

What's the Story?

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Principles of Complex Systems, Vols. 1, 2, & 3D
CSYS/MATH 300, 303, & 394, 2022-2023 | @pocsvox

Prof. Peter Sheridan Dodds | @peterdodds

Computational Story Lab | Vermont Complex Systems Center
Santa Fe Institute | University of Vermont



The PoCVerse
What's the Story?

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Storytellers

Stories

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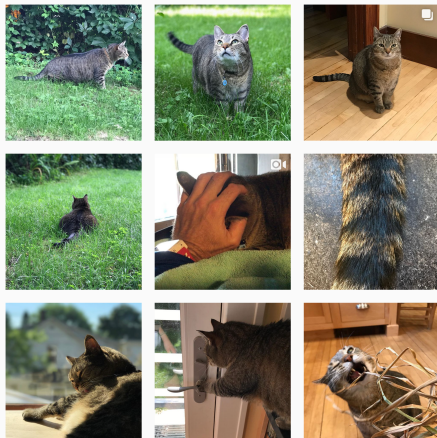
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 On Instagram at [pratchett_the_cat](https://www.instagram.com/pratchett_the_cat) 

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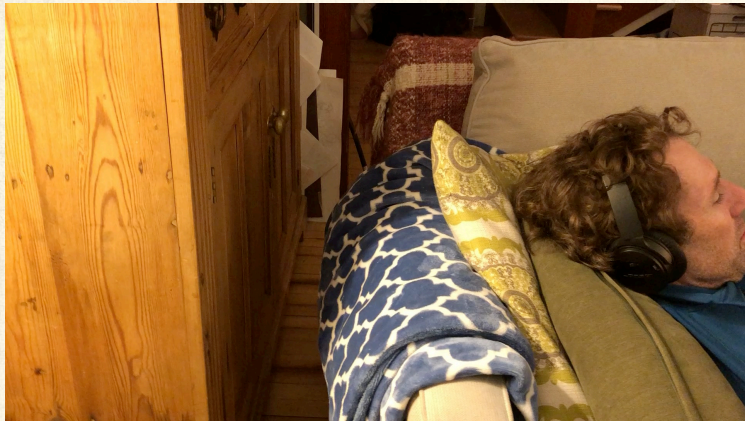
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Story editor  



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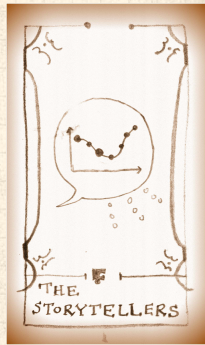
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References



Every can opener is a possible pillow.

THE LURE OF A BRIGHT IDEA	THE SEARCH FOR ELEMENTALS	MANIFESTO	SEAL OF SIXES	INNOVATING POWER	TRANSFORMATION	KNOWN WORLDS	THE LIGHT GUY EISHER	SCIENTIFIC METHOD	THE LAW OF DIGITS FIRST	THE CURIOUS CASE OF GRAVITY	THE PYRAMID OF TIME	
THE MANY FACES OF MOON TEXT	DRESSMAKER	SODA, FOOD	THE BIGGER BOOK	THE CHalice OF HOLY WINE	THE BOOK THAT PREACHES TO THE WIND	THE CHAPTERS OF OLD WINE	THE CHAPTERS OF CHEMISTRY	THE MYSTERY OF MATHEMATICS	THE MYSTERY OF THINKING	IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES	THE MYSTERY OF GRAVITY	THE MYSTERY OF MATHEMATICS
THE MYSTERY OF MATHEMATICS	THE MYSTERY OF CHEMISTRY	THE MYSTERY OF WINGS	THE MYSTERY OF BUBBLES	THE MYSTERY OF NOT A PERFECT	THE MYSTERY OF NOT A PERFECT	THE MYSTERY OF NETWORKS	THE MYSTERY OF NETWORKS	THE MYSTERY OF NETWORKS	THE MYSTERY OF NETWORKS	THE MYSTERY OF NETWORKS	THE MYSTERY OF NETWORKS	THE MYSTERY OF NETWORKS
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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.

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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:

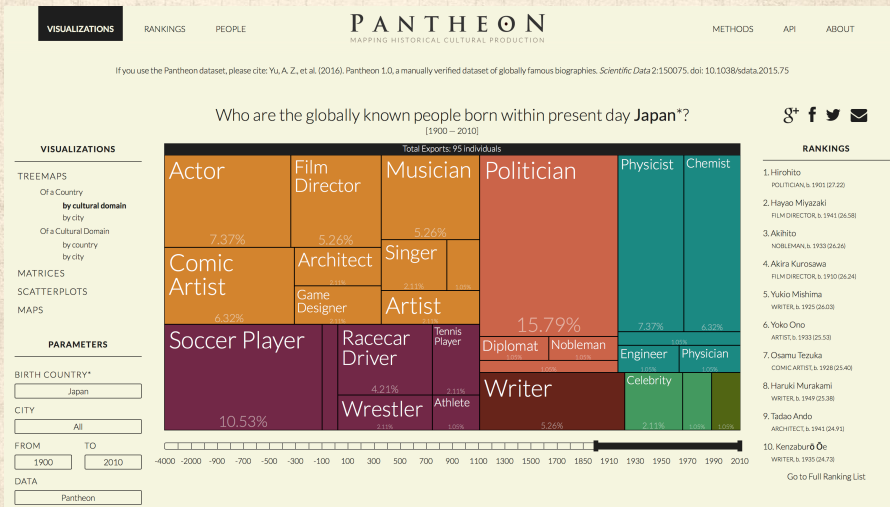
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- 📦 All sport.
- 📦 Video games.
- 📦 Religions, ideologies, belief systems, Freemasons, ...
- 📦 Enduring coherent groups: Cultures, countries, cities, ...

