



High Impact Storytelling ABS Terminology Guide

CENTRAL THEME: For maximum impact, your story needs to support one (and only) one main idea. If you have more than one, audiences will be confused, and, as the old selling adage states, “A confused mind says ‘No’; a clear mind says ‘Go!’”

MAIN CHARACTER — This is the central character. This individual faces a problem and can’t solve it alone. The story revolves around this person’s transformation as the obstacle is overcome.

EVERYDAY LIFE: This is the part of your Main Character’s life you begin your story with. It sets the stage and the context for the remaining narrative.

RELATABLE: Stories that resonate most deeply will address at least one problem your audience is experiencing. The more relatable this problem, the more interest they will have in your story.

ASPIRATION: This is the main goal your main character wants to achieve.

SUPPORTING CHARACTERS — These characters give insights into the Main Character and push the story forward.

INCITING INCIDENT — This incident introduces a change in the Main Character’s life, pushes her out of her comfort zone, and introduces the tension which creates emotion.

THE GUIDE — This is the individual/entity that provides the solution to the Main Character’s problem. In a business story, you are The Guide who helps your clients overcome their problems.

ESCALATING CONFLICT: This increase in the tension intensifies the emotion of the story and keeps listener attention and interest. This is created by a deadline, sometimes referred to as “The ticking clock.”

WISDOM OF THE GUIDE: These are the insights the Guide provides the main character that helps her overcome her challenge.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WISDOM: This is the part of the story when the Main Character begins to use the new insight’s she’s picked up from the Guide. It’s important that she doesn’t experience immediate success - show the initial struggle as she takes new action.

KEY MOMENTS: The most impactful narratives have at least two key moments — the low point and the moment of success. These are specific times in the story when the audience sees the main character struggling so much she can't succeed on her own, and the point when she overcomes the problem as accomplishes her main goal. Providing detail in these moments creates deeper emotional connection with the listener.

NEW LIFE: This is the new existence of the Main Character after overcoming the obstacle and achieving the goal. This scene is critical because it drives home the main point of the story. Additionally, when the new life your character is experiencing is similar to the life your audience wants to live, you've given them hope that they can overcome their problems, too.