:

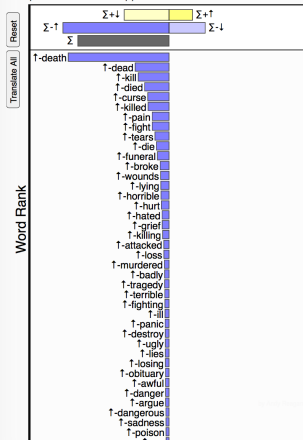


Word Shift:

Why comparison section is less happy than the reference one

Reference section's happiness = 6.13

Comparison section's happiness = 5.14



Online, interactive Emotional Shapes of Stories for 1,000+ movie scripts:

Pulp Fiction

directed by Quentin Tarantino

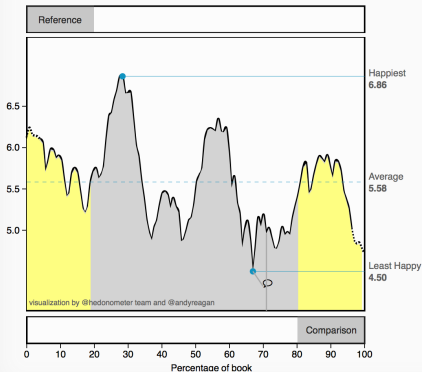
Classics ▾

Team Picks ▾

Random

Movie happiness time series:

Explore the work's emotional dynamics by sliding and resizing the reference and comparison sections.



Movie script:

Portion of script scored for each point in timeseries.

Zed takes the chair, sits it in front of the two prisoners, then lowers into it. Maynard hands The Gimp's leash to Zed, then backs away.

MAYNARD
(to The Gimp)
Down!

The Gimp gets on its knees.

Maynard hangs back while Zed appraises the two men.

MAYNARD
Who's first?

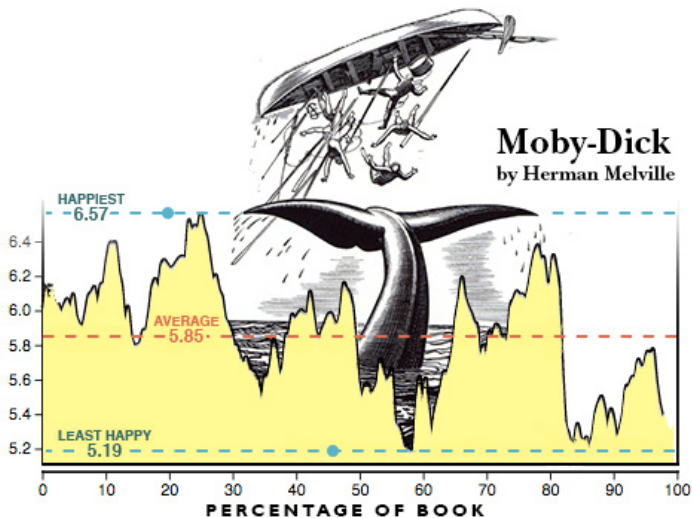
ZED
I ain't fer sure yet.

Then with his little finger, Zed does a silent "Eenie, meeny, miney, moe..." just his mouth mouthing the words and his finger going back and forth between the two.

Butch and Marsellus are terrified.

Maynard looks back and forth at the victims.

The Gimp's eyes go from one to the other inside the mask.

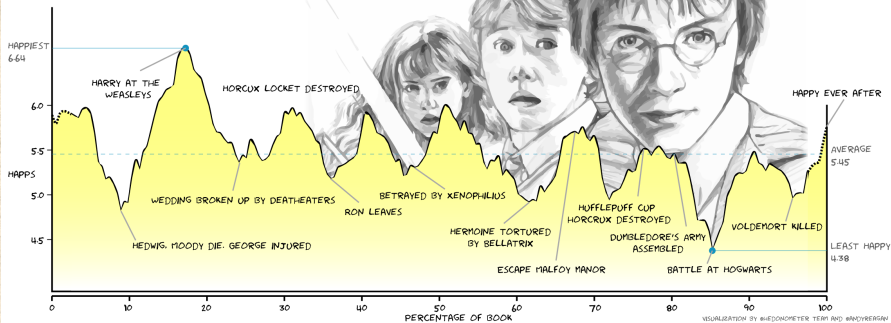


Moby-Dick illustration by Rockwell Kent, 1930




Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

by J.K. Rowling



VISUALIZATION BY @HEDONMETER TEAM AND @AMYBERGAIN
ILLUSTRATION BY NRECH (@STRAY_CATS @OZYNE.COM)



"The emotional arcs of stories are dominated by six basic shapes" 

Reagan, Mitchell, Danforth, Dodds, and Dodds.

