

# Emotional and meaning arcs of stories

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Principles of Complex Systems, Vols. 1, 2, & 3D  
CSYS/MATH 6701, 6713, & a pretend number, 2024–2025

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The PoCSverse  
Meaning arcs  
1 of 19  
Stories  
References

## Aside: From a 2013 Believer Magazine interview with Maurice Sendak

BLVR: Did the success of *Where the Wild Things Are* ever feel like an albatross?

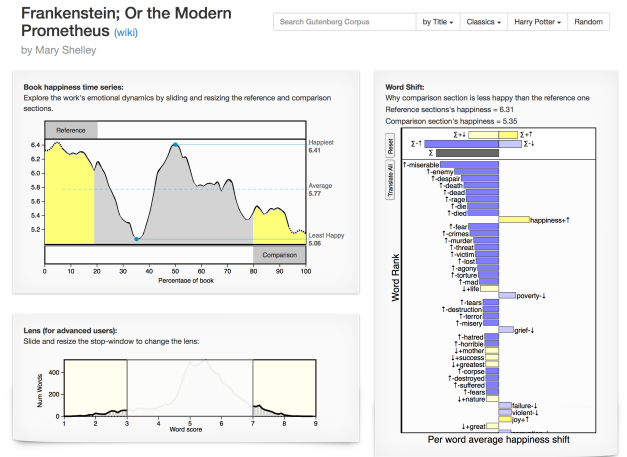
MS: It's a nice book. It's perfectly nice. I can't complain about it. I remember Herman Melville said, "When I die no one is going to mention Moby-Dick. They're all going to talk about my first book, about forking maidens in Tahiti." He was right. No mention of Moby-Dick then. Everyone wanted another Tahitian book, a beach book. But then he kept writing deeper and deeper and then came Moby-Dick and people hated it. The only ones who liked it were Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Hawthorne. Moby-Dick didn't get famous until 1930.

Sendak named his dog Herman.

The essential (true) Colbert interview:  
Pt. 1 and Pt. 2

The PoCSverse  
Meaning arcs  
4 of 19  
Stories  
References

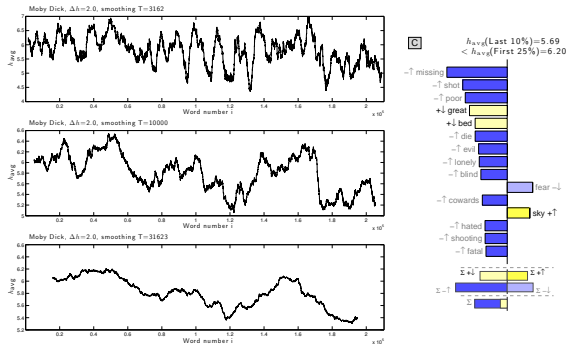
## Online, interactive Emotional Shapes of Stories for 10,000+ books:



## Outline

The PoCSverse  
Meaning arcs  
5 of 19  
Stories  
References

## The emotional shapes of stories—Moby Dick:

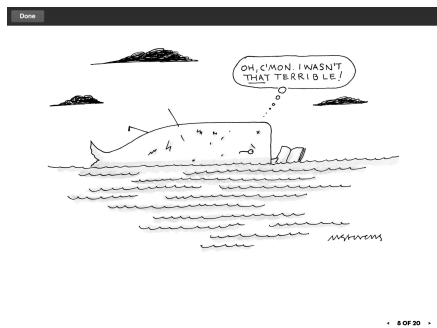


## Stories

## References

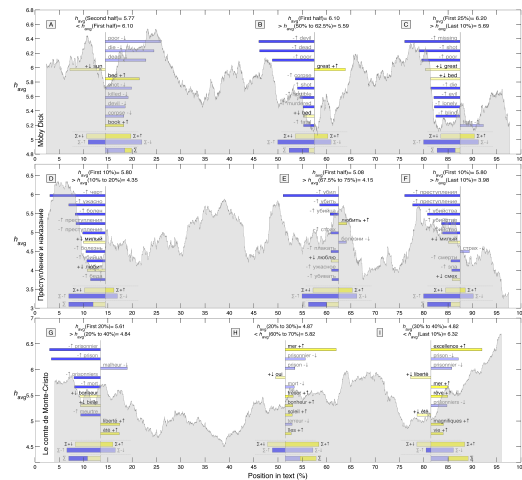
The PoCSverse  
Meaning arcs  
6 of 19  
Stories  
References

## Online, interactive Emotional Shapes of Stories for 10,000+ books:



The New Yorker, December 16, 2013, p. 56.

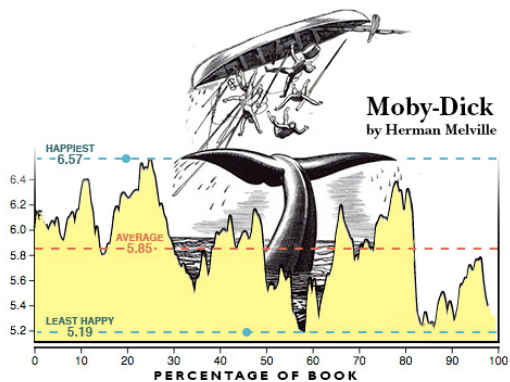
The PoCSverse  
Meaning arcs  
3 of 19  
Stories  
References