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:

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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*

United States

CITY

All

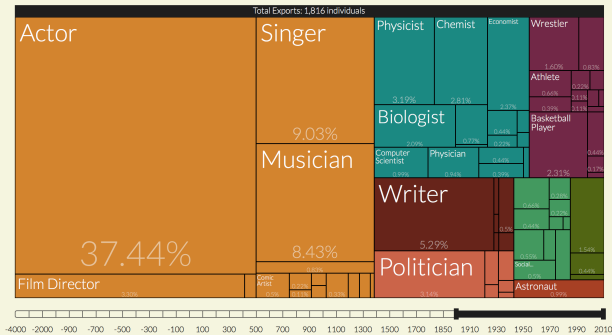
FROM TO

1900 2010

DATA

Pantheon

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:

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



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TREEMAPS

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

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MAPS

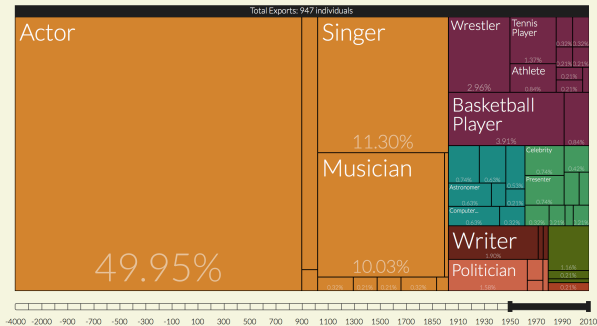
PARAMETERS

BIRTH COUNTRY*

CITY

FROM TO

DATA



RANKINGS

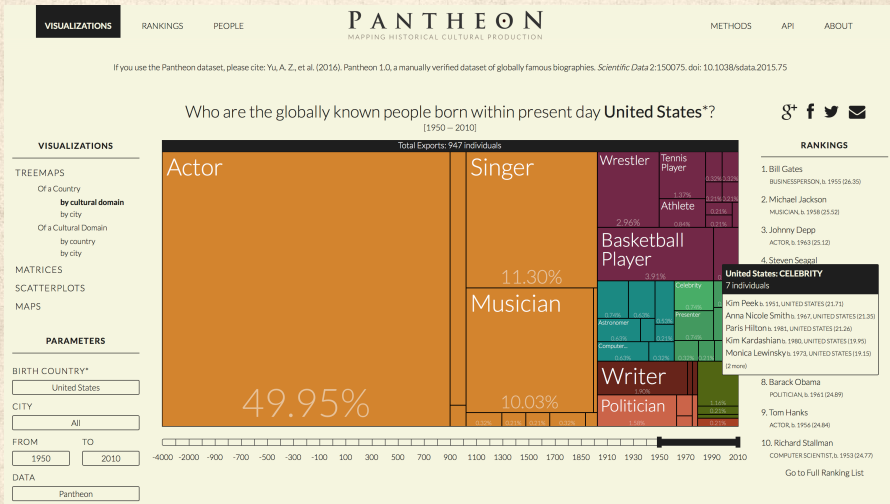
1. Bill Gates
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2. Michael Jackson
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3. Johnny Depp
ACTOR, b. 1963 (25.12)
4. Steven Seagal
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5. Robin Williams
ACTOR, b. 1951 (25.08)
6. Stevie Wonder
SINGER, b. 1950 (25.02)
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9. Tom Hanks
ACTOR, b. 1956 (24.84)
10. Richard Stallman
COMPUTER SCIENTIST, b. 1953 (24.77)

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For people born 1950–

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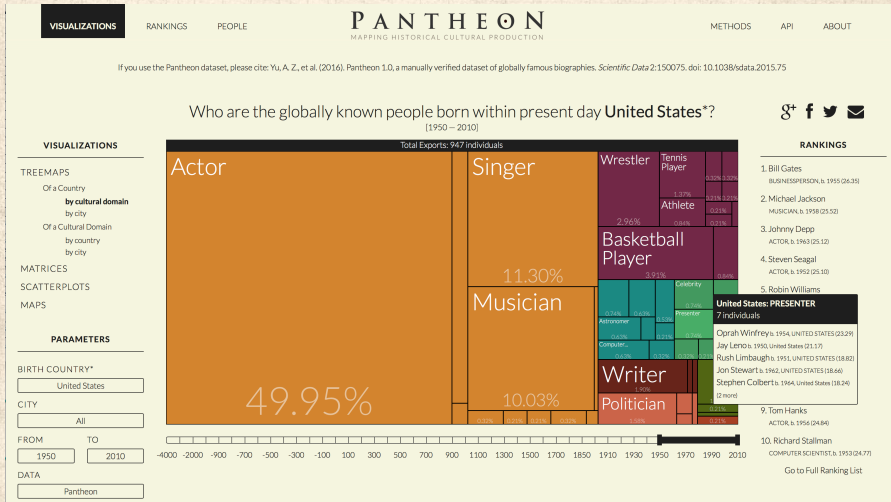
The famous are storytellers—United States:



