

# Storytelling Methods for Experience Design

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by Anna Dahlström | @annadahlstrom @uxfika

Agile Scotland, 11 March 2019



*In all good stories*  
things happen for a reason





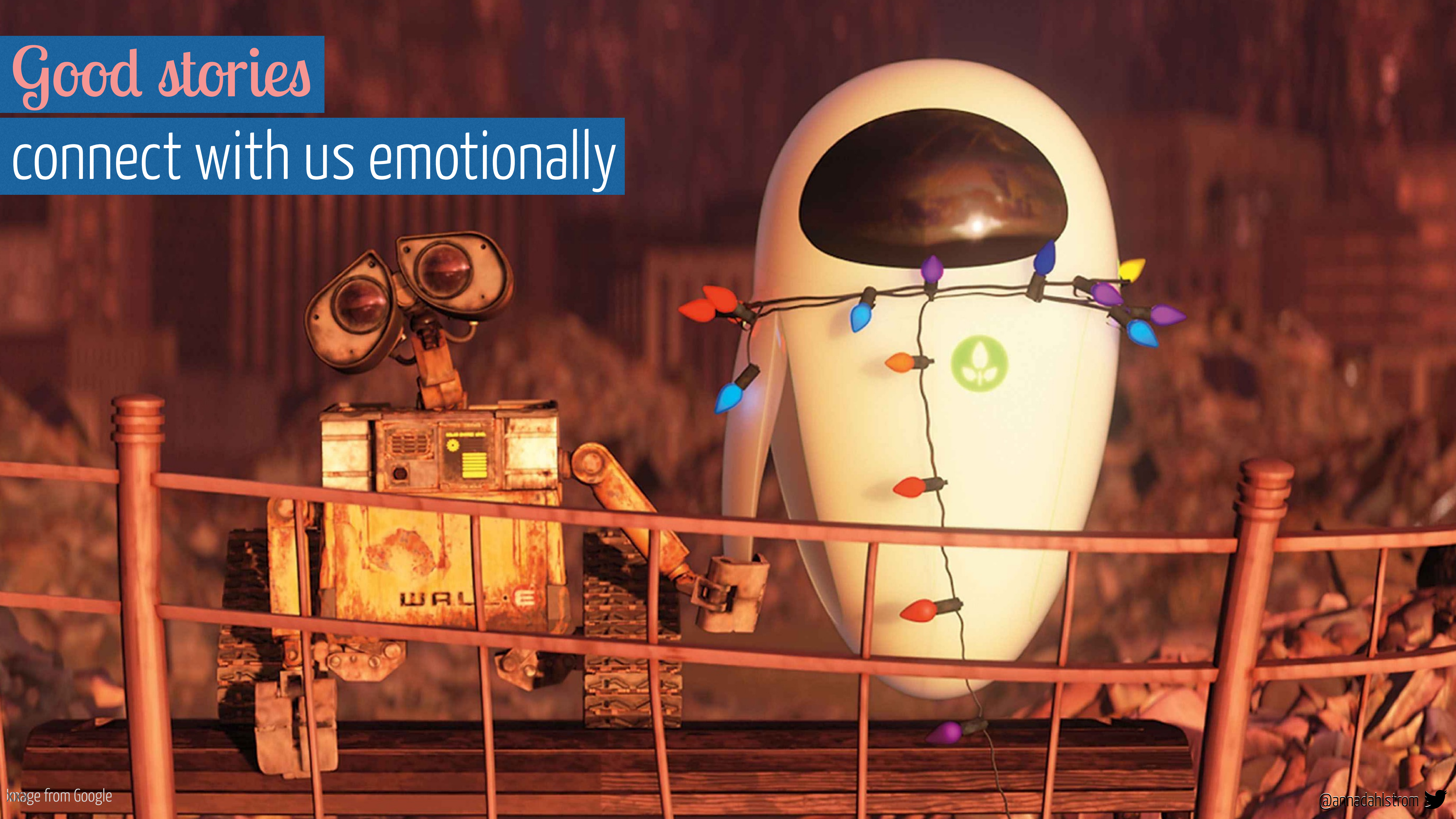


Every aspect of the experience  
should be carefully designed



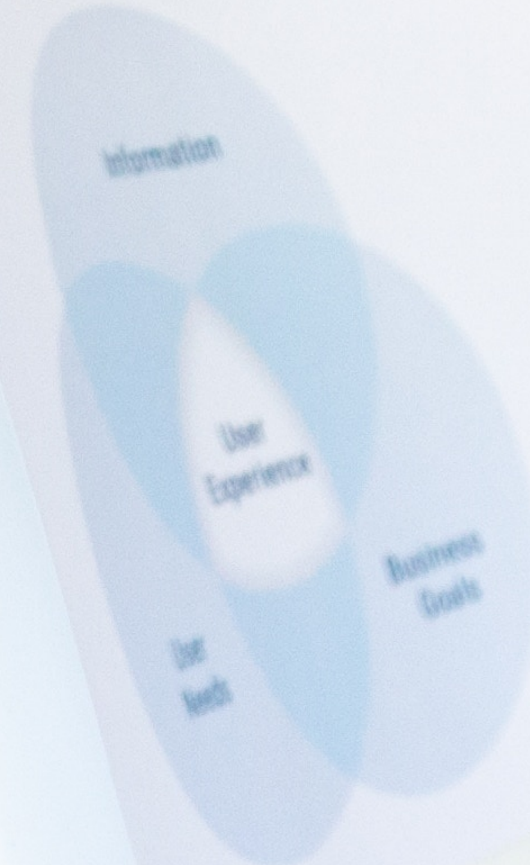
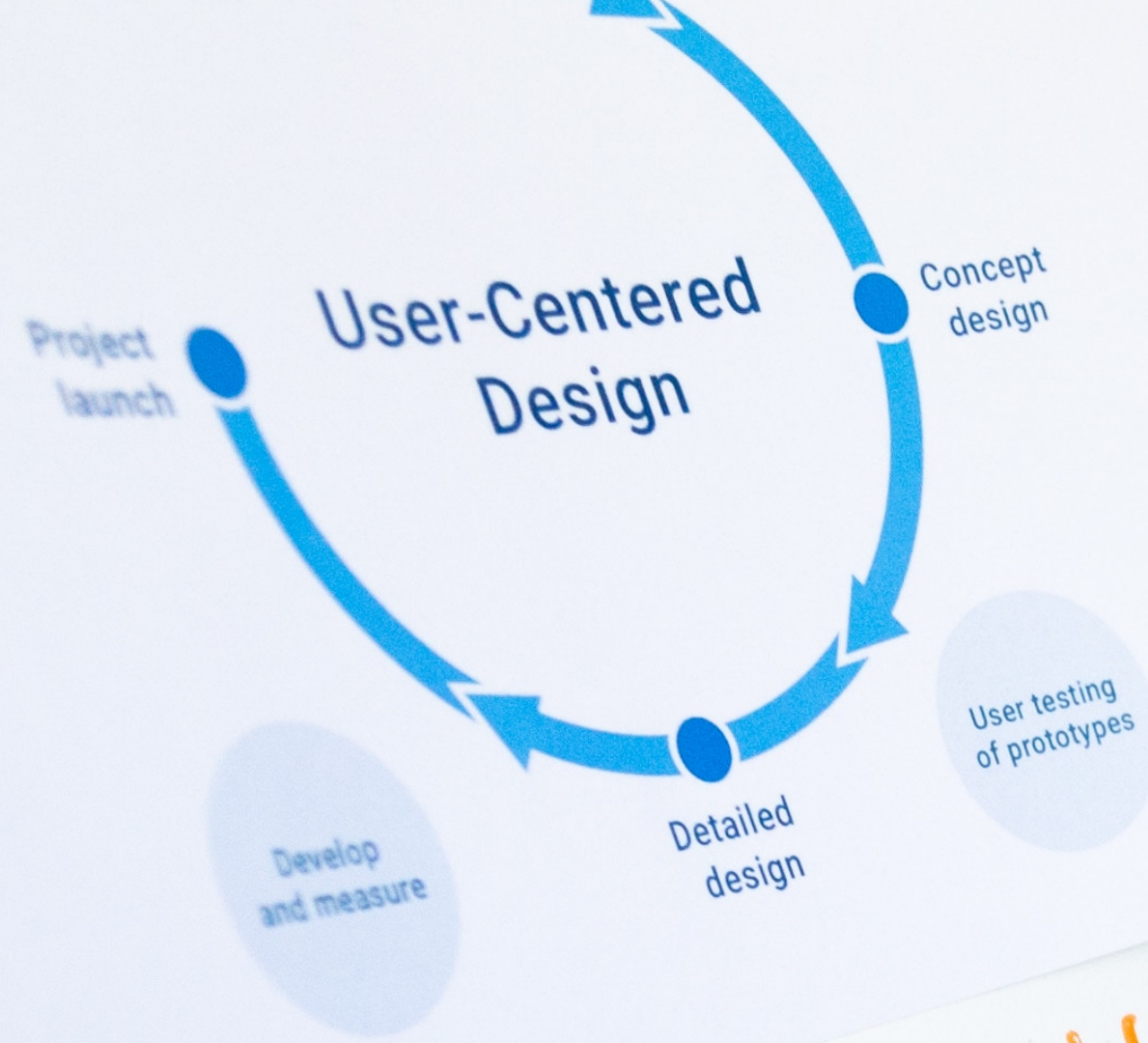
Good stories