EPJ Data Science, **5**, 31, 2016. ^[18]



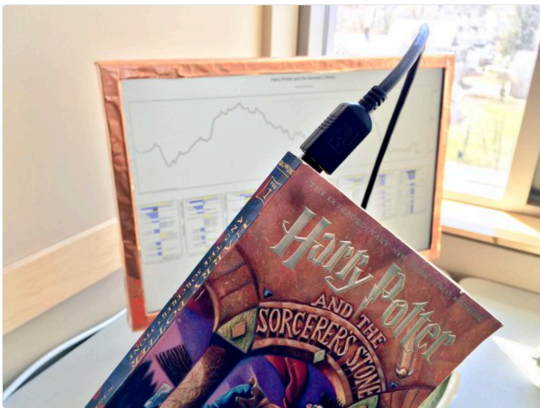
UVM ✓

@uvmvermont



Following

USB in a book? What is this wizardry? Check it out at the Student Research Conference creative lounge. #[uvmresearch](#)



RETWEETS

8

LIKES

14



9:30 AM - 28 Apr 2016

The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
76 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

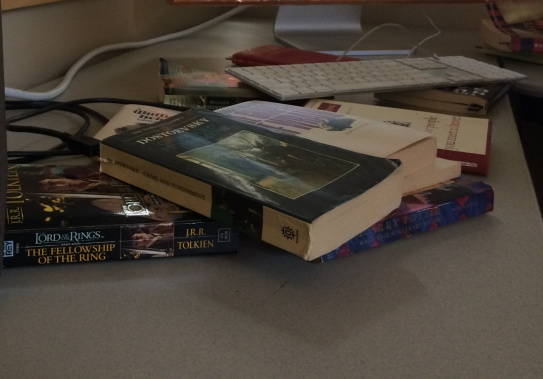
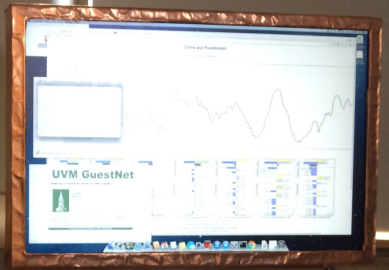
Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References





Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Plot Devices:



Emotional arcs for 1748 books from gutenberg.org

The PoCVerse
What's the Story?
79 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

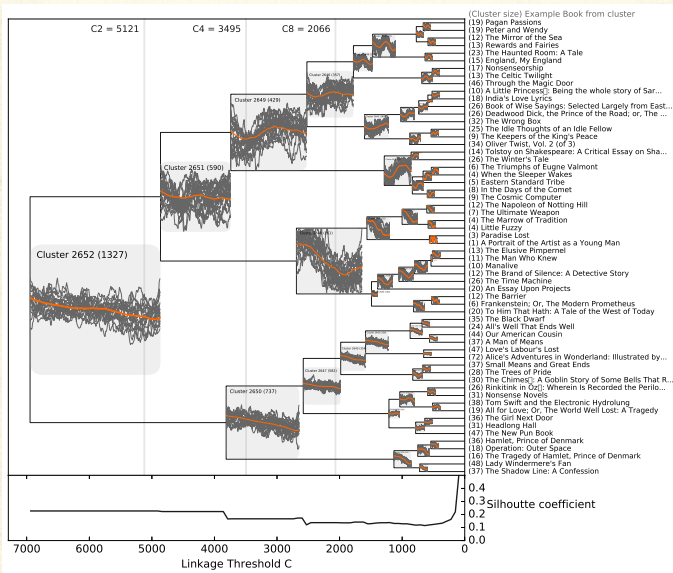
Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References