For people born 1950–

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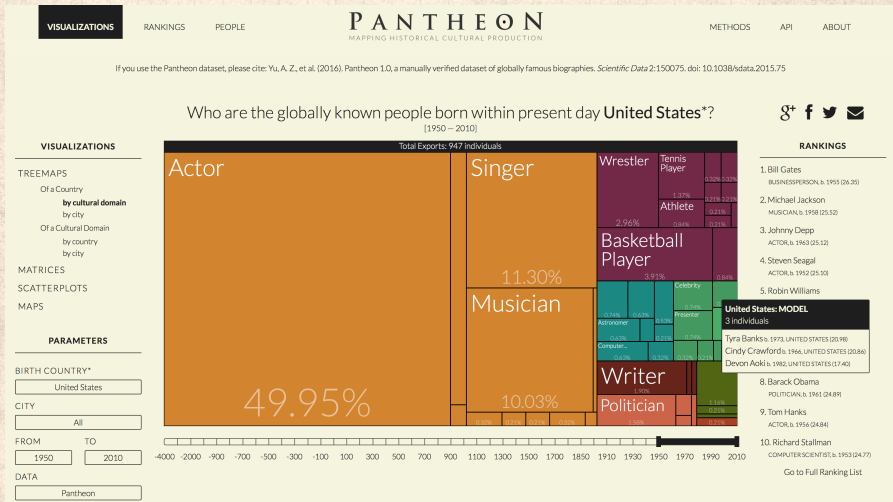
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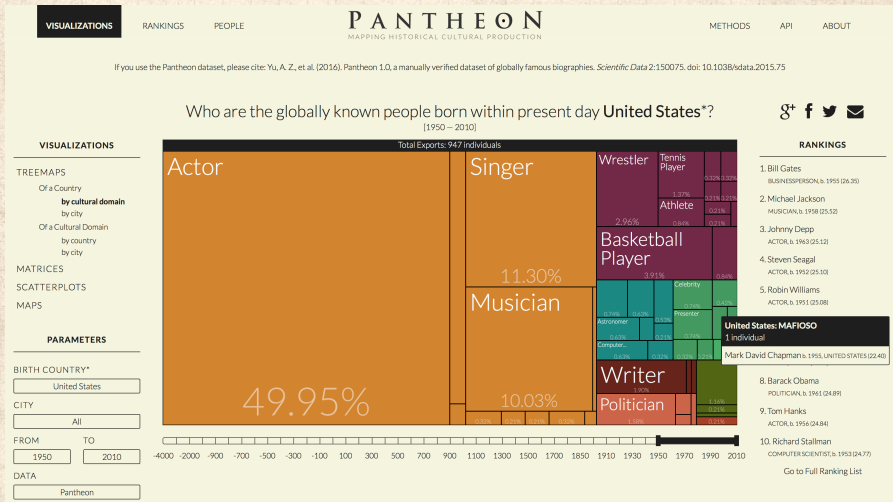
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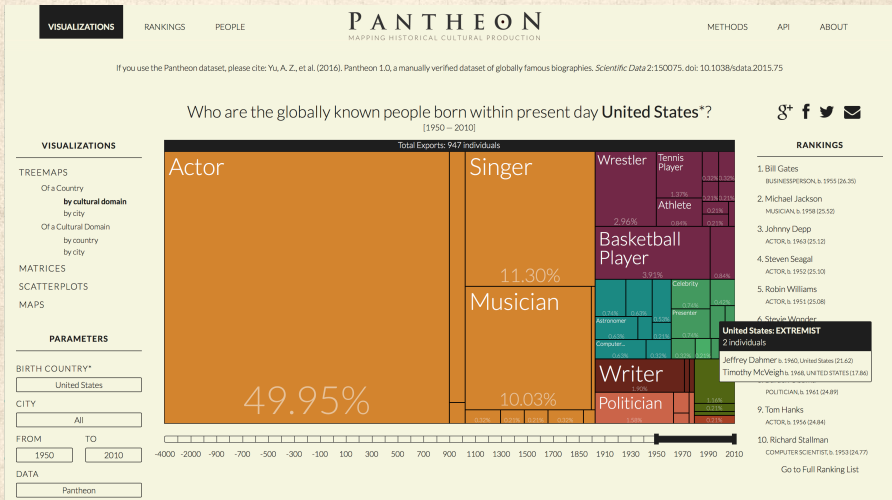
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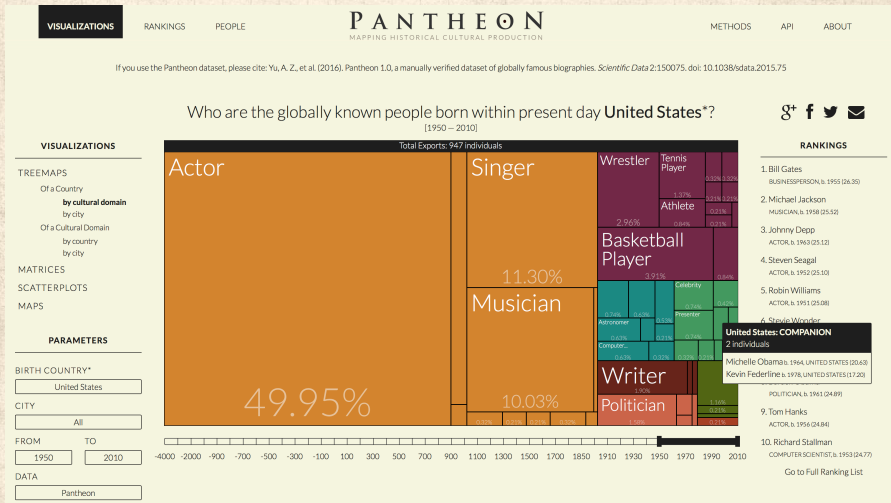
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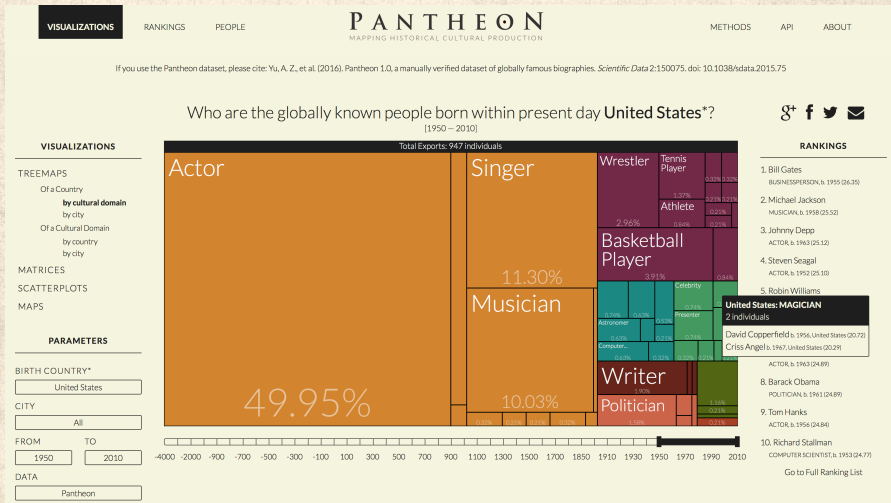
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The famous are storytellers—United States:

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

[1950 – 2010]



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- Of a Country
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United States

CITY

All

FROM

1950

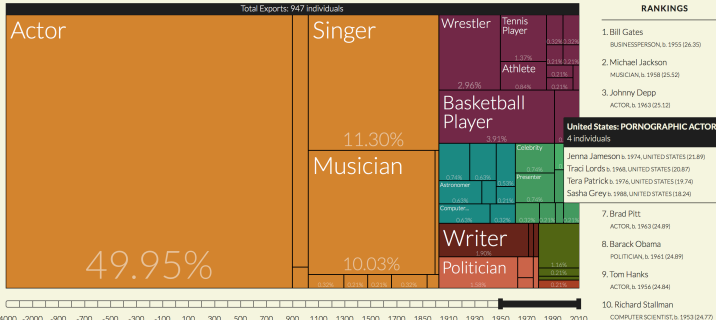
TO

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)