connect with us emotionally



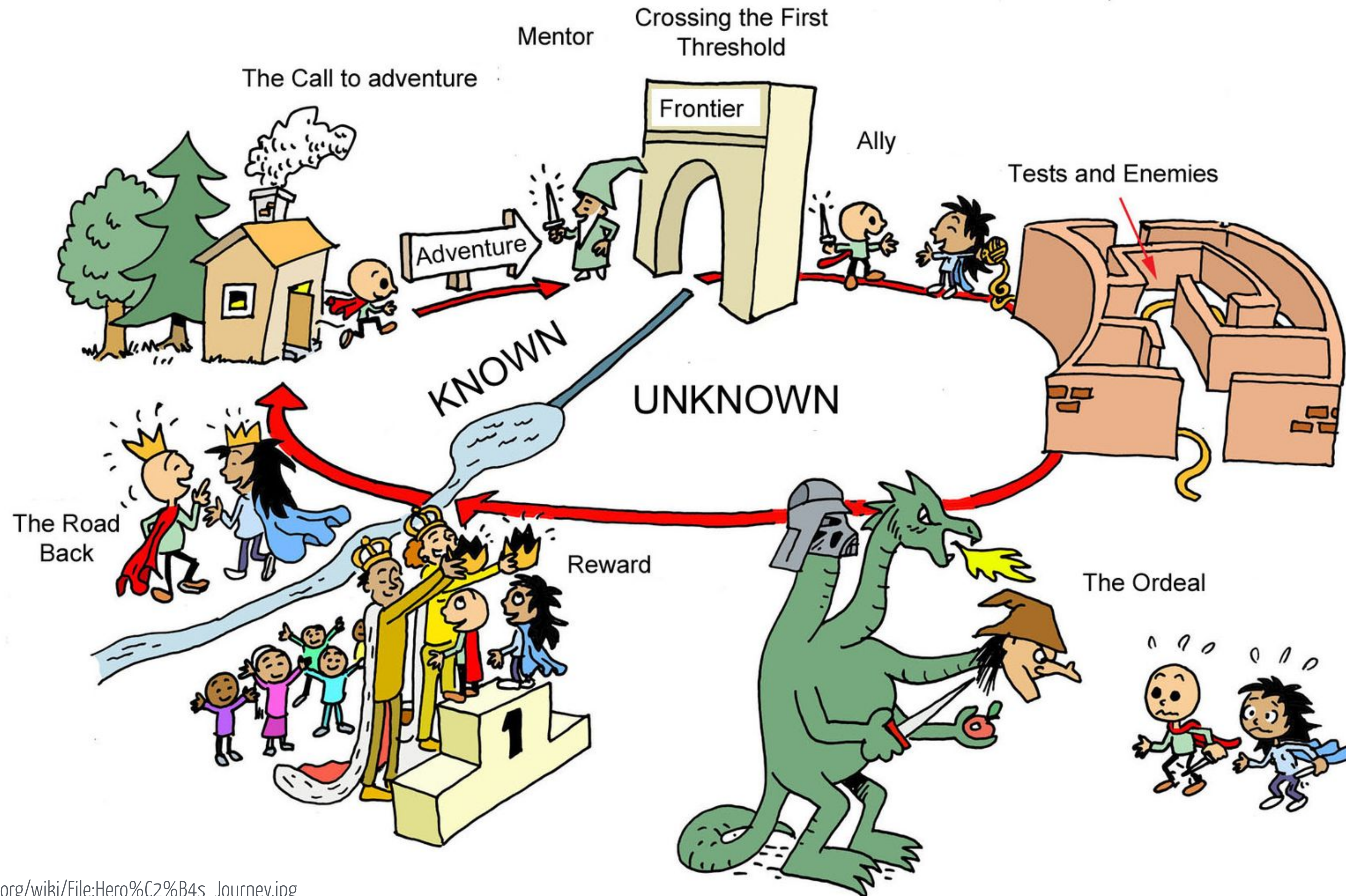


Every (part of a) product  
or service tells (part of) a story





# The Hero's Journey





A woman with dark hair is seen in profile, looking towards a laptop. The laptop screen displays a design application with a red background and the word "IDEAS" in a dashed box. To the right of the text is a technical drawing of a rectangular object with dimensions. Below the drawing is a color palette with several color swatches. The laptop is on a white desk. To the left of the laptop is a smartphone showing the time 08:15. To the right is a dark blue mug. In the background, other people are partially visible, suggesting a meeting or collaborative work environment.