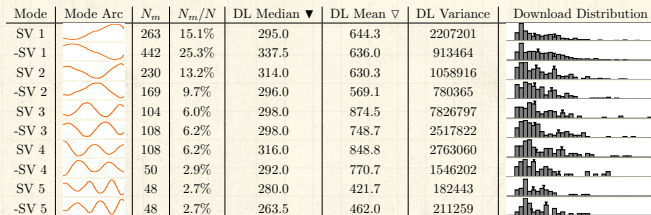
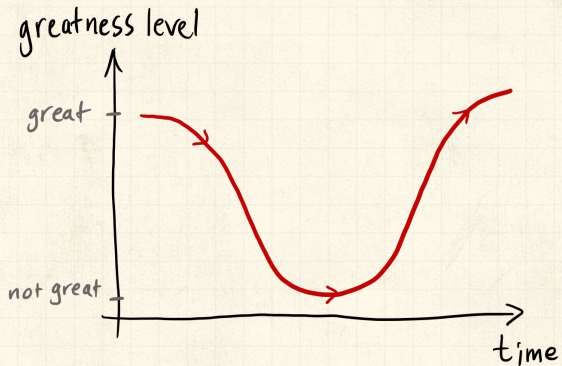


FIG. 6: Download statistics for SVD Modes with more than 2.5% of books. Modes *SV 3* through *-SV 4* (both polarities of modes 3 and 4) exhibit a higher average number of downloads and more variance than the rest.



Stories matter:



Used by Reagan and Bush in 1980.

The PoCsverse
What's the Story?
82 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

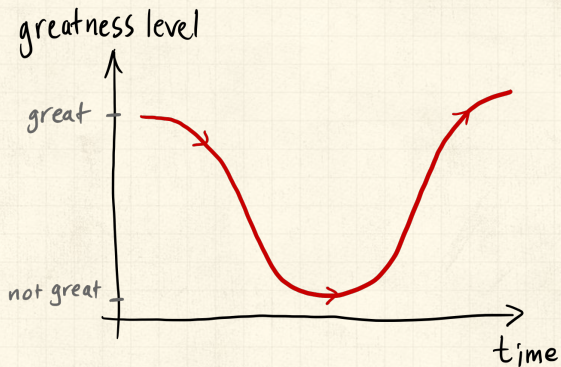
Essence


Emotional Arcs


Moving ahead

References





 Used by Reagan and Bush in 1980.

 Template used by many others including Bill Clinton.

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs


Moving ahead

References





A Science of Stories?

Stories are everything


 Probably, yes.


We talk about and study stories everywhere but ...


 We don't have a central place academically.

 Departments of: English, political science, folklore, cognitive sciences, arts, musicology, communication, ...

Organizing structure going forward:

 PLOS One foundational paper and collection⁴

 Annual meeting?

 SOCKS: Study of Online Collective Knowledge and Stories



⁴the journal formerly known as PLoS ONE

Observations/Claims/Questions:

- Primacy of storytelling and storybelieving in for individuals and populations.
- Maybe: Stories are dynamical paths; plots are algorithms that give rise to stories.
- Internet gives extraordinary power to propaganda, disinformation ↗, conspiracy theories, ...
- Global social media creates a global robust-yet-fragile social system.
 - Failure can be endogenous (infighting) and/or ignited/suported from the outside.

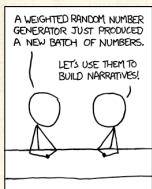


Observations/Claims/Questions:

- Basic social fabric: What is the spectrum of stories in the media being told about classes of people, from within and without.
- Story decoherence: telephone game
- What about stories about global problems like climate change? Government? Journalism?
- All separately powerful: Words, Music/Sound, Visual, ... interplay?
- Outcome: How to communicate scientific findings powerfully.

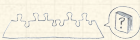


Understanding the Sociotechnocene—Stories:



ALL SPORTS COMMENTARY

xkcd.com/904/



Goal: a Science of Stories.



Claim: Homo narrativus —we run on stories.



“What’s the John Dory?”



“They’ve lost the plot/thread”



Maybe: The narrative hierarchy and the Scalability of stories.



Research: Extraction of metaphors, frames, narratives, and stories from large-scale text/corpora.



Storywrangler, POTUSometer, ...



Research: What’s the taxonomy of human stories?



Maybe: Stories ↔ Algorithms

The PoCSverse
What’s the Story?
86 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References




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The PoCSverse
What's the Story?
92 of 92

Storytellers

Stories

Power

Taxonomy

Essence

Emotional Arcs

Moving ahead

References