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For people born 1950–

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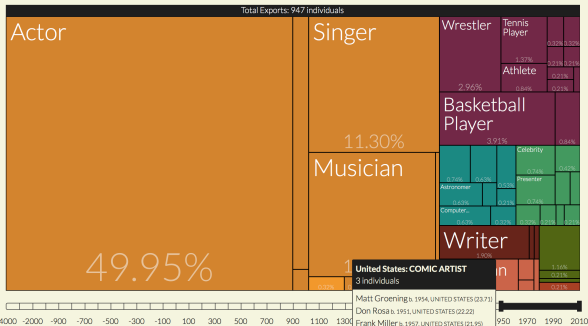
All

FROM TO

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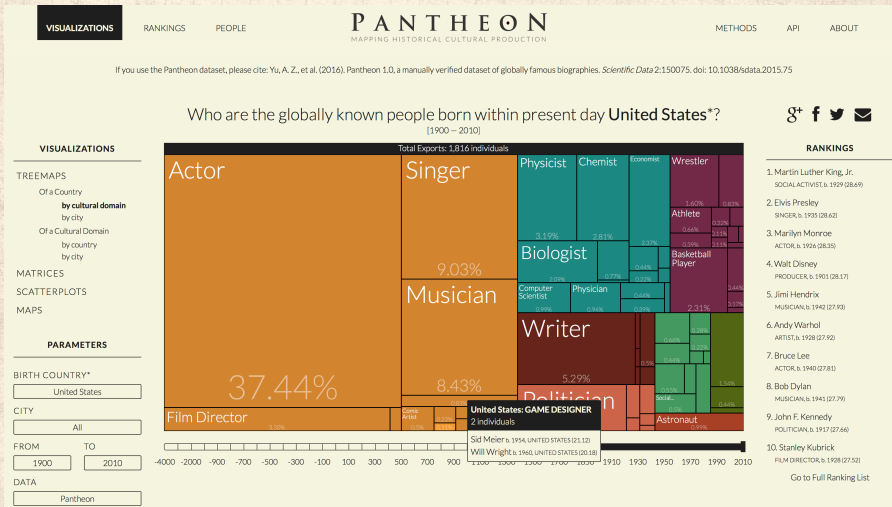
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For people born 1950–

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

Storytellers win:



For people born 1900–

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Storytellers win:

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Who are the globally known people born within present day United States*?
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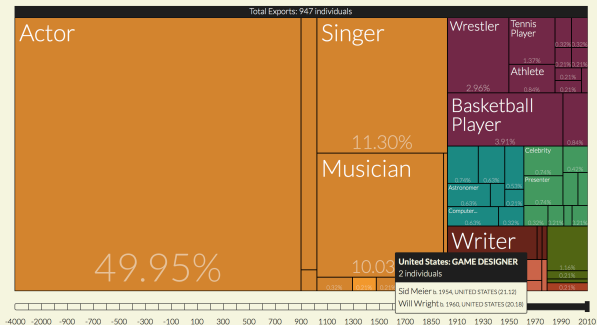
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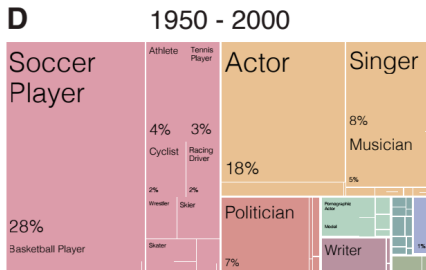
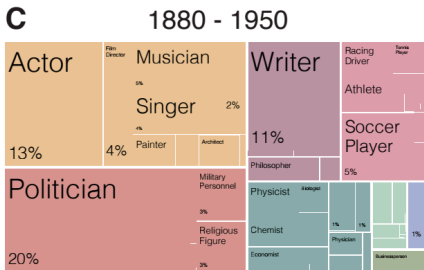
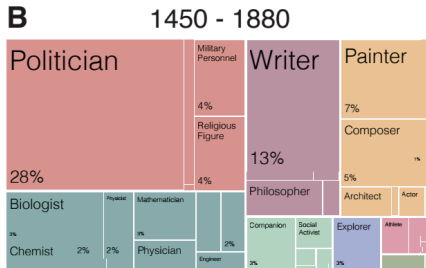
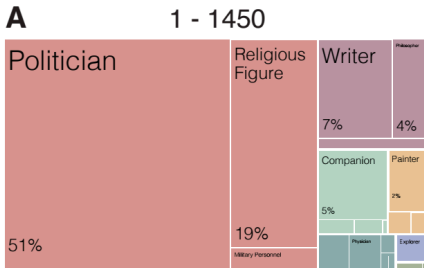
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5. Robin Williams
ACTOR, b. 1951 (25.06)
6. Stevie Wonder
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7. Brad Pitt
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http://pantheon.media.mit.edu/treemap/country_exports/US/all/1950/2010/H15/pantheon



It's all about algorithms (stories):

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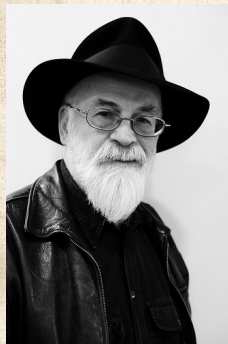
"On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction" [a](#) [↗](#)
by Brian Boyd (2010). ^[?]





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




(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."

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Stories are everything  



Full torturous scene is [here](#)  

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Game of Thrones, S6E06: The Iron Throne

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

Nothing can stop it.

No enemy can defeat it.”



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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
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	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			
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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 [↗](#)

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	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.