*We have a* tendency to  
jump into solution mode





Storytelling helps  
us understand the context





“**Historically**, stories have always been igniters  
of action, moving people to do things.”

- Peter Guber



“Experiences matter. Experiences are journeys. Journeys are designed.”

- Strategy + business



# Storytelling

methods for experience design

Identify & understand  
the **problem space**

Define & deliver  
the **experience**

Present & analyse  
the **outcome**



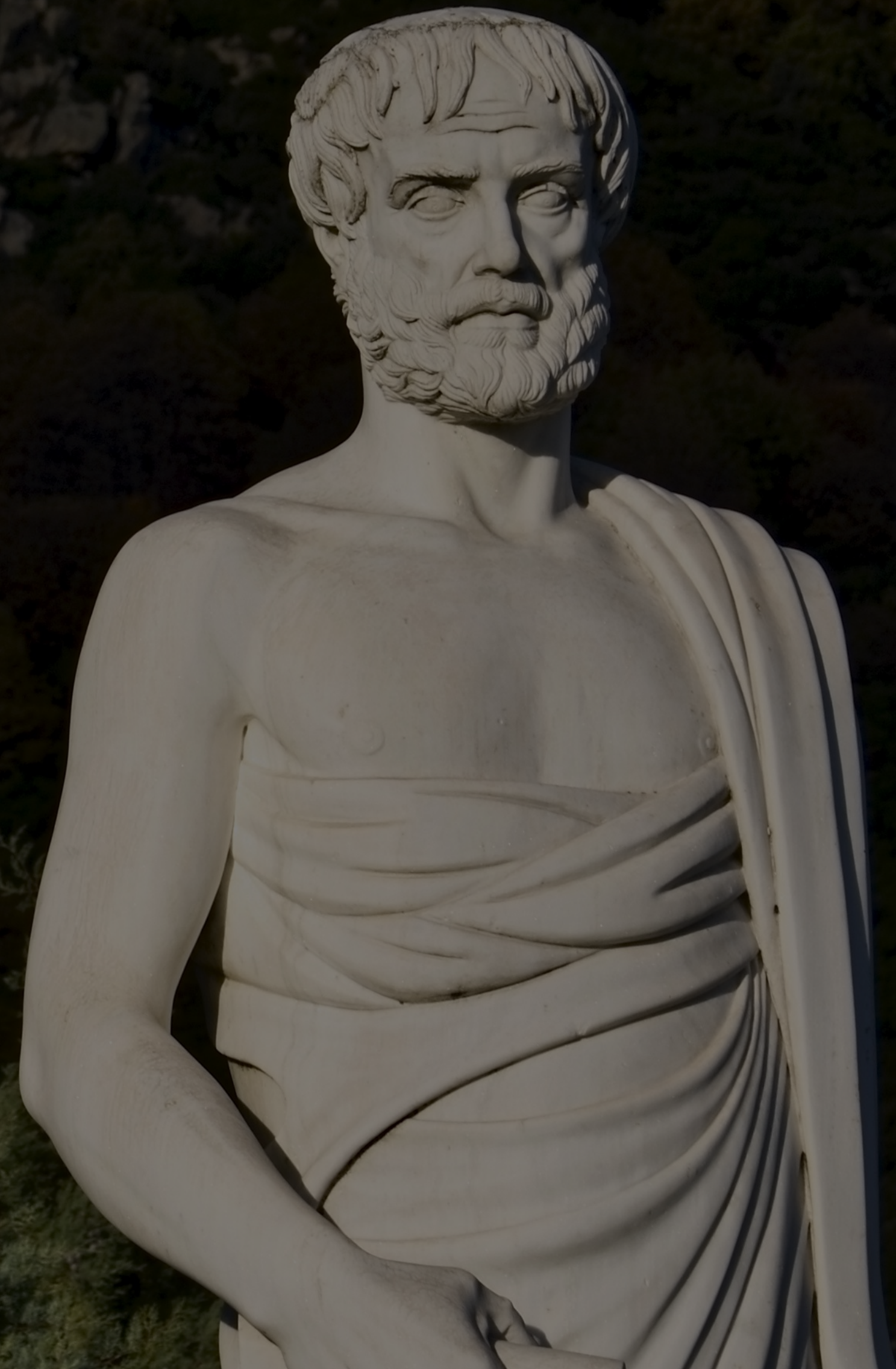
1.

*Define* what story you're telling whom and why



“ *The whole of a story is* that  
which have a beginning, a middle  
and an end ”

