

How To Write A Damn Good Story

Lorrie Morgan



How To Write A Damn Good Story

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Stories Are Critical To Creative Communication

We get hit with over 5,000 sales marketing messages per day, and climbing, in the 21st Century. There's no possible way humans can spend time focusing on every message. Not only is time one of our dwindling resources, but human brains aren't equipped to absorb that much data. So the marketing morphs into a useless blur...unless you have a story.

Storytelling flies in under the radar of selling because a good story can engage your senses. That translates to a richer experience for your reader. Plus stories are more memorable and shareable. With social media, you can get a lot of leverage with a good story.

The thing about storytelling is that your story is unique to anyone in your industry or anyone in your market. Your competition may have things in common with you but your story is your story. Nobody can compete with being the best YOU that there is.

A few years ago I took master storyteller Robert McKee's intense live course called STORY. Robert has trained just about every screenwriter, director and actor in Hollywood like John Cleese, Julia Roberts, Kirk Douglas, David Bowie, and more.

He says storytelling has become more important today than ever because it is a way of seeing yourself in society and seeing where you fit—it is a way of relating. Stories are super effective in getting attention. They work in conversation. And they work like gangbusters in sales. Why?

- 1) **Stories boost credibility.** In order to tell a good story, you had better know your stuff. When your expertise is illustrated in a story you are more believable.
- 2) **Stories spark emotional connection.** We buy from an emotional state of mind, not a logical one. And dry facts

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seldom get us worked into an emotional lather the way stories do.

- 3) **Stories can explore the pain of a problem.** If you're looking to paint the picture of suffering and agony in order to contrast how you or your service can be the solution, nothing does it better than a juicy story.
- 4) **Stories make the prospect trust you.** Whenever we hear a story, by nature we look for connections to our own lives (after all, it truly IS all about "me"). That relating slashes the timeframe for bonding. And we all do business with those we know, like and trust.
- 5) **Stories bust through sales resistance.** Nobody likes to be sold to. But we don't mind kicking back and listening to (or reading) a story. You're much more likely to keep the prospect's attention by telling a story than hitting him or her over the head with hype.

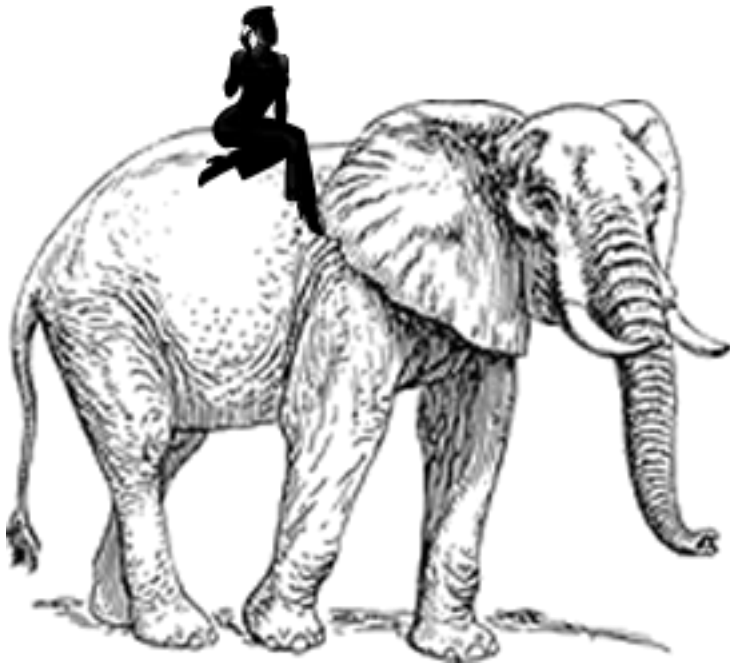
Obviously 150 screenplays and 300 page novels have more wiggle room to let a story unfold than the kind we have with selling stories. So being economical with words while not losing the feel of the story is even more important.

Now that you know why stories work, let's look at a concept sure to bring some emotional energy to your stories...

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The Elephant & The Rider

When I first discovered this metaphor (*by NYU social psychologist Jonathan Haidt*) I was so thrilled. I finally found a way to accurately explain the force of emotional pull over rational reasoning.**



It goes like this
Imagine a **130 pound** rider on top of a **15,000 pound** elephant. It appears that the **smaller rider** is in control...but the truth is the **enormous elephant** is really going to go where it wants.

This is a metaphor for **emotional response...**

See, the **rider** represents the **conscious, logical brain...**while the

elephant represents the **emotional, visceral brain...**

The truth is...the **elephant is ultimately in charge...**and **so are your emotions...**

***As an aside, elephants should never actually be ridden.*

Sure, they're ginormous creatures. So it seems like a human or even an ornate carriage, shouldn't be an issue for something so large. Wrong.