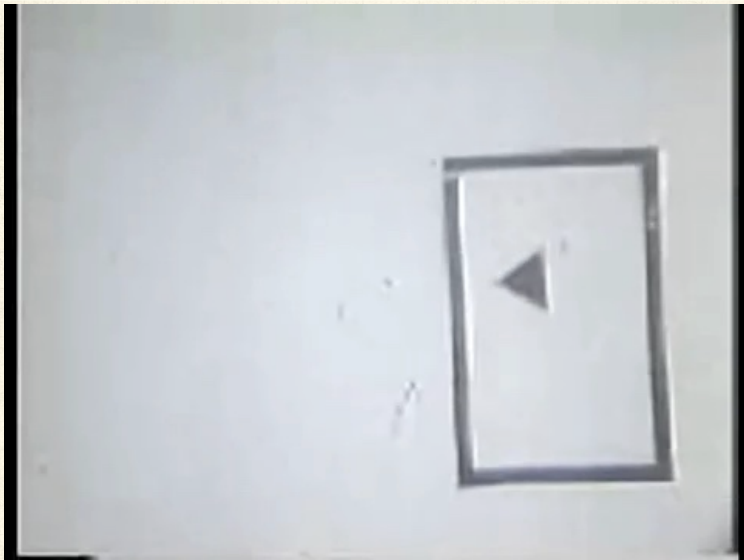
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	4	9.1	9.7	8.9	8.8	8.8	9.7	9.1	9.7	9.6	9.7
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[Series Heat for GoT](#) [↗](#)

We see (certain kinds of) stories  



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Heider and Simmel, 1944 ^[?], Source  

Simple Definitions:

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

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 "Time is a great storyteller" (Irish proverb)

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Simple Definitions:

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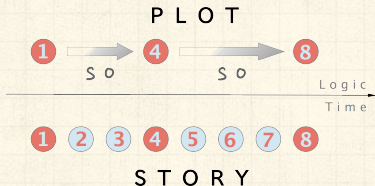
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
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-  Events may be any balance of real and imagined.
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Simple Definitions:

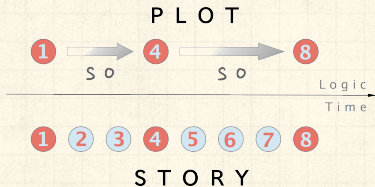
-  Story[↗]: a laying out of a temporal sequence of events.
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-  Plot[↗]: Essential sequence of a story's elements.¹




¹By まとりよ しか — Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0,

Simple Definitions:

- 🧱 Story[↗]: a laying out of a temporal sequence of events.
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🧱 Plot = Algorithm

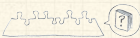
¹By まとりよ しか — Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=24054522>[↗]



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.

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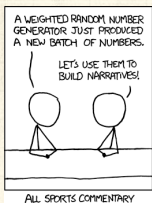
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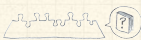
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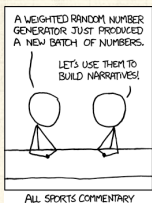
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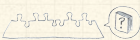
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Storywrangler, POTUSometer, ...

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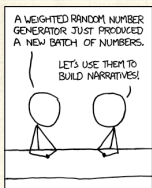
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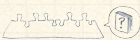


Understanding the Sociotechnocene—Stories:



ALL SPORTS COMMENTARY

xkcd.com/904/



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Research: What’s the taxonomy of human stories?

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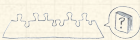
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Storywrangler, POTUSometer, ...



Research: What’s the taxonomy of human stories?



Maybe: Stories ↔ Algorithms

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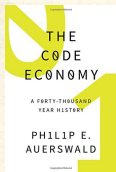


Algorithms are everywhere:

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

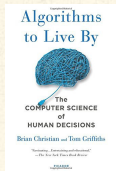


Algorithms, recipes, stories, ...



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

by Philip E Auerwald (2017). ^[?]



“Algorithms to Live By” [a](#) [↗](#)

by Christian and Griffiths (2016). ^[?]



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

by Martin Erwig (2017). ^[?]

Also: Numerical Recipes in C ^[?] and How to Bake π ^[?]

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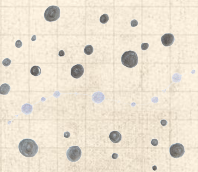
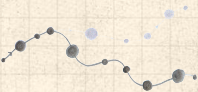
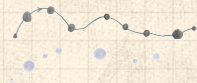
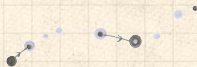
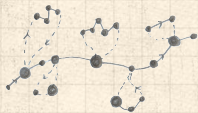
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Adjacent narratives —why mistruths and conspiracy theories exist and flourish:



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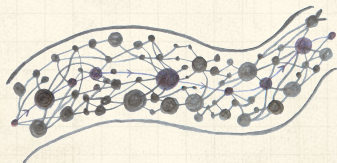
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Why adjacent narratives exist and untrue stories flourish:

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



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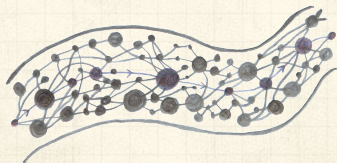
References



Why adjacent narratives exist and untrue stories flourish:

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

 Impossible to record every detail.



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Why adjacent narratives exist and untrue stories flourish:

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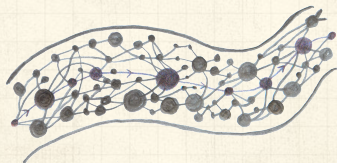
- Impossible to record every detail.
- Recording entails compression to scale of medium (narrative hierarchy).



Why adjacent narratives exist and untrue stories flourish:

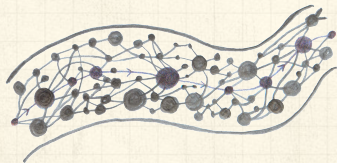
1/4. A real story is never recorded and retold completely

- 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



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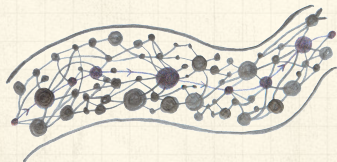
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Why adjacent narratives exist and untrue stories flourish:

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

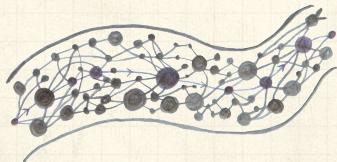
 Better = More engaging, more motivating to spread, more durable under spreading.