- *Aristotle*



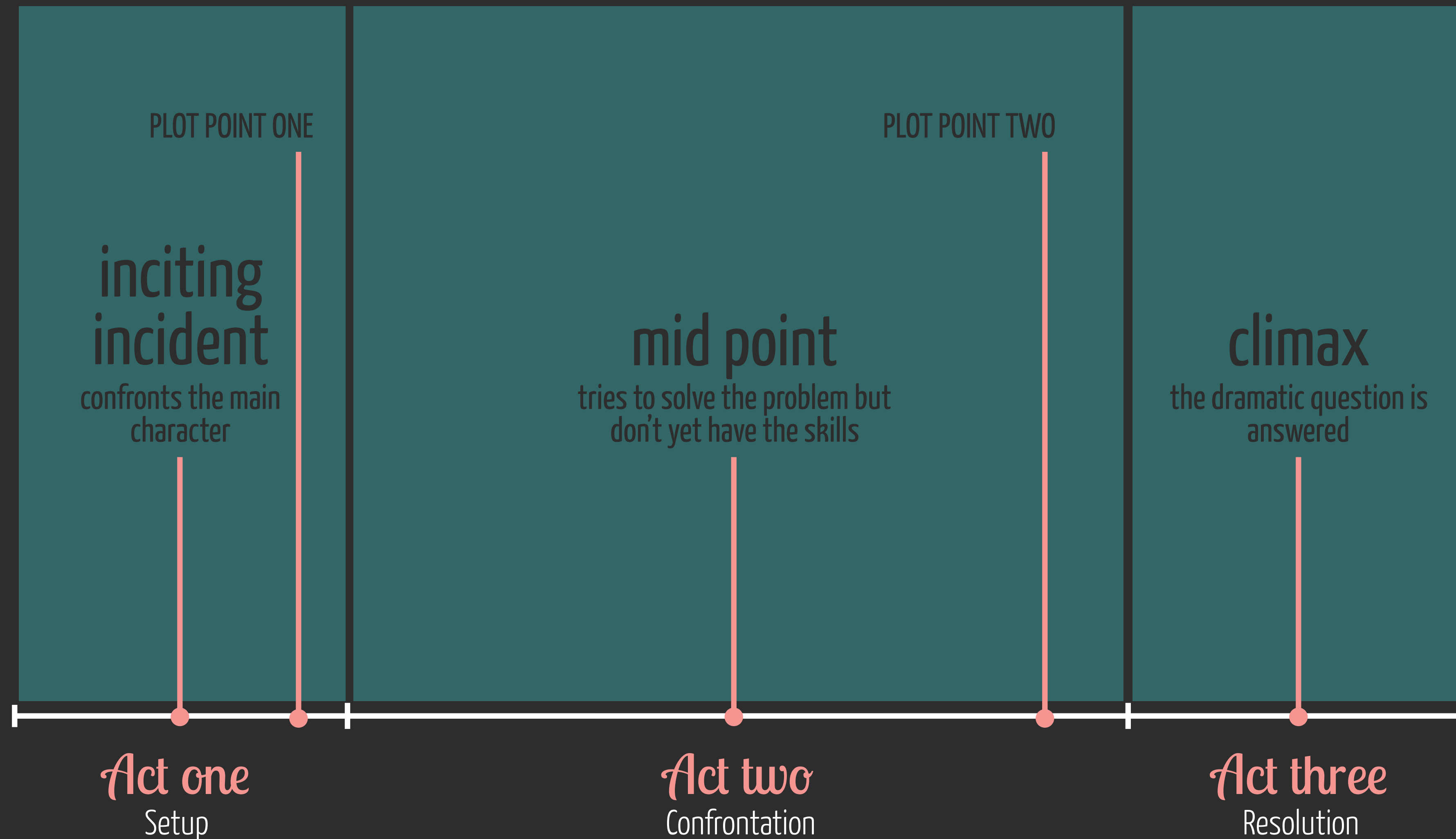


# Dramaturgy

knowing how to apply & structure  
elements to tell a story

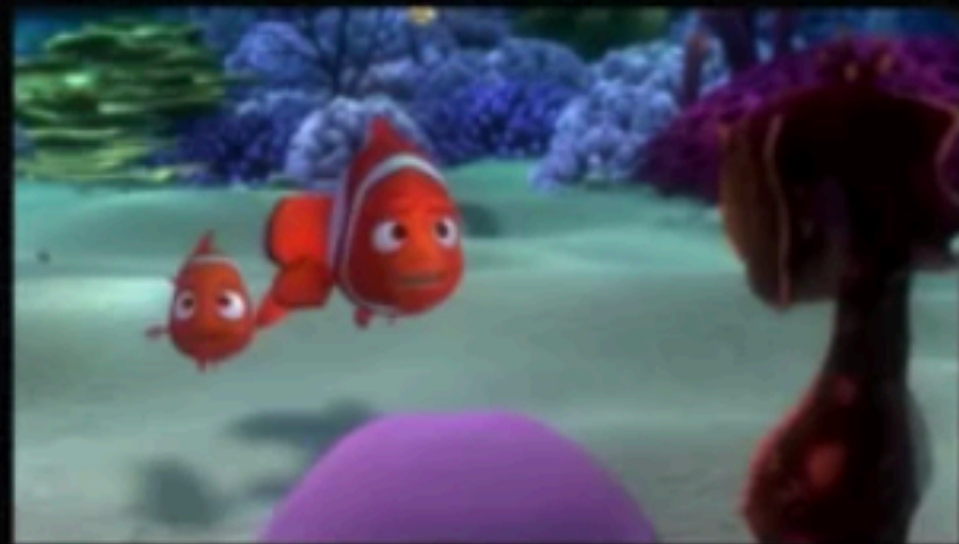


# Three act structure

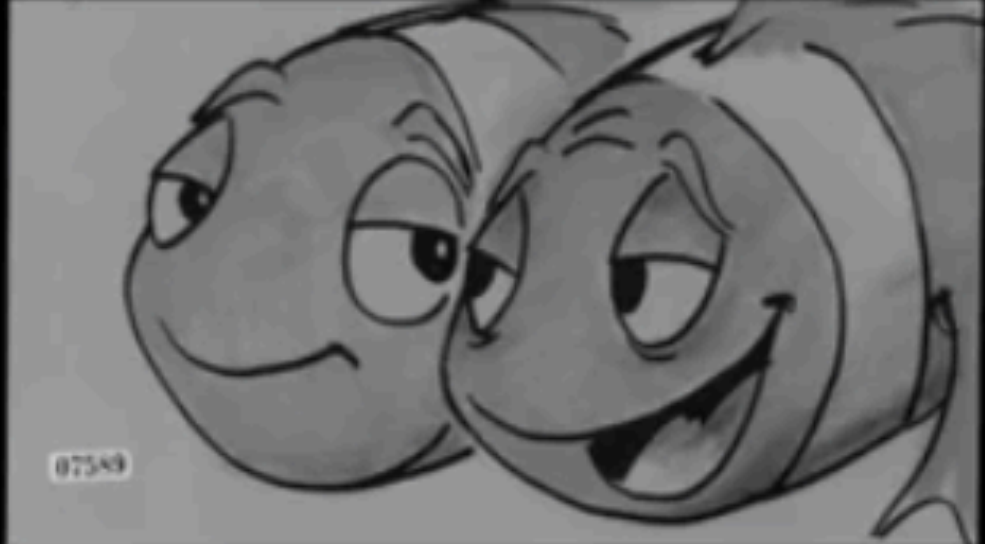
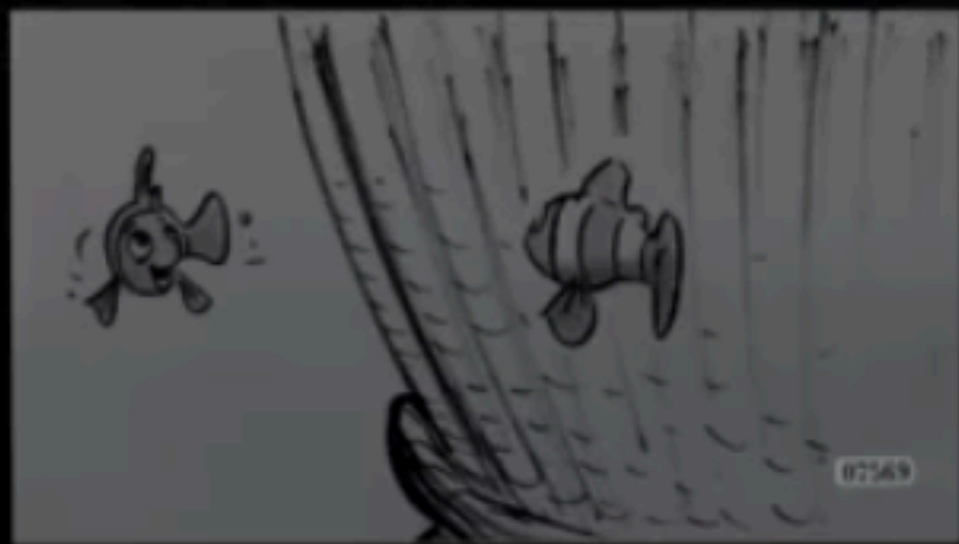




