



The Scientist Who Tells Stories! (And he's not alone.)

A marine biologist once interrupted a workshop I was leading to declare that stories are "the *opposite* of what I do." Science, he explained, is the rigorous study of "the many," the multiple results that definitively confirm a thesis. A story, on the other (and clearly lesser) hand, may be an isolated incident that - while compelling and memorable - ultimately proves nothing. A room full of nodding heads confirmed this wasn't an isolated opinion: as a rule, scientists don't like stories. But every rule has an exception, and this one's name is Rafael E. Luna, Ph.D. [Full story](#). Please note: Apple Mail users may need to scroll down manually.

Assess Yourself Before You Express Yourself

Those tool-making wizards at Spitfire are at it again: this month, they have released SmartScan™, a free online tool to help nonprofits assess their own communications practices (and that can help foundations ensure their grantees are making the most of every communications dollar). [Full Story](#).

Websites We Love: Welcome to Pine Point

There are plenty of creative ways to design a website, but few are as engaging and thought provoking as [Welcome to Pine Point](#). Equal parts scrapbook, public record, and love letter to the small-town-where-we-grew-up, the site is a beautiful mix of video, still images and just the right amount of text. Words fail to describe it, so just check it out and be inspired to rethink how you use the web.

Upcoming online classes at The Goodman Center

TELL BETTER STORIES

Storytelling:
Tapping the
Power of
Narrative

November 3, 10, 17 and 24
9am - 10am PT

PRESENT BETTER

Why Bad
Presentations
Happen to Good
Causes

November 19 and 20
11am - 12pm PT

WEBINAR BETTER

The Webinar
on Webinars

December 12
11am - 12pm PT

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Rafael Luna

Born and raised in Washington, DC, Dr. Luna was immersed in storytelling from an early age. His father ran a video rental store with more than 4,000 titles in stock, and Dr. Luna estimates that by the age of nine he was watching a minimum of a dozen movies a week. And he wasn't watching for pleasure alone: he would carefully analyze the storylines to help his father recommend movies to customers.

While this may read like the backstory of a Hollywood screenwriter, Dr. Luna's education took him down a different path. Scholarships in science at Southern University helped pay for college and ultimately led to a career in cancer research, first at the National Institutes of Health and eventually leading to Harvard Medical School, where Dr. Luna currently works as an Instructor. And it was at Harvard that his interest in storytelling resurfaced in a new way.

In 2011, Dr. Luna submitted a research paper on how proteins are synthesized to the scientific journal "Cell." The paper was rejected, and he felt stuck: he was confident of the importance of his research, but he also recognized that the presentation of his findings wasn't cutting it. At the same time, he was taking a creative writing course at Harvard, and he began to wonder if the principles of telling a good story could apply to the presentation of his research.

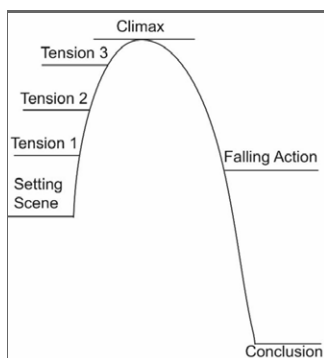


Figure 1

Specifically, Dr. Luna saw a close parallel between the dramatic arc of a story (figure 1) and the lifecycle of a research project (figure 2). He rewrote his research paper on protein synthesis following the structure in figure 2, and the new version was accepted for publication in "Cell Reports". True to his scientific side, Dr. Luna recognized that he didn't have a proven formula until he replicated it with more publications, but as submission after submission was accepted, he knew he

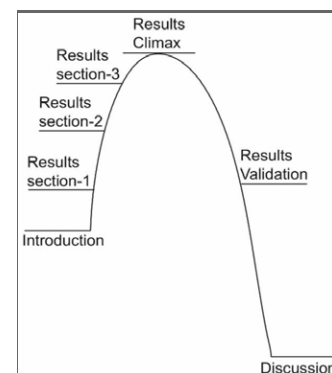
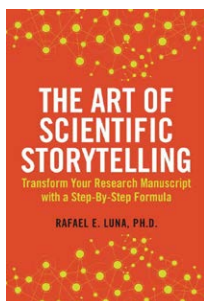


Figure 2

was onto something.



In 2013, Dr. Luna published [The Art of Scientific Storytelling](#) to share his step-by-step process with scientists seeking publication of their research findings. He has also developed a workshop based on the book and has taught at MIT, the University of Maryland-Baltimore County, Boston University Medical School, Children's Hospital Boston, Brigham Women's Hospital, University of Graz in Austria, as well as at the University of Norway in Bergen.

Dr. Luna acknowledges that there was resistance among his colleagues when he first introduced scientific storytelling. "They thought it was just a gimmick," he says. But as he continued to have his work published and helped others do the same, "I convinced them the only way I could," he adds. "With data."

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Spitfire's SmartScan™ has four modules to help organizations evaluate (1) identity and branding, (2) communications planning, (3) best practices such as storytelling, media relations, and use of social media; and (4) measurement that ensures real impact. Users of this tool can pick one of these modules or any combination to address specific concerns.



To learn more about SmartScan™ and begin your organization's self-assessment, visit www.spitfiresmartscan.org.

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free-range thinking is written by Andy Goodman and edited by Celia Hoffman. To read back issues, download free publications, and to learn more about our work, please visit www.thegoodmancenter.com.

To reach Andy directly, please call (323) 464-3956 or send an email to andy@thegoodmancenter.com.

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