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



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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:

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



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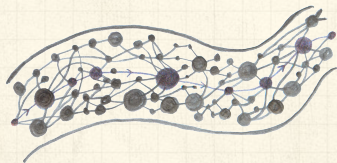
3/4. The infinitude of adjacent stories means “better” stories exist for those who would disinform

- 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



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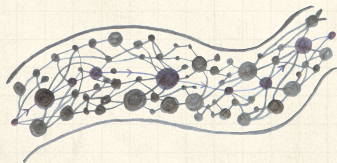
References



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.



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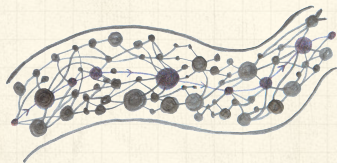
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Why adjacent narratives exist and untrue stories flourish:

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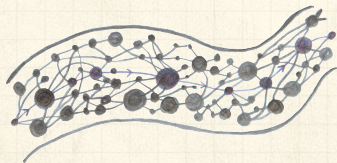
-  The barely implausible can be believed if the character can make it so.
-  A believe-to-be evil character can do anything.





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, the comments, ..."



Buzz Aldrin has enough



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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> .



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

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 -  A. "Yes. Yes it is."



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 Phantom time hypothesis :



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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

-  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.





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.





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- ❏ 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.



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



Absence of story, meaning, sense:

Las Vegas, 2017/10/01:

 60 murdered, over 400 injured, 1000 bullets.

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- Why did the Las Vegas shooter do what he did?

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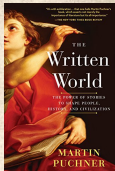
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- Marked the lowest point ever on the English Twitter Hedonometer  at the time.
- Why did the Las Vegas shooter do what he did?
- Why have we forgotten about it?





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

by Martin Puchner (2017). [\[?\]](#)

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.” ”

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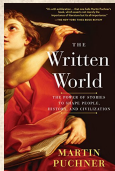
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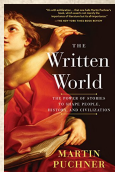
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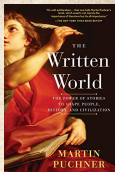
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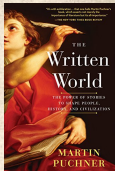
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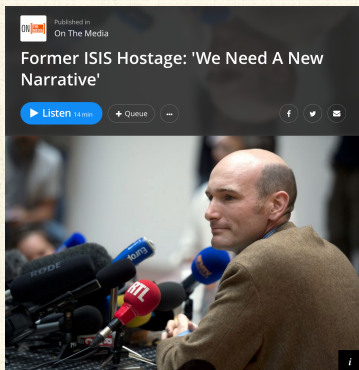
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Story Wars:



Nicholas Hénin 
French Journalist,
held captive for 10
months .

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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.”

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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.”

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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.” ”

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The Attack on the United States Capitol



Photo: Evelyn Hockstein for The Washington Post

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

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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."

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
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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. 



Make the truth a needle in a haystack

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
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 Make the truth a needle in a haystack

 Trump's Reality Distortion Field ,
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
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Trump's Reality Distortion Field 
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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.

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Stories generated the first surveillance state:



Low tech, low cost.



Infrastructure maintained in the Social Wild by storytellers and storybelievers.

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Stories generated the first surveillance state:



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

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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
adultery
Thou shalt not steal
Thou shalt not bear false
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Thou shalt not covet

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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



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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)



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The American Dream = Rags to Riches



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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

🧱 The story that anyone can become King or Queen.

🧱 Story of individual, not the collective.

🧱 But we know about fame and success:



The American Dream = Rags to Riches

- 🧱 The story that anyone can become King or Queen.
- 🧱 Story of individual, not the collective.
- 🧱 But we know about fame and success:
The presence of outsized fame in a social system means social imitation is a driver of value.





The American Dream = Rags to Riches


- 🧱 The story that anyone can become King or Queen.
- 🧱 Story of individual, not the collective.
- 🧱 But we know about fame and success:
The presence of outsized fame in a social system means social imitation is a driver of value.
- 🧱 Stories of societies can only hold if they have been and remain believable.





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 "Entertaining beliefs in economic mobility": Effort to understand if rags to riches stories in popular culture affect people's lives. [?]



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

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

"We'll probably need a new national story.

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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."



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Claim: Stories must have “real” substance to endure over generations²



²Reality is being tested harshly

Claim: Stories must have “real” substance to endure over generations²



Enormous disasters: Fabrications of real experiences.

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Plain old making stuff up: A million little pieces 

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 - Lance Armstrong. Also got to meet Oprah.
- Enormous power: Fiction that speaks to real experiences.



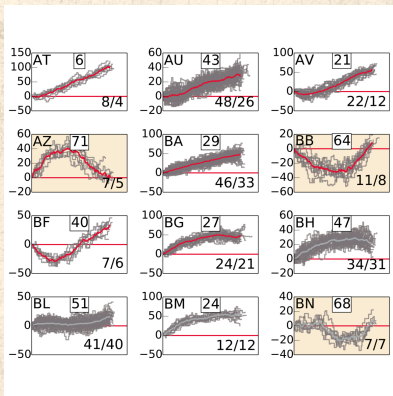
²Reality is being tested harshly



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

Kiley, Reagan, Mitchell, Danforth, and Dodds.

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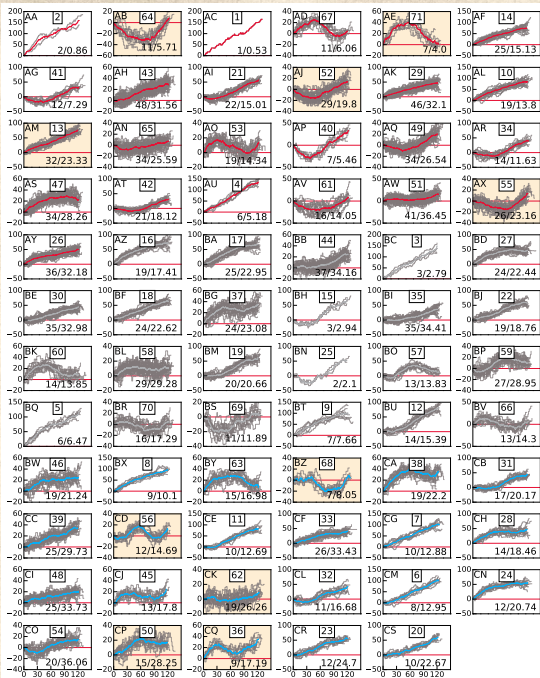
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Sports = Spontaneous story producing systems



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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.”