The PoCSverse  
Meaning arcs  
6 of 19  
Stories  
References

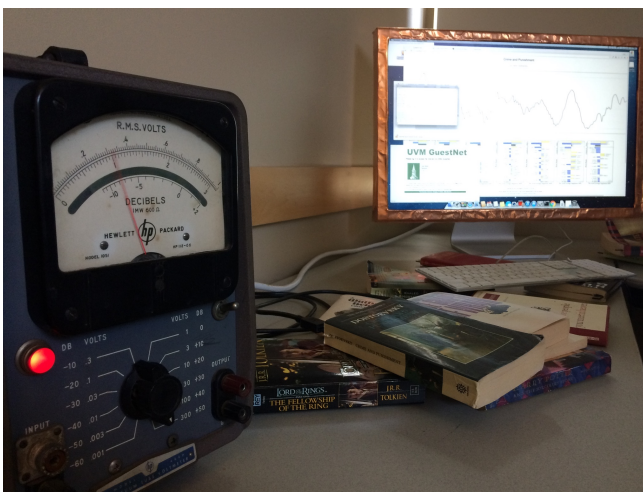
## Online, interactive Emotional Shapes of Stories for 1,000+ movie scripts:





Moby-Dick illustration by Rockwell Kent, 1930

<http://whyfiles.org/2015/in-10-languages-happy-words-beat-sad-ones/>

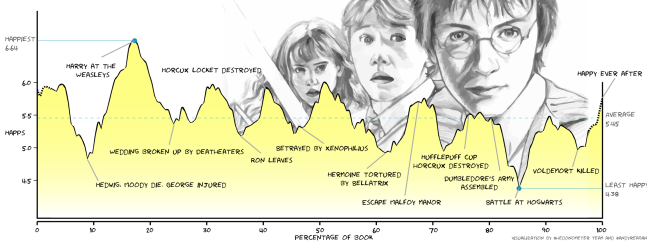


Stories with a few ups and downs most downloaded:

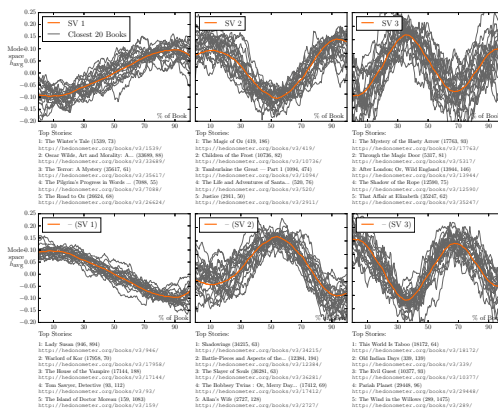
Mode	Mode Arc	N <sub>m</sub>	N <sub>m</sub> /N	DL Median	DL Mean	DL Variance	Download Distribution
SV 1		263	15.1%	295.0	644.3	2207201	
-SV 1		442	25.3%	337.5	636.0	913464	
SV 2		230	13.2%	314.0	630.3	1058916	
-SV 2		169	9.7%	296.0	569.1	780365	
SV 3		104	6.0%	298.0	874.5	7826797	
-SV 3		108	6.2%	298.0	748.7	2517822	
SV 4		50	2.9%	292.0	770.7	1540202	
-SV 4		48	2.7%	280.0	421.7	182443	
SV 5		48	2.7%	263.5	462.0	211259	

FIG. 6: Download statistics for SVD Modes with more than 2.5% of books. Modes SV 3 through -SV 4 (both polarities of modes 3 and 4) exhibit a higher average number of downloads and more variance than the rest.

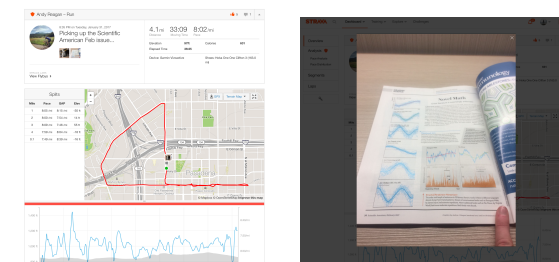
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows by J.K. Rowling



“The emotional arcs of stories are dominated by six basic shapes”  
 Reagan, Mitchell, Danforth, and Dodds.  
 EPJ Data Science, 5, 31, 2016. [1]

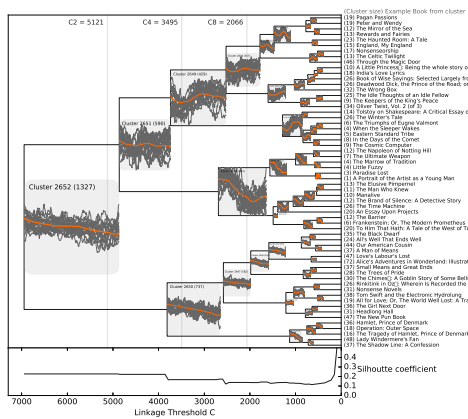


Another Great Moment in being Andy Reagan:



Six basic shapes: Rags-to-Riches, Man-in-a-hole, Cinderella, Tragedy, Icarus, Oedipus.

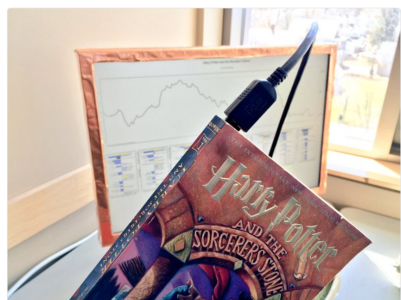
Emotional arcs for 1748 books from gutenber.org



“So, in writing, there are six basic plots, and their sequels and derivative franchises.”



USB in a book? What is this wizardry? Check it out at the Student Research Conference creative lounge. #uvmresearch



RETWEETS 8 LIKES 14

- [1] A. J. Reagan, L. Mitchell, C. M. Danforth, and P. S. Dodds.  
The emotional arcs of stories are dominated by six basic shapes.

[EPJ Data Science](#), 5:31, 2016.

Available at <https://arxiv.org/abs/1606.06820.pdf> 