Stories as Psychologically Privileged:
Using Story Structure for Course and Lesson Design in Health

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1. Describe research that demonstrates the usefulness of story structure for student understanding, engagement, and learning
2. Identify the key components of story structure that are helpful for course and lesson design
3. Create a course or lesson outline using story structure

Today’s Objectives
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Background
What’s the Evidence?

Research over the past few decades demonstrates that stories are indeed special for three reasons (Willingham, 2004):

- Comprehension
- Memory
- Attention/Engagement

People tend to be more engaged and attentive when reading stories (Britton et al., 1983; Frick, 1992; Kim, 1999)

Stories are easier to understand than expository text because we know the format (Graesser et al., 1994)

People remember stories because the pieces of information are moderately causally related forcing the person to think about the information (memory is the residue of thought) (Duffy et al., 1990)

Two Approaches

- Willingham (2009) recommends using the 4 C’s of stories when lesson planning:
  - Causality-one event leads to the next
  - Conflict—opposing forces such as disease and health
  - Complications—problems that arise within the conflict
  - Character—the major people/personalities involved

- Egan (1986) proposes using a ‘Story Form Model’:
  - Identify the importance of the topic
  - Find the binary opposites
  - Organize the content in story form
  - Conclusion or resolution
  - Evaluating whether the importance was grasped

Two Examples

- Willingham’s 4 C’s in a personal health class
- Egan’s model in a men’s health class
PRE-TEST

POST-TEST

Your Turn!!

Questions?

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References


1. What is MOST important about this topic and why should it matter to my students?

2. What are the binary opposites, or what is the 'Conflict' associated with this topic?

3. What 'Characters' might be involved with this 'Conflict'?

4. What content best articulates the topic into a developing story where each event 'Causes' or leads to the next event?

5. What are the 'Complications' one may encounter along the way to a resolution?

6. What is the healthiest way to resolve the 'Conflict'?

7. How can I evaluate my students in such a way as to know that the importance (see number one) is grasped?