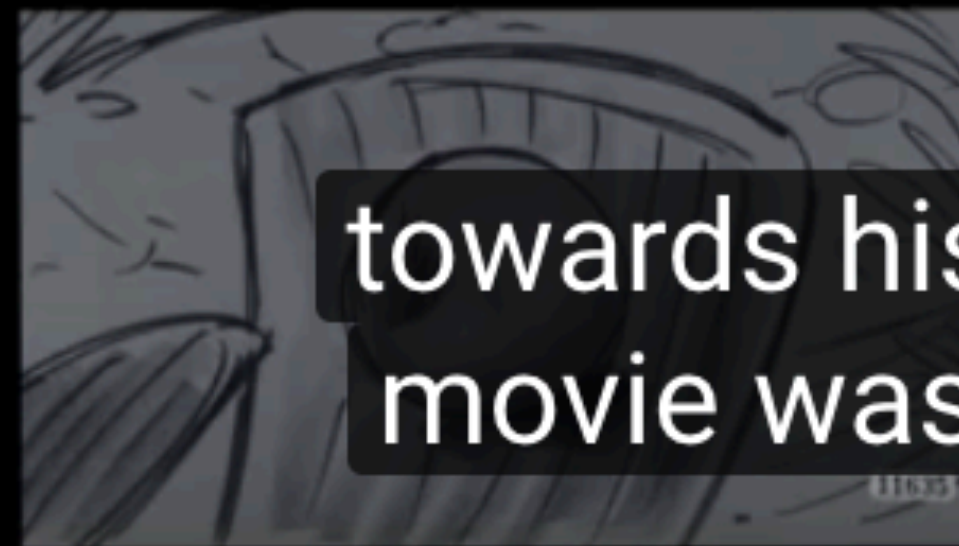
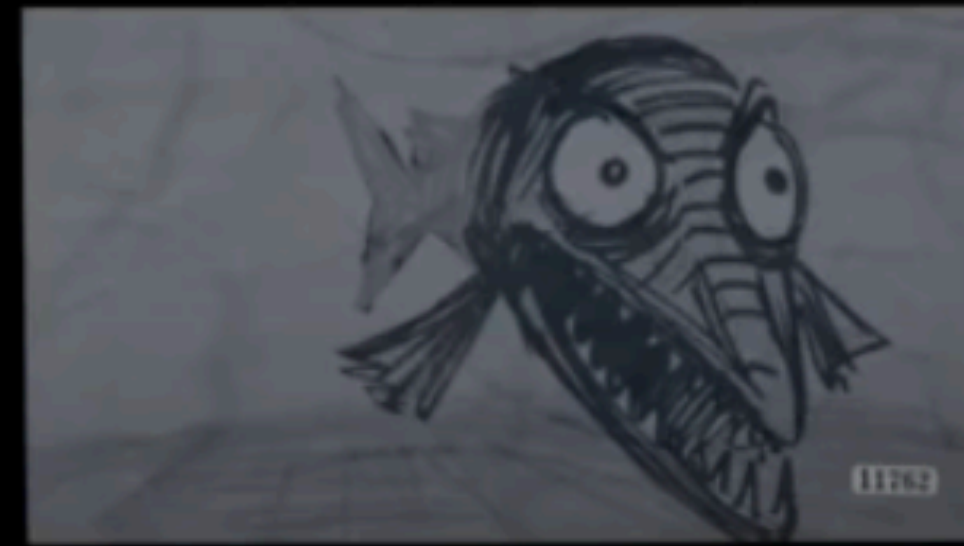
OPENING