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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.

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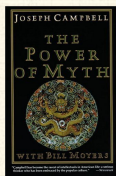
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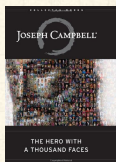
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The "I wonder who wrote this?" Great Man Theory:



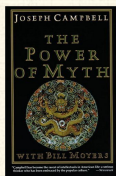
"The Power of Myth" [a](#) [↗](#)
by Campbell and Moyers (1991). [?]



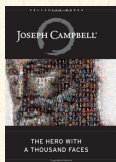
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Highly influential but it's a trap! [↗](#)



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How to write a screenplay:



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



9 acts.



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



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Logline = one or two sentence summary.



How to write a screenplay:

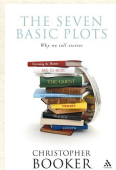


"Save the Cat!"  
by Blake Snyder (2005). ^[?]

-  9 acts.
-  Someone important to the main characters gets toasted in the second act, blah, blah.
-  Believes irony is key.
-  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). [?]

- 🧱 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).

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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 

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







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. 

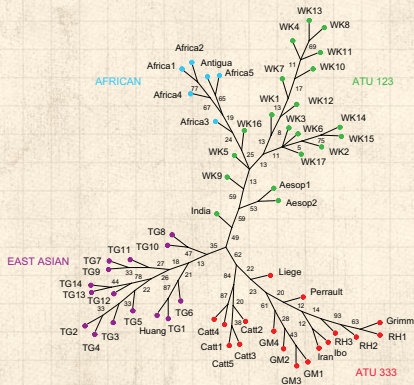


Figure 2. Majority-rules consensus of the most parsimonious trees returned by the cladistic analysis of the tales. Major groupings are labelled by region or ATU international type and indicated by the coloured nodes. Sub-types are indicated in the taxa labels (RH = Little Red Riding Hood; GM = Story 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

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The taxonomy of stories:

Fundamental arcs:

 Kill the Monster.

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The taxonomy of stories:

Fundamental arcs:

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-  Rags to Riches (and Riches to Rags—*Metamorphosis*).

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What about comedies?



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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:

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Stories are algorithms for life:

Homo narrativus:

 Provide dynamic paths and trajectories.

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Stories are algorithms for life:

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 Provide dynamic paths and trajectories.

 If this, then that.

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Stories are algorithms for life:

Homo narrativus:

- Provide dynamic paths and trajectories.
- If this, then that.
- Convey and reinforce how to behave, how not to behave.



Stories are algorithms for life:

Homo narrativus:

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Competing, self-defending operating system for people's minds.



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Proverbs as algorithms (hero: Wolfgang Mieder):



Stories are algorithms for life:

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Proverbs as algorithms (hero: Wolfgang Mieder):

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- "Look before you leap."



Stories are algorithms for life:

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- Provide dynamic paths and trajectories.
- If this, then that.
- Convey and reinforce how to behave, how not to behave.
- Full ecology of stories =
Competing, self-defending operating system for people's minds.

Proverbs as algorithms (hero: Wolfgang Mieder):

- "Pride cometh before the fall."
- "A stitch in time saves nine."
- "Look before you leap."
- "Anti-aphorism: The one who hesitates is lost."



Stories are algorithms for life:

Homo narrativus:

- Provide dynamic paths and trajectories.
- If this, then that.
- Convey and reinforce how to behave, how not to behave.
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- "Pride cometh before the fall."
- "A stitch in time saves nine."
- "Look before you leap."
- "Anti-aphorism: The one who hesitates is lost."
- Understanding randomness: "Shit happens"



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Hatchings, Matchings, and Dispatchings

30 Rock
S4E19: Argus
April 29, 2010



The boiled-down essence of stories:

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

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The boiled-down essence of stories:

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The boiled-down essence of stories:

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

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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 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.

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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.



Kurt Vonnegut on the shapes of stories



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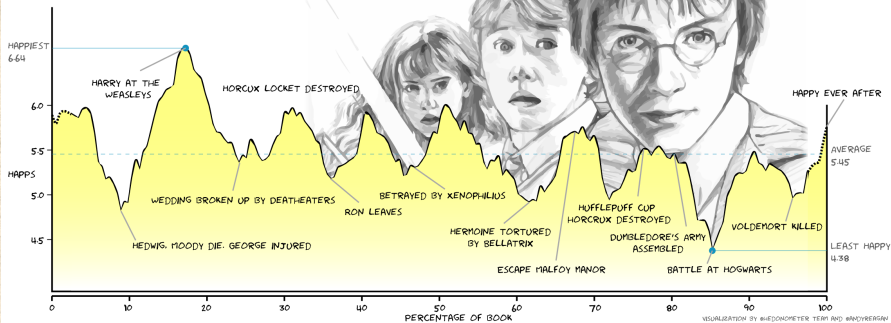


Source: Kurt Vonnegut on the Shapes of Stories  .

Longer piece   with bonus stories (Metamorphosis and *Ulysses*)


Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

by J.K. Rowling




VISUALIZATION BY @HEDONMETER TEAM AND @AMYBERGAIN
ILLUSTRATION BY NRESCH (@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. 

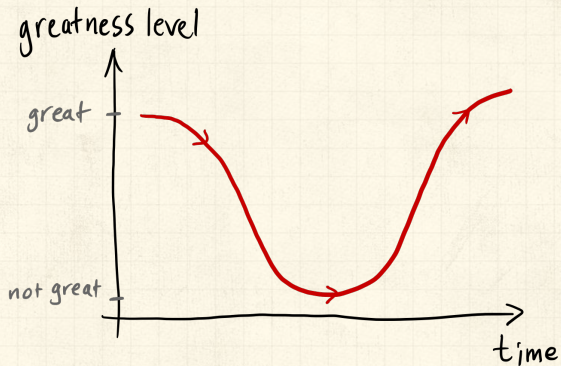
Harry Potter and the Trove of Plot Devices



More in PoCS, Vol 2.



