

# Your Brain on *Story*

*(But especially the brain of every person  
you need to persuade, inspire, influence, or teach)*

*The Science Behind  
the Startling Power of Story*

by

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Thank you for your cooperation, and for your interest in my work.

Signed,  
KendallHaven

making sense, understanding, memory,  
recall, & interpretation

of your stories all happen.....

in the **mind**  
of the **receiver!**

Your job:

*make it easy*

for listeners to understand, believe, remember  
and apply your information  
to affect their beliefs, attitudes,  
values and behavior.

That requires *The Elements of Story Structure*

## *Your real job:*

### *INFLUENCE*

- requires that you gather *ATTENTION*
- which requires that you first *ENGAGE*
- which requires that you involve an *EMOTIONAL LEVEL*

*Engagement* is the essential *gateway* to *influence*.

### *STORY STRUCTURE*

activates emotional responses, engages,  
gathers and holds attention,  
and thus allows you to influence

150,000 years of storytelling dominance

to **communicate** and to **archive**  
learning, wisdom, fact, knowledge,  
values, beliefs, history, etc.

has **evolutionarily rewired** the human  
brain to think in specific story terms.

## The Research:

In order to make it **make sense**,

Listeners routinely:

- **change (even reverse) factual information,**
- **make assumptions,**
- **create new information,**
- **ignore parts of your presentation,**
- **infer connections and information**
- **infer motive, intent, significance**
- **misinterpret**

# The Neural Story Net

- Lies **between** external world and internal mind
- **Distorts** incoming information in order to make it **make sense**
- The story they see & hear ***IS NOT*** the story you said

**\*\*** Applying **effective story structure**  
to your information  
**minimizes** that distortion



# *PRIOR KNOWLEDGE*

"Banks of existing knowledge, belief, and experience about a relevant topic."

What should I know about my audience's  
Banks of Prior Knowledge?

## **Audience Modeling**

Beliefs, Attitudes, Values  
Goals, Wants  
Issues, Concerns, Gripes, Problems  
Viewpoint & Perspective  
Biases & Pet Peeves

These are the basis for identifying **Motive**  
and for creating **Motive Matching**

We interpret new information  
to support  
*existing* core beliefs and attitudes.

Information alone rarely changes reluctant minds.

*The only thing that replaces  
a story-formed belief....*

*is*

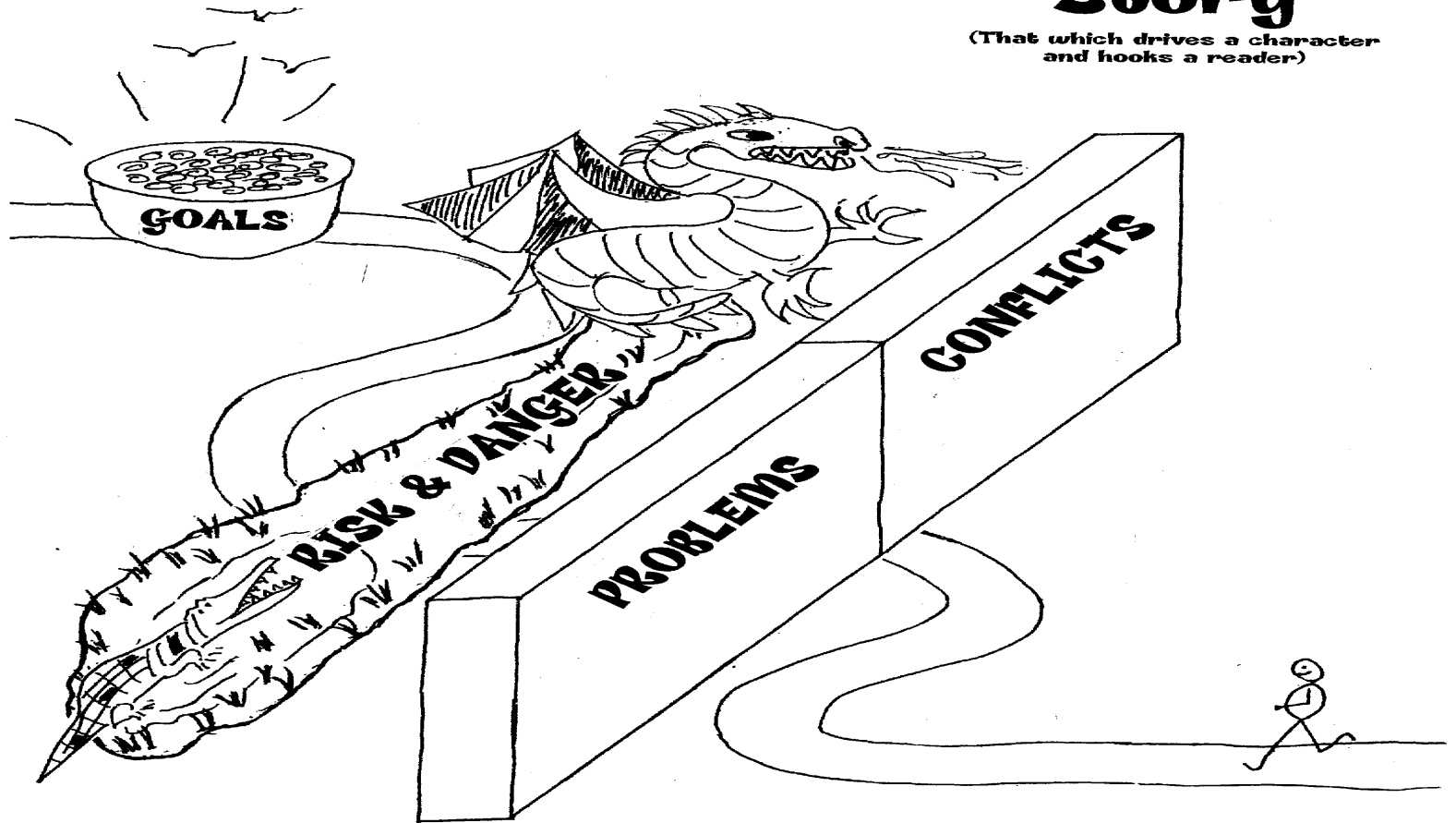
*a better story*

Effective story structure is:

that **character-based story organization** that provides the **informational elements** required by the **neural story net** in order to **understand** and to **make sense**

# The Core of a Story

(That which drives a character  
and hooks a reader)



# The *Eight Essential Elements* of the Story Structure

- 1. Characters:** The characters that populate essential character positions in the story.
- 2. Traits:** Selected elements of character description used to control receiver attitude toward story characters.
- 3. Goal:** What a character needs/wants to do/get in a story.
- 4. Motives:** The drivers that make a goal important to a character.
- 5. Conflicts & Problems:** The sets of obstacles that stand between a character and an established goal.
- 6. Risk & Danger:** The likelihood of failure (risk) and the consequences of failure (danger).
- 7. Struggles:** The sequence of events a character undertakes to reach a goal highlighted by the climax scene (confrontation with the last & greatest obstacle) and the resolution scene.
- 8. Details:** The character, sensory, scenic, and event specific descriptors used to create, direct, and control receivers' story imagery.

# Thoughts to Leave You With

1. Effective Story Structure Creates...
  2. Our Brains & minds are Hardwired for Story
  3. The Make Sense Mandate
  4. The Neural Story Net
  5. We know the informational elements of effective stories.
  6. We know the elements that control *narrative influence*.
- 7. These elements and models are powerful tools**
- that control the effectiveness of your communications
  - that you each can design and control
  - ***THAT GET RESULTS!***