First of all, their spines point upward instead of being flat

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like a horse's back. So weight on their backs is painful.

Secondly, to get a wild elephant tame enough requires inhumane torture on baby elephants called Phajaan, which means crushing the spirit. I don't want you to lose your lunch by telling you how it works, but trust me, it's sickening.

Please don't support riding elephants.

People feel emotion first, then rationalize it.

Say you want a piping hot pizza...

You can practically taste the hot cheese and the crispy crust...

Then you start talking yourself down rationally...

You know pizza has little nutritional value...

You've been hitting the gym lately and pizza is just more unwanted calories to work off...

You also feel like crap afterwards...

So now it's a push me/pull you game...

Which side wins? The **rider** or the **elephant**? The **rational** side or the **emotional** side?

If you've even done things that you know you probably shouldn't do like sleep in or procrastinate or make an impulse buy, then the **emotional/elephant** side is winning.

Emotions are much more **powerful** than rational thought.

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If you want your stories to pack as much of a punch as possible, try to literally experience the emotion you are writing about. You'll be astonished at how much more connecting your story will become to the reader.

Next what I'd like to do is introduce you to the master template for good story, the **Hero's Journey**. However, because we seldom need such a detailed blueprint in sales (except maybe for our bios), I'll also share my more concise template for creating a selling story...

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The Hero's Journey

When you get into a serious conversation about storytelling, expect Joseph Campbell's popular book, ***The Hero With a Thousand Faces***, to come up. Even though the ideas in it are older than the Pyramids, Campbell's breakdown of the Hero's Journey has become THE template for effective storytelling.

Basically, in his book, he describes the typical adventure of the archetype known as The Hero, the person who goes out and achieves greatness on behalf of his tribe or community.

See, the bare bones of most stories are actually the same story, retold differently to make an endless supply of new stories – which is why the book is called ***The Hero With a Thousand Faces***. Good storytelling, consciously or not, follows the same ancient patterns.

You've seen this pattern in blockbuster movies like ***Star Wars***, ***Indiana Jones***, the ***Wizard of Oz***, etc.

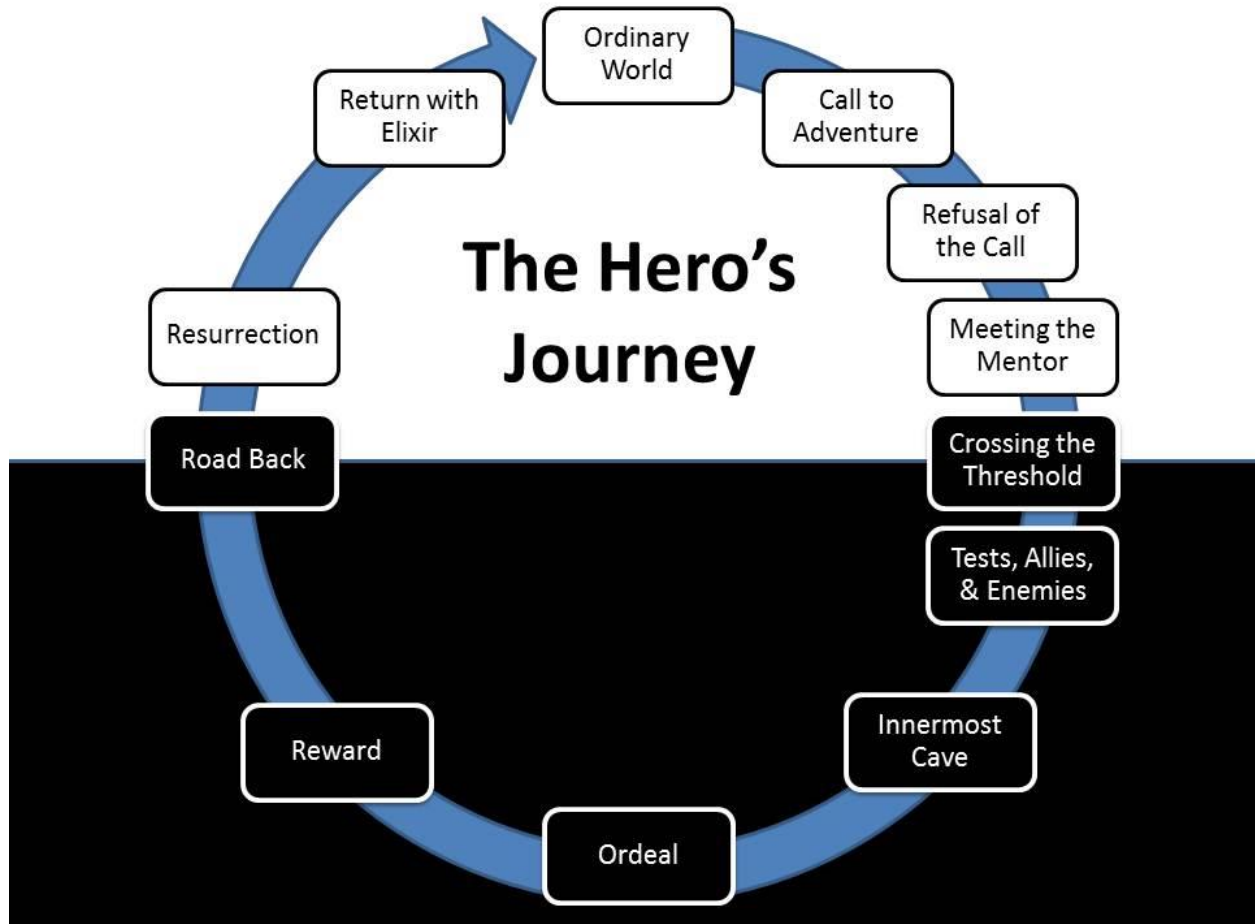
That's because stories built on the model of the Hero's Journey have universal appeal. They come from a universal source in the collective unconscious, and they reflect universal concerns.

