

COFFEE



LECTURE

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How to tell a convincing scientific story



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Wednesday
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13:00, Zoom



**A story is the
shortest
distance
between two
people — a
good story is a
sturdy bridge**

Scientific writing is a genre

Genres have conventions: rules, patterns, structures

- Conform to expectations
- Make readers comfortable
- Inspire trust in the author

If expectations aren't met, readers are annoyed, confused, distrustful

- Genres develop because certain patterns reliably achieve a goal
- Successful patterns are standardized through use



Scientific papers are “teaching stories”

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Cultures transfer wisdom through stories

- Stories bridge ideas and audiences quickly
- Transfer valuable knowledge in an engaging way
- Foster meaningful and memorable exchange
- Turn passive readers into active participants in science



The best model is a certain type of fairy tale

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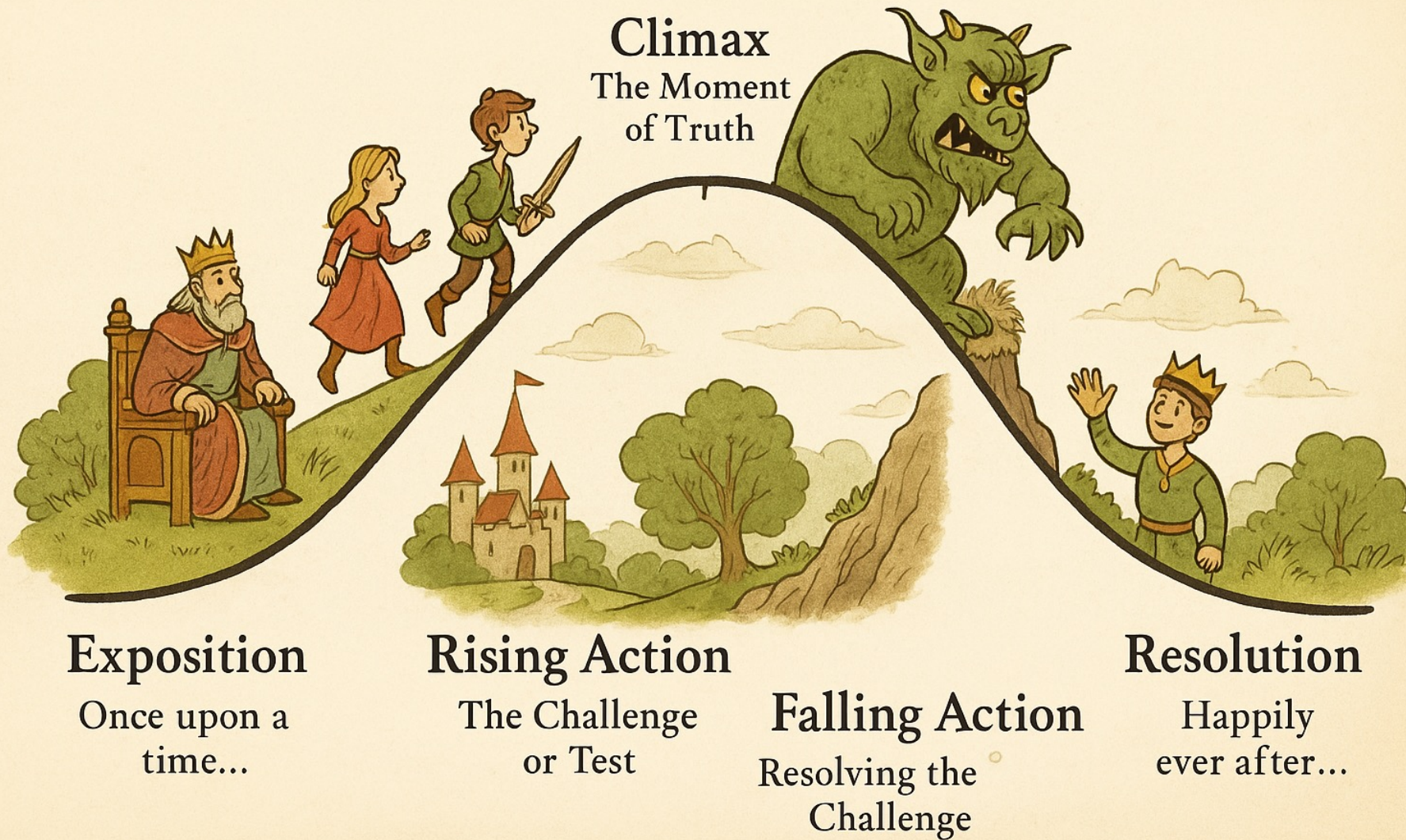
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Fairy tales of tests or trials

- “Once upon a time...” sets the scene (a castle in a kingdom), introduces the main characters (a king and his three children), and describes the problem (a giant threatening the kingdom)
- Set up a trial or contest: the 3 children must set out and return with a gift
- Determine the winner: the child who successfully defeats the giant will rule
- Derive a moral: Wit and intelligence are preferable to brute strength