MIDDLE



END



towards his son until the movie was almost over,

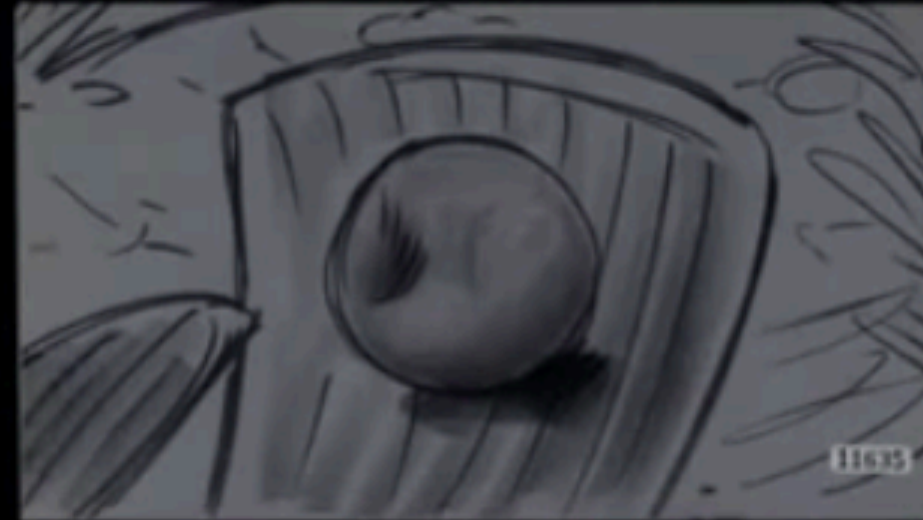


2:52 / 3:56

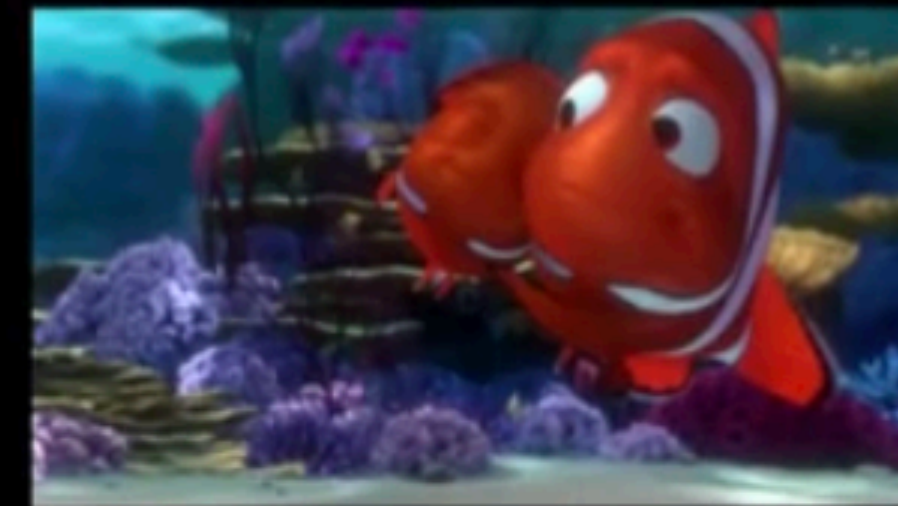




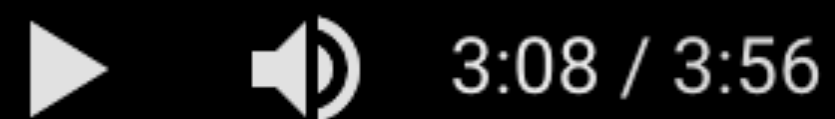
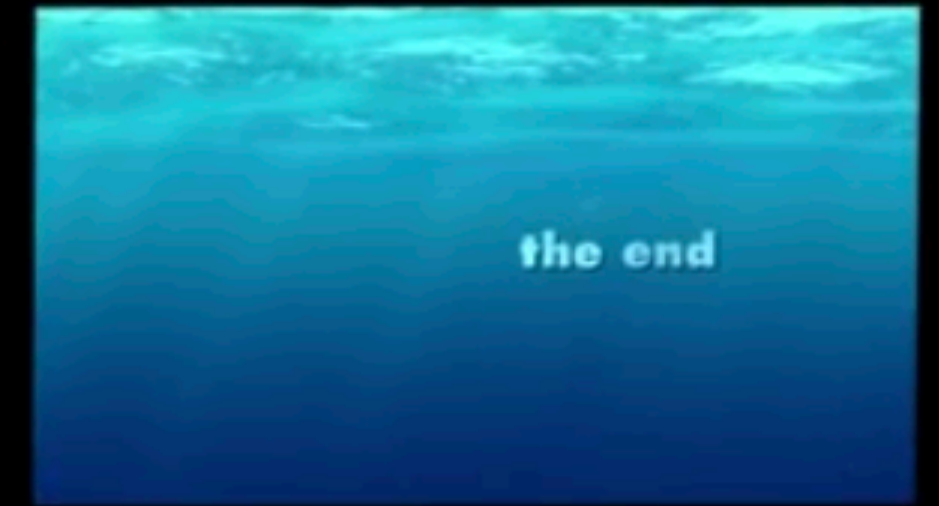
## OPENING



## MIDDLE



## END





# Structure

is about what you're going to tell  
your audience when



## Man in Hole



The main character gets into trouble then gets out of it again and ends up better off for the experience.



Arsenic and Old Lace



Harold & Kumar Go To White Castle

## Boy Meets Girl



The main character comes across something wonderful, gets it, loses it, then gets it back forever.



Jane Eyre



Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind

## From Bad to Worse



The main character starts off poorly then gets continually worse with no hope for improvement.



The Metamorphosis



The Twilight Zone

## Which Way Is Up?



The story has a lifelike ambiguity that keeps us from knowing if new developments are good or bad.

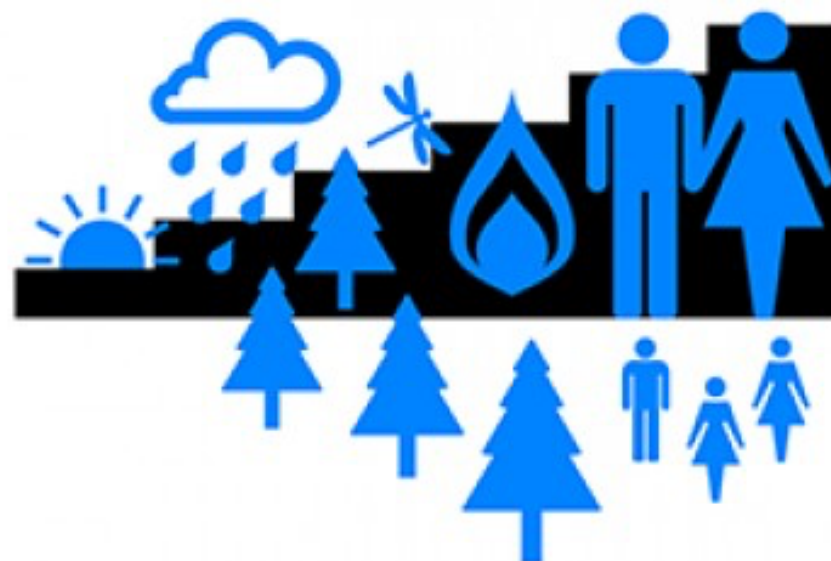


Hamlet



The Sopranos

## Creation Story



In many cultures' creation stories, humankind receives incremental gifts from a deity. First major staples like the earth and sky, then smaller things like sparrows and cell phones. Not a common shape for Western stories, however.

## Old Testament



Humankind receives incremental gifts from a deity, but is suddenly ousted from good standing in a fall of enormous proportions.



Great Expectations

## New Testament



Humankind receives incremental gifts from a deity, is suddenly ousted from good standing, but then receives off-the-charts bliss.