Here's how the Hero's Journey breaks down:

The Hero is introduced in his ORDINARY WORLD where he receives the CALL TO ADVENTURE. He REFUSES the call then MEETS THE MENTOR. Next he CROSSES THE THRESHOLD where he eventually encounters TESTS, ALLIES and ENEMIES. He reaches the INNERMOST CAVE where he endures the ORDEAL. As a result of the ordeal, he receives his REWARD and makes his way on the ROAD BACK to his world. Next he is RESURRECTED and transformed by his

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experience. Finally he RETURNS to his ordinary world with his prized gift or ELIXIR to benefit his world.



Just remember that every storyteller can mold the Hero's Journey to his or her own purpose. And you should feel free to do the same with your story.

Would you like to see an example of the Hero's Journey in a story? Good. Because to illustrate what that looks like, I've broken down one of my favorite movies for you, ***Star Wars*** (*Episode IV: A New Hope*, for you purists). Writer/Director George Lucas had already finished 2 drafts of the story when he

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rediscovered the Hero's Journey. He rewrote the story yet again, but this version had more focus and rhythm.

Here's what ***Star Wars*** looks like using the Hero's Journey as the blueprint:

SEPARATION

First our hero, Luke Skywalker, is living in his ORDINARY WORLD on Tatooine with his aunt and uncle working on a farm. He gets CALLED TO ADVENTURE when he receives the message from Princess Leia via the droid R2D2. At first he REFUSES THE CALL because he has to help with the harvest. Still he's driven by the thought of the "damsel in distress" (Princess Leia). He MEETS THE MENTOR, Obi Wan Kenobi. Next, he CROSSES THE THRESHOLD by deciding to find someone to help him rescue the Princess in the criminal cesspool of Mos Eisley.

INITIATION

In the wretched hive of scum and villainy, Mos Eisley, Luke encounters various TESTS, ALLIES and ENEMIES in the form of aliens and stormtroopers wanting to kill him. He also meets the gun-for-hire outlaw Han Solo & his Wookie, Chewbacca, promising him transport to the Princess. As they're escaping Tatooine to get to the underworld of the Death Star, INNERMOST CAVE. There Luke meets the "goddess," Princess Leia. During the rescue, the gang faces the ORDEAL of near-death in the trash compactor. Evil Darth Vader and his minions continue waging war against the Rebellion. There is a face-off between Darth and Obi Wan where Kenobi lets Vader kill him in order to be transformed into something bigger– the Force. Meanwhile Luke and the Rebellion destroy the Death Star where the heroes get the ultimate REWARD – galactic freedom.

RETURN

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On the ROAD BACK to his world, Luke has been RESURRECTED to a true Jedi warrior. He RETURNS to his roots by joining forces with the Rebels as a Jedi like his father and Obi Wan. His ELIXIR is the power of the Force.

Ta dah! With the Hero's Journey as the roadmap, ***Star Wars*** has become one of the most iconic movies of all time.

(As a caveat, you should realize business stories tend to be markedly shorter than what goes into the full Hero's Journey. The Hero's Journey is perfect for longer bio business stories but can get a little wordy in fast-paced marketing messages.)

So how do we use the Hero's Journey effectively in our sales stories today? Let's take a more focused look...

