SPOTLIGHT

STORYTELLING

**THE IDEA
RESEARCH
FOCUS
STRUCTURE**

THE IDEA

Storytelling begins with an idea:
- The best time to question the idea is at its conception.
- Will the viewer care about it?
- Will it bring understanding?
- Will it affect the viewer?
- Will it involve the viewer?
- Will it make the viewer angry? Sad? Happy? Curious?
- Will it make the viewer ask themselves questions?

A good story idea will answer "yes" to at least one of the above. Stories are for The Viewer.

Your job Is to come up with story ideas that:
Are relevant to the viewer.
Are likely to involve the viewer.
Could move the viewer from apathy, through sympathy to empathy.
Will bring 'understanding to the viewer.

Viewers are people.

So the best way to bring relevance, involvement, empathy and understanding to them
Is naturally through stories about people. Or that intimately involve them.

When the story idea first comes up look for people genuinely involved, the participants.

People are interested in people.

Viewers are more interested in themselves, their families, friends and other people than in Institutions or remote, inaccessible subjects like The New World Order, The Environment or The Economy.

Which doesn't mean a story idea about the Environment should be killed. Not at all. Just find ways to tell it through people.

Storytelling is about what happens to people, how they feel about it and what they do about it.

RESEARCH

All good story telling is based on sound and thorough research.

Your credibility Is based on your ability and willingness to do sound and thorough research.

Research uncovers:

Truth   what Is actually happening (not what they or you want to believe is happening) and what it means.

Facts   the who, what, when, where. of the story.

Context   what dramatists call the "back story". The old facts from which the new story emerges. The crucial happenings which led up to today

Focus   good research can come up with a number of Suggested Focuses from the same story idea.

Strong
Images   great stories depend on strong Images.

Your research also must find:
- Interesting people
- Interesting questions to ask the Interesting people
- Interesting locations to ask the interesting questions of the interesting people.

Cross-examine yourself as you go:

WHO is the story about?

WHAT is It about?

WHEN is our story? (Does It involve the past, present or future - or maybe all of them?)

WHERE is It? Rural or urban. Interior or exterior. Newfoundland or St John's?

WHY are you doing It?

HOW will you be able to tell this story?

When you have answered the above questions, you can then ask the Climactic Research Questions:

Why are the people in your story doing what they are doing?
How are they doing It?
What does why and how they are doing something say about these people? And what is happening or will happen to them If they continue?

As you grapple with answering these questions you will find the heart and soul of your story.

You will find your **STORY FOCUS**

FOCUS

Focus is the theme or controlling idea of your story. Focus is a single, simple, vivid declarative sentence expressing the soul, the essence, of the story AS IT Will. BE ON THE AIR.

- A story is focused before you go out to shoot
- The focus is based on research.
- The focus contains both cause and effect.
- The focus defines the order of events of the story.
- The focus must be brutally specific in that It defines what you go out to
- shoot, write, edit, report.
- The focus can't be a question - it is the answer to your Climactic Research Questions.
- The focus defines the emotional as well as the factual meaning of the story.

The focus answers the questions:
WHO is the story about?
WHAT is she/he doing?
WHY is she/he doing it?

Then you put information into a sentence with a "because" (or similar word) as the fulcrum.
- The focus is a roadmap that tells you where the story is going and how to get there.
- It identifies three vital areas of the story: the beginning, the middle or transition (cause to effect or effect to   cause) and the closing
- It identifies and describes the roles of the principal character.
- It dictates the chronology of the story.
- It defines the emotional effect
- It ensures that you use only essential information.
- It ensures clarity and order in your story

Focus Examples:

Eighteen your old Johnny can't read because there were always too many
kids and not enough teachers.

A lowly pop can be transformed into art because Pierre Labelle uses his imagination to recycle.

The once frantic life of Annie Brooks is back in balance because she's rediscovered her
connection with nature.

STRUCTURE

First come up with a **STORY IDEA**
Second, **RESEARCH** the story
Third, **FOCUS** the story
Fourth, **STRUCTURE** the story

Classic storytelling looks like this:

CONTEXT	Enough information at the beginning of the story to make it understandable, accessible as It unfolds. Information necessary to intrigue the viewer to follow the story.
FORESHADOWING	A hint, a clue, that there's to be an unexpected, even dramatic outcome to the story. Not just random facts or pictures.
DRAMATIC UNFOLDING	Telling the story as it happens. Usually involving someone taking some sort of journey and having to overcome obstacles to reach a desired goal.
CLIMAX	The point, the resolution, the culmination of the story. The end of journey. Such as the winning or losing. Or conflict.
DENOUEMENT	The wrapping up of the details. Could be a concluding image that sums up your focus.

Good storytellers take the viewer on a journey of discovery. That's the whole point of storytelling.

The better the story is told:
- The more the viewer takes part In It.
- The more the viewer wants and needs to know how it turns out
- The more information is retained by the viewer.

If the structure Is garbled, if the climax and the main points of the story are known at the beginning, there can be no discovery, no dramatic unfolding.

Good storytellers tell stories with **CONTEXT, FORESHADOWING, DRAMATIC UNFOLDING, CLIMAX and (sometimes) DENOUEMENT.**

IN THAT ORDER.