Great Expectations with Dickens' alternate ending

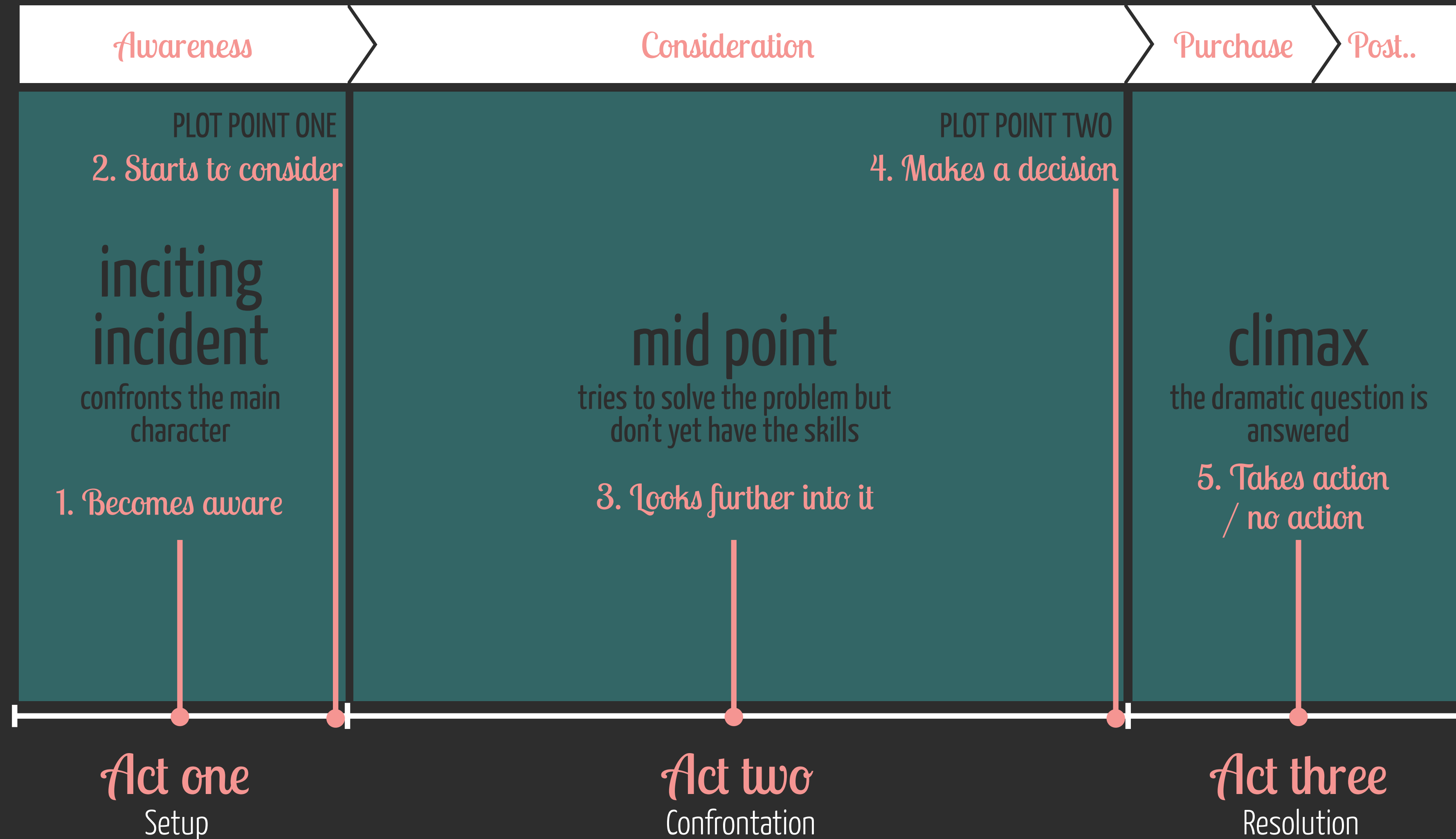
## Cinderella



It was the similarity between the shapes of Cinderella and the New Testament that thrilled Vonnegut for the first time in 1947 and then over the course of his life as he continued to write essays and give lectures on the shapes of stories.

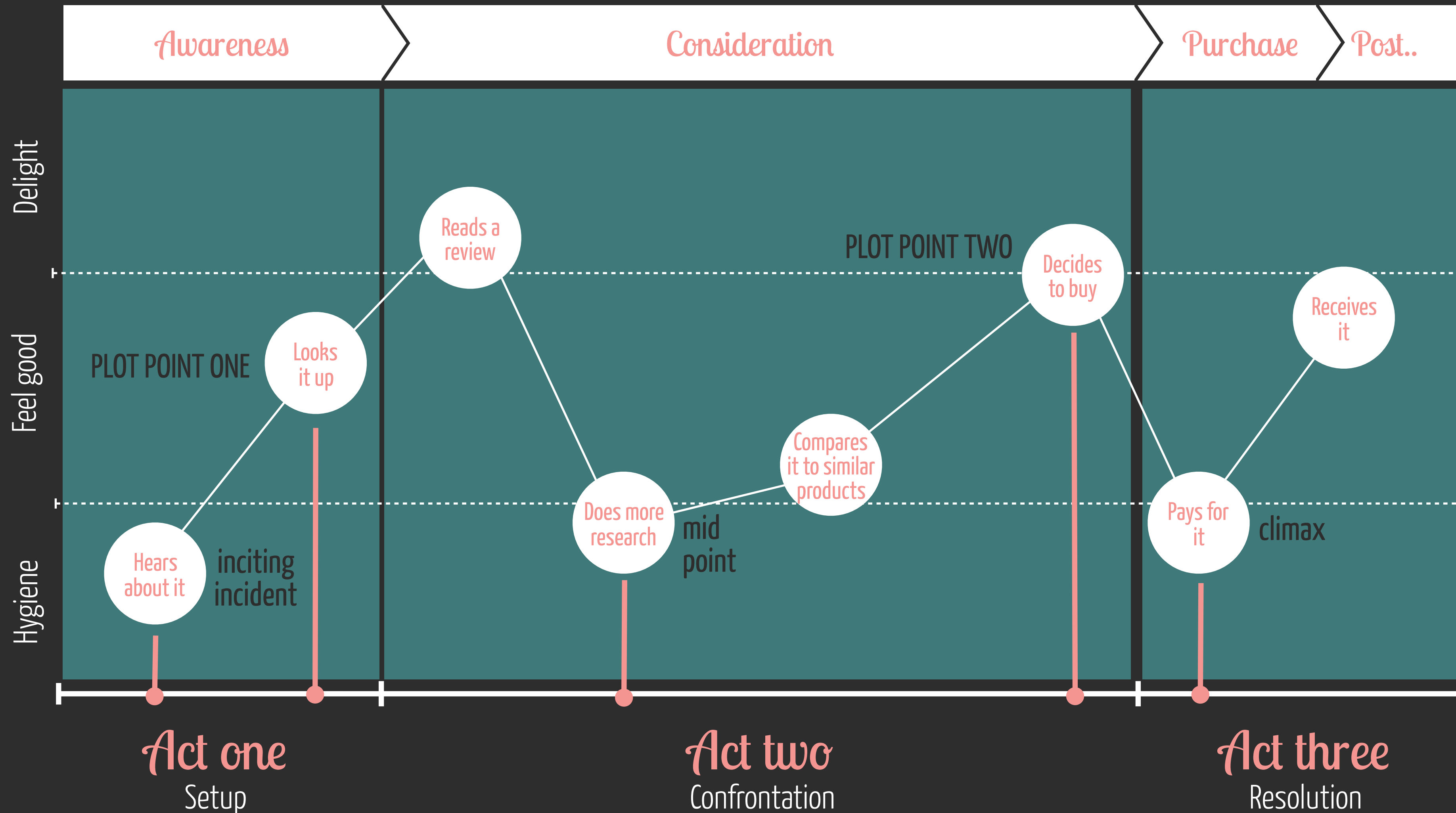


# The structure of a typical purchase journey





# Map out the experience





2.

Identify and develop the characters



Without characters  
there is no story





# The protagonist



# The protagonist

+

1.

The main  
characters

2.

Supporting  
characters

3.

Sub-plot  
characters

4.

One-string  
characters





**Aspirations**  
"I'm starting my second career in something I love and I hope to someday become an established local brand."

**Business**  
Full time business offering event planning services

**Business Growth Drivers**  
Online | WOM | Social Media | Marketing

**Mindset**  
"I don't know how to code or write HTML, but I've heard there are some tools out there where coding is

**Hesitations**  
"My website will be the face of my brand so it needs to be polished and professional. And once it's out there, how can I market it to get more clients?"