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Formatting a Selling Story

To abbreviate your own selling story, it's important to realize that Campbell broke the Hero's Journey down into 3 basic stages first. Then he expanded each of those stages into sub-stages (like I did in my ***Star Wars*** dissection).

Those 3 main stages are:

- 1. Separation**
- 2. Initiation**
- 3. Return**

Here's an example of the business story I tell from the stage about Red Hot Copy using the condensed Hero's Journey.

LORRIE'S HERO'S JOURNEY - SEPARATION

I'll never forget the day I decided to quit my stable \$50,000 a year job. On this particular day, the older assistant who really ran the company, had the radio on in her office. The news was blasting the unfolding details about the Columbine tragedy. It was unthinkable. We were following the story unfold of two social outcasts plotting out an evil plan to kill their fellow students and teachers. I was especially upset because I had two young sons in elementary school while I was stuck behind a desk, unable to leave.

See when my sons were first born in 1990 and 1992, I was a stay-at-home mom. We spent everyday reading, going to parks, visiting museums – just hanging out together. It was terrific. But with my divorce in the mid 1990s, I was forced to go to work each day, leaving them in the YMCA after school care program. I had been warned by two of my oldest son's preschool teachers that he was a child who REALLY needed his mother or he could self-destruct...like those kids at Columbine.

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The day Columbine happened was the day I realized I couldn't continue being away from my kids anymore. I had to find an escape. It took some research and a leap of faith before I pulled together enough courage to quit to become a full-time writer.

LORRIE'S HERO'S JOURNEY - INITIATION

Success wasn't a straight path. I was learning how to create and run a business "on the job." I quickly ran up \$46,000 in debt and was incredibly tense. My new husband and I argued A LOT.

However, once I discovered copywriting, things changed dramatically. I found I had a passion for writing and marketing that I'd never known. In my quest to be one of the best, I went to live events, bought courses, and hired mentors. Red Hot Copy was born.

LORRIE'S HERO'S JOURNEY - RETURN

Word of my knack for the genre spread. I began doing work for visionaries like Mark Victor Hansen, Ali Brown, Marcia Wieder, Arielle Ford, Les Brown, and more. And I started teaching others how to harness the power of copy.

Today I'm considered by many to be a pioneer in the world of copywriting, especially with women and conscious entrepreneurs. I've been able to help thousands of business owners around the globe master the techniques of writing copy. . . boosting their personal freedoms as well!

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Template for Your Longer Selling Story

Here is the template for you to construct your own selling story using the Hero's Journey.

- **Separation** – *How did your life used to be before your "calling"?*
- **Initiation** – *What specific incident happened to create your current business?*
- **Return** – *What has changed positively in your life as a result?*

Remember this type of business story is spectacular to use in your bio, but is generally too long for emails or social media.

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Creating Your Own Selling Story

One of the things we need to address when you're adding story to your sales process is what is the global lesson you want your prospect to understand? There needs to be a point to the story – a transformation, a takeaway, a resolution. Otherwise your story is just a self-indulgent ramble.

Once you figure out the takeaway, you can check your personal story arsenal for what would support that lesson best. That's why it's crucial to keep writing on a regular basis...even on those days when you don't "feel like it."

It's so important to practice finding and writing stories on a regular basis so when you need to access them, they are practically at your fingertips.

As an aside, when you do some of the story-building skills that follow, you don't necessarily need to have a fully developed story. The shortcuts I'm including (especially the 30 Day Storytelling Challenge) are more about practice than perfection.

Now let's look at a method you can use right now to find story ideas...

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Finding Stories

I'm going to share with you a method guaranteed to get your selling story razor sharp in a hurry. It's an old trick I learned in journalism school, and it works great to get those creative juices flowing. Since I've been using it regularly again, I write circles around my former output times. The words are just at my fingertips.

How did I do it? (More importantly, how can you do it too?) Well, you probably already know you must have curiosity to become a good writer. Take your natural curiosity to the next level and become an avid observer.

When you're driving, look at the car next to you on the road. Pick up a can of beans in the grocery store. Check out your shampoo while in the shower. Notice the colors and smells. What qualities does it have that set it apart? What would make someone want to buy what you're looking at? You're surrounded with opportunity to sharpen your writing skills. It's easy.

Here's how --

- Describe Appearance of Product
- Identify Features (look for complementary and contrasting qualities)
- Single Out Main Benefit
- Create your Benefit Statement or Summary

Let your imagination go. This is only an exercise. If it were a real product, of course you'd do your research. But our goal isn't to actually sell at this stage - it's designed to open up and free your mind.

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THE RULES:

1. You don't have to write down your observations. Just practice doing them. You'll be amazed at how quickly your writing improves.
2. Limit yourself to 15 minutes on each "product."
3. Brainstorm. Do NOT edit yourself until you're done.
4. Stop on time.

