

ABT FRAMEWORK BASICS

The Elements of ABT (And, But, Therefore) Universal Narrative Template

REFERENCE CARD

The **ABT Narrative Template** is a new tool for organizing the narrative structure of any amount of content. It is at the core of storytelling, logic, reason, argument and the scientific method.

It is the idea of shrinking a narrative thread down to a single sentence using three connector words: **and**, **but**, **therefore**. It embodies the three forces of narrative:

AGREEMENT – and

CONTRADICTION – but

CONSEQUENCE – therefore

You can
also think
of it as:

SET UP – and

PROBLEM – but

SOLUTION/ACTION – therefore

The ABT Narrative Template was developed in 2012 by scientist-turned-filmmaker Randy Olson, though its origin reaches back thousands of years to Aristotle and the beginning of narrative culture.

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

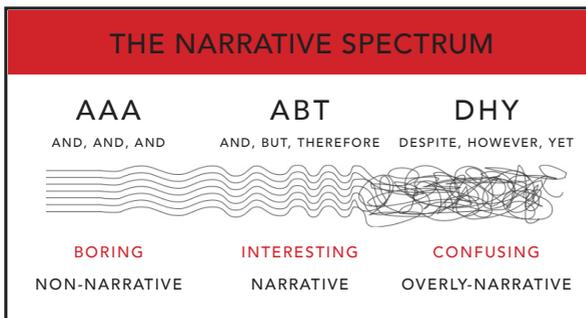
Good Narrative Form

ABT (And, But, Therefore) – the optimal amount of narrative content

Bad Narrative Form

AAA (And, And, And) – too little narrative (no contradiction = no narrative content)

DHY (Despite, However, Yet) – too much narrative content (multiple contradictions)



The Narrative Spectrum is the fundamental tool for **NARRATIVE ANALYSIS**.

For further **ABT** insight:
www.StoryCirclesTraining.com

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THE ABT?

The one sentence elevator pitch: A one-sentence elevator pitch, as brief as it might be, will still be boring without narrative structure.

It needs set up (and), contradiction (but), consequence (therefore).

Focus: The ABT leads you to the central narrative of your argument/story/theory/concept.

Opposing goals: You want to express your idea in the fewest words (to be **CONCISE**), yet you also want impact (to be **COMPELLING**). This is the challenge that requires intuition to solve: to be short enough to be concise, yet long enough to be compelling. There is no set length for an ABT.

Quick AB, Detailed T: as you master the ABT, you will realize that, “the quicker you get through the A and B, the more T everyone wants”.

Basically, give us a quick, compelling set up that hooks us and we’ll be eager to hear what your solution/action is in response to it.



WHO USES THE ABT?

Government Agencies – The ABT can be found in a climate report from the National Park Service and a communications handbook for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The Scientific Method – The Scientific Method is built around the ABT, which underlies the IMRAD Narrative Template for scientific papers.

Great Speeches, Poems, and even Nursery Rhymes –

**Little Miss Muffet sat on a tuffet,
(AND) eating her curds and whey
(BUT) along came a spider who sat down beside her
and (THEREFORE) frightened Miss Muffet away.**

A FEW QUESTIONS ANSWERED...

How do you learn it? You need **NARRATIVE TRAINING**;

think of it like physical fitness training, conditioning the narrative part of the brain over time.

Didn't we learn the ABT in elementary school? Yes and no.

You learned the basics of drama, but it's never been reduced down to the simplicity of the ABT.

Isn't it good for only one paragraph?

The ABT structure applies to all scales; the ultimate goal is to craft 'a story made up of stories'.

Is the ABT only good for outreach? The ABT structure underpins everything from the most detailed scientific research paper to the silliest joke.

Okay, I've got the words memorized, am I done?

You've only started. Narrative has infinite and endless complexity.