The Dramatic Story Arc of a Fairy Tale Contest



The structure of a scientific paper

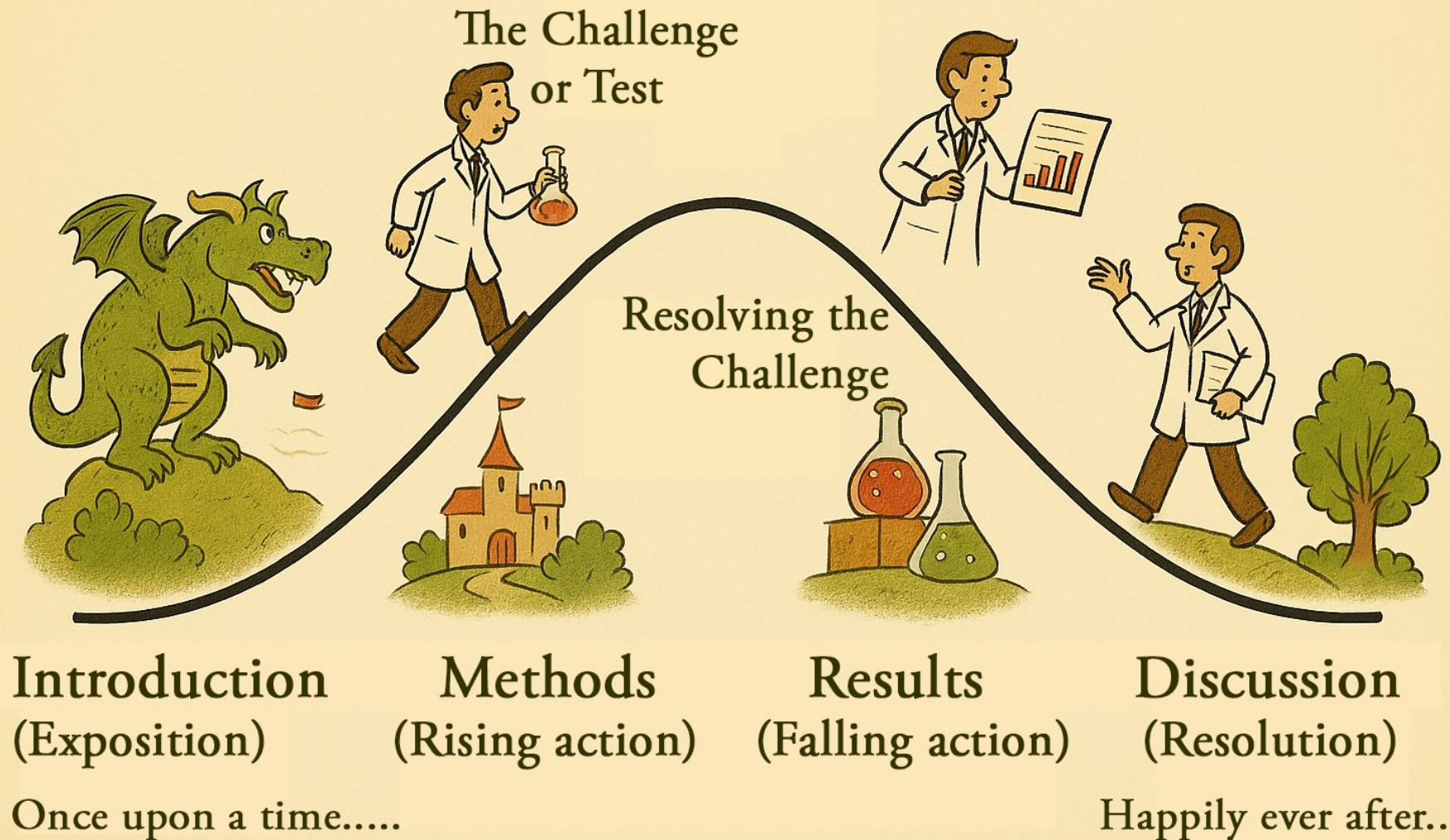
- “Once upon a time...” is the **Introduction**
- The test is the experimental design described in the **Methods** section
- The winner is the outcome in the **Results**
- The moral of the story is the paper message (main finding/s + most important implication/s), which is explained in the **Discussion**



The Dramatic Arc of a Scientific Paper

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A good story is only as long as it needs to be

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- Too much background is distracting, but too little is confusing
- Methods and results support the story but don't tell the story. You do!
- Summarize your main findings, put them in context, discuss limitations and implications in the discussion
- Leave them with your message.



Stories move the reader through time

**You know everything you know, all at once.
But you must tell stories in logical, linear
sequence**

- Who are your readers? What do they already know? How do they think?
- Walk *with* your reader, step by step, to guide them and keep them on track
- Reward the reader with the information they expect, where they expect it
- Leave them with your message



Why scientific stories matter

**Scientific storytelling isn't decoration.
Stories make research meaningful,
persuasive, and memorable.**

- Genre conventions build trust and make your work easier to read.
- Your audience will understand what you did and why it matters.
- Guide your reader step by step and leave them with a message they'll remember.

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The End

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Thanks



**for your
attendance**

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Now there is time for...

Questions & Discussion

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