Here's a case in point. A while back, I took my dog Shadow, on a hike through the mountains. On our walk, I noticed pretty yellow weeds lining the path. I picked those to represent my "product" and played my sales story game.

- ❖ **DESCRIBE APPEARANCE:** butter-colored spray of petals, braided green stem, burst of color, gently moving with the breeze.
- ❖ **IDENTIFY FEATURES:** soothing, calming, appealing color contrast to trees, heaviest around the path as though guiding hikers
- ❖ **SINGLE OUT MAIN BENEFIT:** Rejuvenating
- ❖ **BENEFIT STATEMENT:** "After hiking with these soothing butter-colored wildflowers lining the trail, you'll return rejuvenated and ready to face the day."

Maybe not award-winning copy, but by raising your awareness and practicing, you'll find that selling stories spill out of your brain without any pain.

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Story Starter Ideas

You deal in stories every single day. So when it comes time to sit down and write a story, where do all the ideas go? Here are a few ideas you can start with when you are wracking your noggin.

(HINT: Try to think of things that people universally do so they'll relate to your story and get pulled in.)

EXAMPLE: Car

STORY: "I was driving my car to a meeting yesterday when a black BMW jetted past me like I was parked. And I was 15 miles over the speed limit! Then about a mile further down the road I could see the car must have whipped out of control and smashed into the median. No one was hurt but it was a good reminder that slow and steady wins the race."

EXAMPLE: Breaking Up

STORY: "He took me to the prom. I wore his letterman's jacket. We went to the same college. But when he broke up with me in our sophomore year, not even the suite of 7 girls who also knew heartache, could patch up my shattered heart. So when it came time to break up with my unsatisfying J.O.B. years later, I knew the potential pain I could look forward to."

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Now it's your turn.

Relationships (Significant Other, Children, Friends, Neighbors, Enemies, Competitors, etc.)	Technology (Computer, Phone, Tablet, Music, Texting, Satellites, Entertainment etc.)	Objects (Scissors, Window, Stamps, Paper, Glasses, Jacket, Box, Candle, Genie Lamp, Jewelry, Paper Clip, Fork, Skull, Grass, Carpet, Lotion, Rocks, Nail Polish, Fan, Pen, Pill Bottle, etc. The sky's the limit on this one. Just look around you.
Activities (Sleeping, Eating, Entertaining, Exercising, Shopping, etc.)	Animals (Pets, Farm Animals, Wild Animals, Caged Animals, etc.)	
Feelings (Excited, Motivated, Angry, Disappointed, In Love, etc.)	Places (Coffee Shop, Grocery Store, Restaurant, Movies, etc.)	

If you need a little help with your business story or bio, let's talk. Visit me at www.RedHotCopy.com to see what options I have for your budget.

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Storytelling Shortcuts

You don't have to start your selling story from scratch. Here are some strategies you can start using on a regular basis to skyrocket your output for stories and connection.

1. **Fall In Love With Your Timer.** Copywriting legend Eugene Schwartz avoided writer's block AND got a heck of a lot done because of one simple rule. He used a timer to laser focus on his writing. During that chunk of time, he allowed himself to do nothing but write. When the timer went off, he stopped whatever he was doing – even if it was mid-sentence – and took a five minute stretch break. It's that simple. Focusing on a task in a measurable chunk of time propels you toward reaching your goals. Here's how it works:

- Get your timer
- Set it for 15 minutes
- Get rid of ALL DISTRACTIONS
- WRITE LIKE A MANIAC
- When the timer goes off, STOP, no matter where you're at

The reason it's so important to stop when the timer goes off is that you'll train your brain to turn on full power for short bursts of time. In short, you'll be more productive.

2. **Use Plot Line Formulas You Find In Entertainment.** Did you know that all stories rely on a handful of the same plots? That's because they have universal appeal (like in the Hero's Journey). These plots are used over and over again in stories. You don't have to reinvent the wheel. Just model these formulas:

- Human vs. Self
- Human vs. Human

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- Human vs. Religion
- Human vs. Technology
- Human vs. Environment
- Human vs. Supernatural

3. **Keep A Storytelling Journal.** Carry a small notebook with you where you can write down your story ideas. It's up to you whether or not you want to transfer them to digital form. When you pass by the seed of a good story, you likely won't remember it unless you write it down. Then you don't need to rattle your brain when it comes time to create.

4. **Remember, ALL Stories Are Lies.** Even biographies can't tell you every single incident that happened in a person's life. Choices have to be made. Incidents highlighted. A story is simply someone's point of view. In the book *"Fast Fiction"* by Roberta Allen she teaches you to write super short stories.