Stories matter:



Used by Reagan and Bush in 1980.

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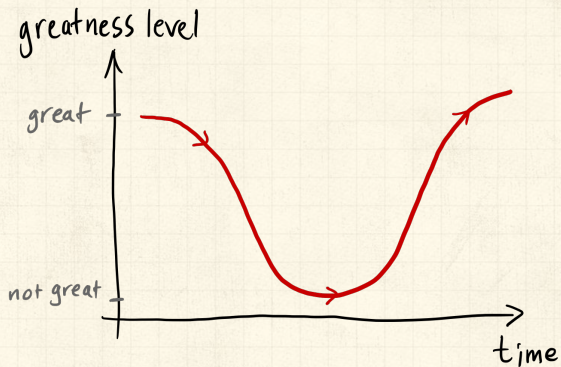
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Stories matter:



 Used by Reagan and Bush in 1980.

 Template used by many others including Bill Clinton.

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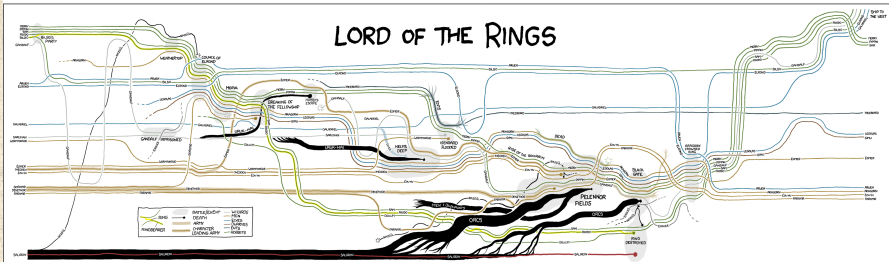
References



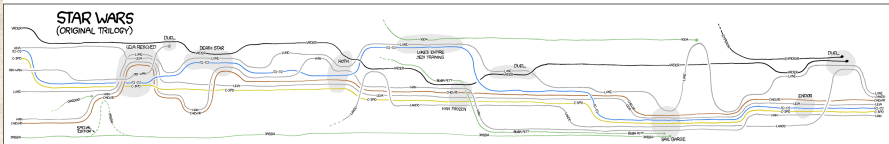
Emotional arcs are not plots. Neither are character paths:

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.

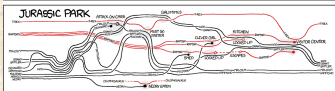
LORD OF THE RINGS



STAR WARS (ORIGINAL TRILOGY)



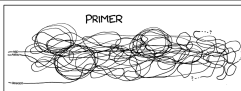
JURASSIC PARK



12 ANGRY MEN

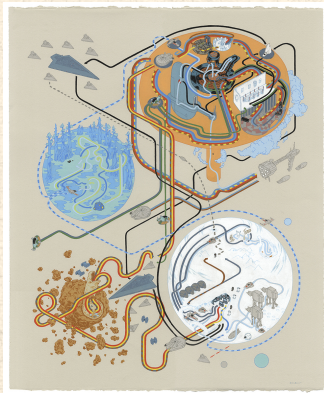


PRIMER





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



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


Trope inception:


 [Chekhov's gun](#) 


 Chekhov's Chekhov's gun


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A Science of Stories?

Stories are everything

- Maybe, yes.
- Characters* + Time.

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, ...


Next big thing, maybe:

- SOCKS: Study of Online Corpora, Knowledge, and Stories





"George Green and physics" ↗
Freeman Dyson,
Physics World, **6**, 33, 1993. [?]

 "Tool-Driven Scientific Revolutions Scientific revolutions are more often driven by new tools than by new concepts."

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
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Freeman Dyson,
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🧱 "Tool-Driven Scientific Revolutions Scientific revolutions are more often driven by new tools than by new concepts.

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🧱 This was a prime example of a concept-driven revolution. Kuhn's book was so brilliantly written that it became an instant classic. It misled a whole generation of students and historians of science into believing that all scientific revolutions are concept-driven."

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Freeman Dyson,
Physics World, **6**, 33, 1993. [?]



"The concept-driven revolutions are the ones that attract the most attention and have the greatest impact on the public awareness of science, but in fact they are comparatively rare.

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"The concept-driven revolutions are the ones that attract the most attention and have the greatest impact on the public awareness of science, but in fact they are comparatively rare.



In the last five hundred years we have had six major concept-driven revolutions, associated with the names of Copernicus, Newton, Darwin, Maxwell, Einstein and Freud, besides the quantum-mechanical revolution that Kuhn took as his model.

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In the last five hundred years we have had six major concept-driven revolutions, associated with the names of Copernicus, Newton, Darwin, Maxwell, Einstein and Freud, besides the quantum-mechanical revolution that Kuhn took as his model.



During the same period there have been about 20 tool-driven revolutions, not so impressive to the general public but of equal importance to the progress of science."





"George Green and physics" ↗
Freeman Dyson,
Physics World, **6**, 33, 1993. [?]

🧩 "I will not attempt to make a complete list of tool-driven revolutions. Two prime examples are the Galilean revolution resulting from the use of the telescope in astronomy, and the Crick-Watson revolution resulting from the use of X-ray diffraction to determine the structure of big molecules in biology.

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- ❏ "I will not attempt to make a complete list of tool-driven revolutions. Two prime examples are the Galilean revolution resulting from the use of the telescope in astronomy, and the Crick-Watson revolution resulting from the use of X-ray diffraction to determine the structure of big molecules in biology.
- ❏ The effect of a concept-driven revolution is to explain old things in new ways.

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- ❏ The effect of a concept-driven revolution is to explain old things in new ways.
- ❏ The effect of a tool-driven revolution is to discover new things that have to be explained."

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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.

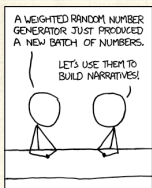


Observations/Claims/Questions:

- 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.

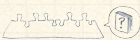


Understanding the Sociotechnocene—Stories:



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

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