She says, "First it happens, then I make it happen."

In other words the kernel of a story is true but embellishing it is just good story-telling. Here are some qualities of a good selling story:

- Reveal state of mind – before and after using the product
- Only talk about one single incident
- Defy ordinary reality – overcome odds
- Compress time

See. It doesn't have to be complicated. You just have to roll up your sleeves and DO IT. In fact, one of the fastest and most efficient ways to master story fast is by using the Photo Prompt Exercise which I'll explain in the next section...

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Photo Prompt Exercise

The best way to get good at storytelling is to actually practice writing them daily. So I created the **30 Day Storytelling Challenge** on Facebook. It's free to join.

<http://bit.ly/30daystory>

(Challenges are held twice a year.)

But you don't have to wait for the next Challenge to begin because I've got you covered right here. You can do your own 30 Day Challenge in between the group ones. And I've got 30 random photos to get you started. Here's how it works:

Choose your start date and your end date. Then mark them on the calendar. It helps when you can visually see your goal. The daily photos begin after this section.

Your mission is to write a related SHORT story (100-200 words) about the daily picture.

I recommend you set a timer for 15 minutes so you don't get stuck. If you happen to miss a day, just double up the next day.

When you're done, you'll have 30 stories you can use in emails, social media, sales letters...you name it! People who've participated in the Challenge have reported their writing is much faster and their confidence has increased in their ability to tell a selling story. You can't do this wrong. Just make the commitment!

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SAMPLE STORY - SHEEP



Here's the thing about sheep...

They aren't the brightest animals on the planet. So they'll blindly follow each other, even into danger.

Business owners can act like sheep too. If they see enough people doing something, they think they should do it too...even if it doesn't suit their business model.

Having trouble falling asleep and staying asleep because your head is spinning with all the things you need to get done?

I've arranged for this small herd of sheep to give you a hand.

Each night when you get all snuggly in your bed, these sheep will take turns jumping over your bed so you can count them. They'll stick around for as long you need. When you slip into a deep,

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sweet sleep, they'll raid your refrigerator. Don't worry though....just R.E.L.A.X. and S.L.E.E.P...

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YOUR 30 Day Storytelling Challenge Begins Now...

The next 60 pages have everything you need...except the creativity. That's your job! You'll see a picture on a page. Then on the following page is that same picture much smaller with space for you to write your story. You can print this out and write by hand or create your own document. It's up to you.

Remember the idea is just to keep practicing. No need to put a lot of time or thought into this yet. Your storytelling muscles will be getting pumped up before you know it. Set your timer for 15 minutes so you don't get stuck. HAVE FUN!

Happy writing!

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STORY #1 – BIRD CIRCLE (via Dlisted)



How To Write A Damn Good Story

STORY #2 – BUBBLE (via Unsplash)



How To Write A Damn Good Story

STORY #3 – CARTS (via Dlisted)



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STORY #4 – COMPUTER HEADS (via Dlisted)



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STORY #5 – HITCHER (via Pixabay)



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STORY #6 – HELLO KITTY (via Dlisted)



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STORY #7 – PEOPLE POT (via Dlisted)



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STORY #8 – CROWDED CAR (via Dlisted)



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STORY #9 – DRYER (via Unsplash)



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STORY #10 – ROBOT (via Dlisted)



How To Write A Damn Good Story

STORY #11 – HEADSTAND (via Clipart)



How To Write A Damn Good Story

STORY #12 – RELAXED CAT (via Unsplash)



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STORY #13 – PAINT (via Unsplash)



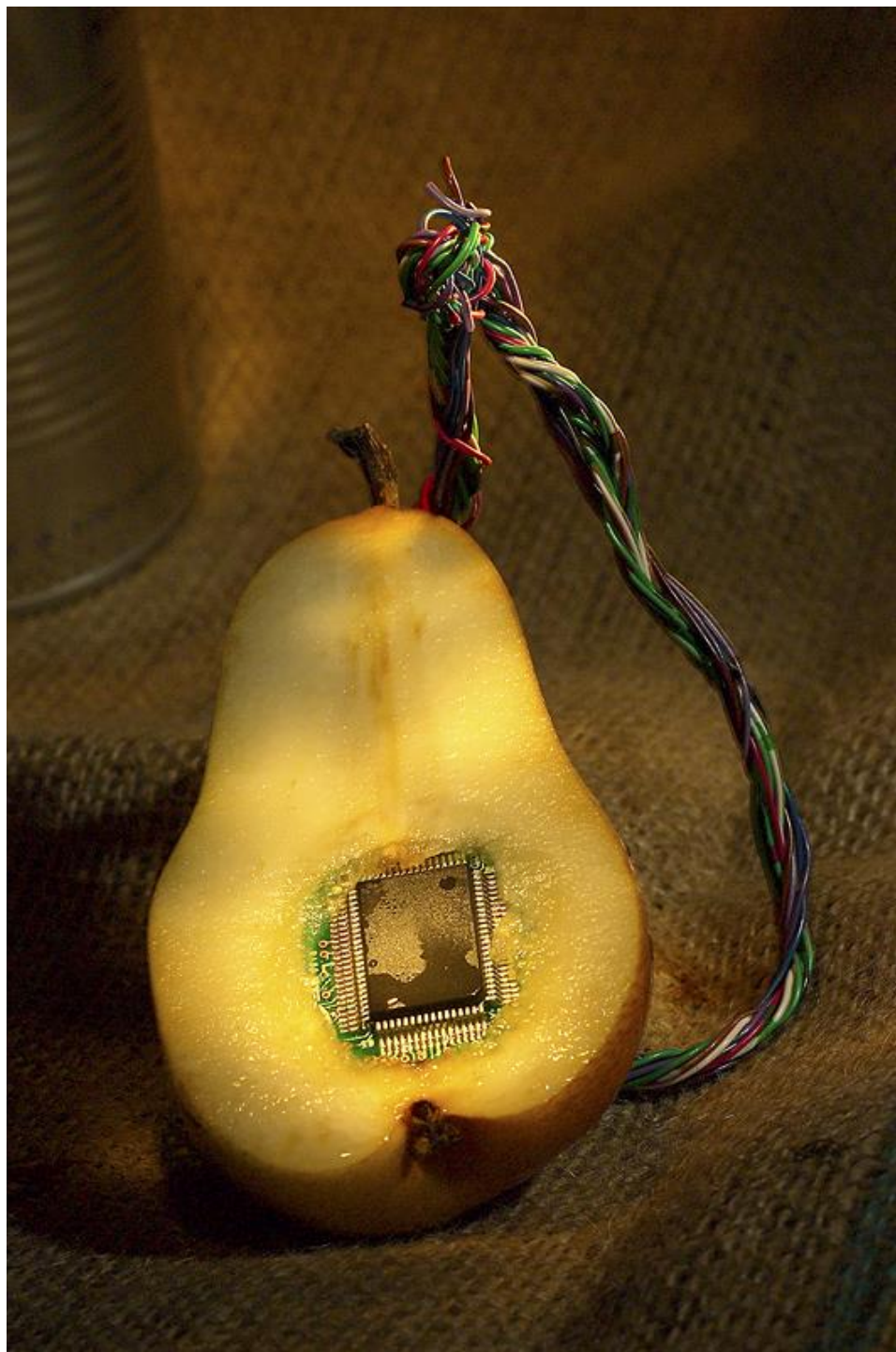
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STORY #14 – FAIRY BAND (via Unsplash)



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STORY #15 – ORGANIC TECHNOLOGY (via Pexels)



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STORY #16 – PACKING (via Pexels)



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STORY #17 – BRIDE (via Dlisted)



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STORY #18 – KITTY FRIENDS (via Dlisted)



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STORY #19 – JOGGING PONY (via Dlisted)



How To Write A Damn Good Story

STORY #20 – SNAKE (via Pexels)



How To Write A Damn Good Story

STORY #21 – STINKY (via Clipart)



How To Write A Damn Good Story

STORY #22 – UNDERWATER OFFICE (via Pexels)



How To Write A Damn Good Story

STORY #23 – FARMER (via Clipart)



How To Write A Damn Good Story

STORY #24 – TRICYCLE (via Clipart)



How To Write A Damn Good Story

STORY #25 – CRAB (via Unsplash)



How To Write A Damn Good Story

STORY #26 – WORKPLACE (via Pexels)



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STORY #27 – CARROT BATH (via Pexels)



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STORY #28 – TIGER (via Unsplash)



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STORY #29 – CHICKEN EXERCISE (via Unsplash)



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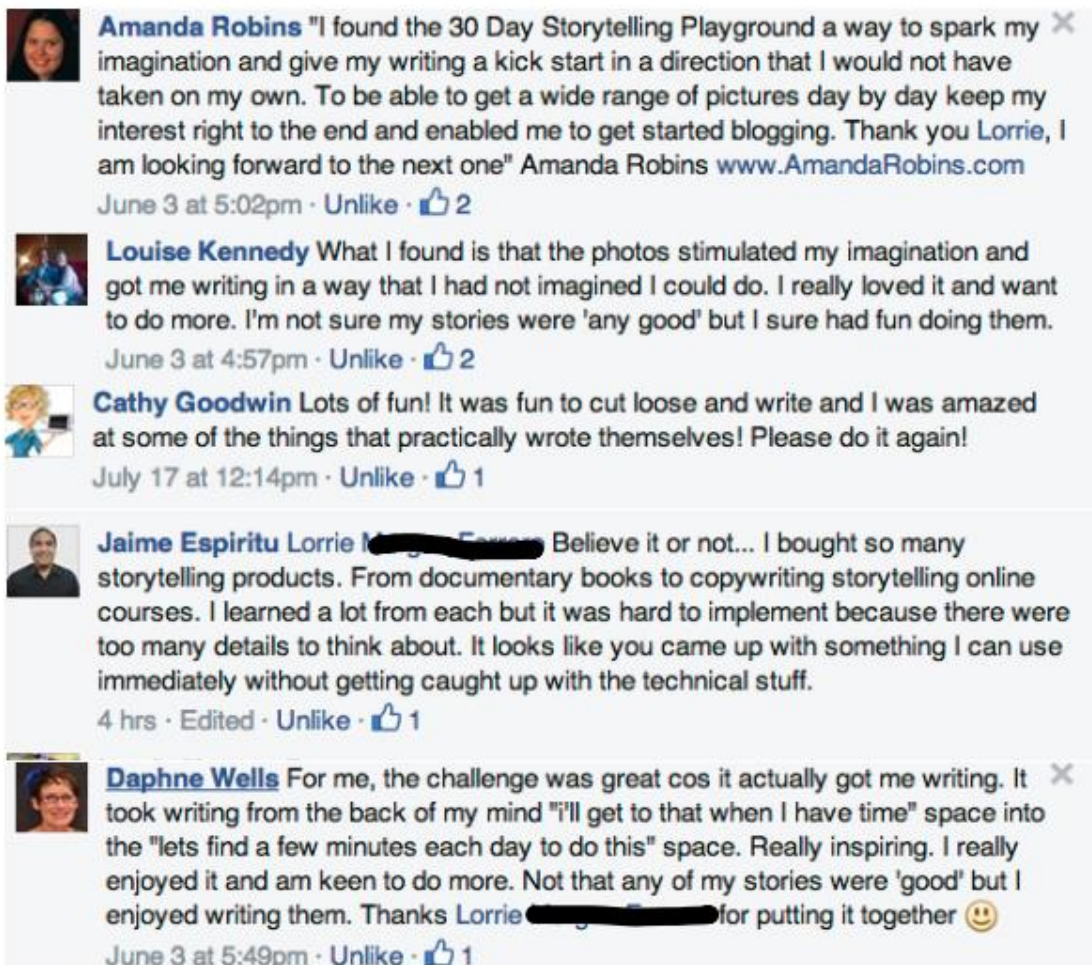
STORY #30 – TP (via Dlisted)



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Final Storytelling Steps

To keep your storytelling tools sharpened, I recommend joining the free **30 Day Storytelling Challenge** on Facebook, <http://bit.ly/30daystory>. Here are what some happy campers had to say about the Challenge:



Meanwhile, keep writing!

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Meet Lorrie



Lorrie Morgan is considered an industry trailblazer in the world of emotional response copywriting & marketing.

She founded her first company Red Hot Copy in 1999 so she could work anywhere, raise her family, and make a good living.

After studying closely with legends Dan Kennedy, John Carlton, and Gary Halbert, she takes established marketing formulas and adds her own conversational rapport to the mix for proven increases in conversions.

Lorrie and her businesses have been featured in Dan Kennedy's Gold Membership, Copy Chief, AWAI (American Writers & Artists Institute), John Carlton's SWS (Simple Writing System), Mal Emery's Business School in Australia, Ladies Who Launch, Office Depot, NAWBO (National Association for Women Business Owners), Mark Victor Hansen's Mega Events and more.

Lorrie has appeared in many print publications such as Armand Morin's Traces, Ali Brown's Ali, Savvy Business Women's Magazine, Parenting, Dan Kennedy's Gold & Platinum Newsletters plus her own previous newsletter, Hot Off the Presses.

She is regularly invited to John Carlton's Masterminds as the go-to voice for selling to women. In addition to running her own podcast, Red Hot Factor, Lorrie is frequently interviewed on other popular podcasts in a variety of industries.

Lorrie's copywriting products have won awards for publishing excellence. She was also nominated for outstanding business contributions by a woman for the Los Angeles Business Journal Awards, The Stevie Awards and others.

Today she lives in Arizona on a 13-acre horse ranch with her partner. When she's not working on copy or is mentoring other business owners, she's usually living out my Big Valley fantasies by riding her horse, feeding chickens, or shooting competitively.

Follow her at www.RedHotCopy.com.