- How Weebly Uniquely Serves**
1. Offers professional webinars and marketing advice to help grow her business
  2. Makes her feel part of something bigger with a community of like minded small business owners
  3. Makes it easy to create a high-quality site to establish her brand and attract clients



**AGE:** 20  
**COURSE:** GRAPHIC DESIGN  
**JOB:** RETAIL  
**DEVICES:**



## BETH KING

Beth is a full time student living in a share house with several mates. She works in retail to help pay for rent, uni and her social life. She has a boyfriend who takes up much of her free time. She tries to make it to as many lectures and tutorials as possible, but often has to cover shifts at work or needs to skip lectures to catch up on course work. She tries to keep a regular, structured study pattern, but is not very strict about it and sometimes blows off studying to go out and have fun with friends. She mainly uses Moodle to watch lectures online, keep up to date on what happened in missed tutorials and to contribute to forums.

### COMPUTER SKILL



### ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS



### ENGAGEMENT



**HOBBIES:**  
GOING OUT WITH FRIENDS, WORKING OUT, DRAWING

# Traditionally we think of these

**JOHN DOE**  
THE SOFTWARE ENGINEER

**JOHN DOE**  
THE SOFTWARE ENGINEER

**JOHN DOE**  
THE SOFTWARE ENGINEER

**Andrea, Optimizer**

**Facts**  
Age: 28  
Job: Physical Therapy Assistant  
Location: Miami, New York  
Relationship status: Engaged  
Education: BS from University of Arizona  
Income: \$34k US  
Hobbies: Yoga, exercise, reading, dancing  
Pets: One cat  
Favorite place: Turkey, Portugal

**Personality**  
"If there's an easier, cheaper, faster way to do something, I'm all about it."

**JA Habits**  
First visit recommendation from a friend  
During exercise: Phone, laptop PC, home laptop  
Shows all her simple medical diagnoses & symptoms, perspective & decision-making help, everyday troubleshooting  
Favorite thing about JA: "It was really fun, the experts I spoke to were really friendly, and I was able to get some advice from them."  
Least favorite thing about JA: "Consistency... when I don't really specifically think about what I was looking for, the doctor I spoke to was the doctor who didn't."  
Married couple: "It's a place where you can get qualified experts for answers and get those answers quickly."

**Motivation:** Convenience, control, saving time and money

**SARAH**  
HAPPY IDEALISTIC SCHOOL LEAVER

**ABOUT**  
AGE: 20  
RELATIONSHIP: SINGLE  
TRAVEL: NOT YET  
LIVING AT HOME WITH PARENTS  
SOCIAL, ECONOMIC PARENTS EARN UNDER 70K A YEAR  
POLITICAL MOTIVATION: RELAXED  
ETHNICITY: KAZAKHSTAN

**JOURNEY**  
DREAM: TO BECOME A FAMOUS FASHION DESIGNER AND TRAVEL  
PERSONALITY: BRIGHT AND BUBBLY, IDEALISTIC AND EMPLUSE, CONFIDENT  
AROUND HER FRIENDS, ESTIM. DESIGNER

**BEHAVIOURS**  
DREAM: TO BECOME A FAMOUS FASHION DESIGNER AND TRAVEL  
PERSONALITY: BRIGHT AND BUBBLY, IDEALISTIC AND EMPLUSE, CONFIDENT  
AROUND HER FRIENDS, ESTIM. DESIGNER

**HELLO, I'M DAN JENSEN**  
THE RETIRED SENIOR

"I love relaxed, peaceful walks. I love working with people who want to protect the creeks as much as I do even more. It gives my life a greater purpose that cannot be found anywhere else."

**AGE:** 65  
**GENDER:** MALE  
**LOCATION:** PORT MOODY  
**OCCUPATION:** RETIRED SENIOR  
USED TO BE LOGISTICS COORDINATOR

**PERSONALITY TRAITS**  
Spontaneous  
Outgoing  
Laidback  
Disorganized

**MY TYPICAL DAY**  
I wake up early at 6:30 AM everyday  
I slowly savour my breakfast  
I head to the hatchery and help out with any team  
It takes 15 minutes for me to walk back home  
I have lunch with my wife  
I usually like gardening in the afternoon  
I help my wife cook and then we eat dinner together  
After dinner, we walk in the nearby park  
My typical day ends around 10 PM

**TASKS AT THE HATCHERY**  
Salmon Team: Feed the fish, monitor water temperature at the hatchery  
Water Quality Team: Get field data and water samples  
Event coordinator within the society: Plan for events like the Fingering Festival

**MY MOTIVATIONS**  
I am a firm believer in protecting the environment in his local area  
60%  
I like hiking and taking walks in the parks, enjoying the beautiful scenery  
40%  
Over the years, I have seen how construction negatively affects the environment from working at my past company

**FRUSTRATIONS**  
I am not comfortable with technology, and therefore I avoid conducting the analyses in the laboratory when I am helping the Water Quality Team  
I also dislike coming to the hatchery at night to check on urgent issues, as it disrupts my relaxation time before sleeping at 10 PM


**MY GOALS**  
**RELATIONSHIP WITH SOCIETY**



3.

Identify the main story and the mini stories





The 'eight sequences' approach  
from the early days of film





*A sequence is* series of *related scenes* that are *tied together* by location and/ or time and/ or overall intent of the hero/ heroine and generally only *follows one line of action*.

---

*Each sequence is a story* in and of itself with a beginning, a middle and an end.



## Onboarding:

Deciding to sign up → Learning about the app → First use

## Making a reservation:

Researching places → Deciding on a place → Making the reservation



Stage/ Act	Act 1: Beginning What's the conflict?	Act 2: Middle What happens next?	Act 3: End What's the resolution?
Awareness	Realises need ->	Starts to consider ->	Decides to look into it
Consideration	Decides to research ->	Compares products ->	Makes a decision
Purchase	Adds to basket ->	Registers & starts checkout ->	Pays -> Gets a confirmation



4.

*Define* the story of the page/view





Does the page tell a story  
if you strip away all the styling?



Hi, we are Dropbox.

We are reinventing teamwork (and we keep releasing tools and software that proves that).

We are designed around the way you work.

You can take your docs anywhere – whether it is your phone or on the road.

You can also upload videos pretty quickly and send to anyone (even if they don't use Dropbox).

You can manage your photos fairly easily too. We make it pretty simple to organize them.

And we also have tools for real-time collaboration with your peers, whether you are working together on a presentation or constantly updating files in a folder.

Of course, we're safe. You'll never lose a file again.

Interested? Get started now.

PS: in case this is not what you're looking for, here are a few other things you can do.

” How would I explain to a friend, in a conversation or in an email, this thing/topic/product/story I am trying to communicate? ”

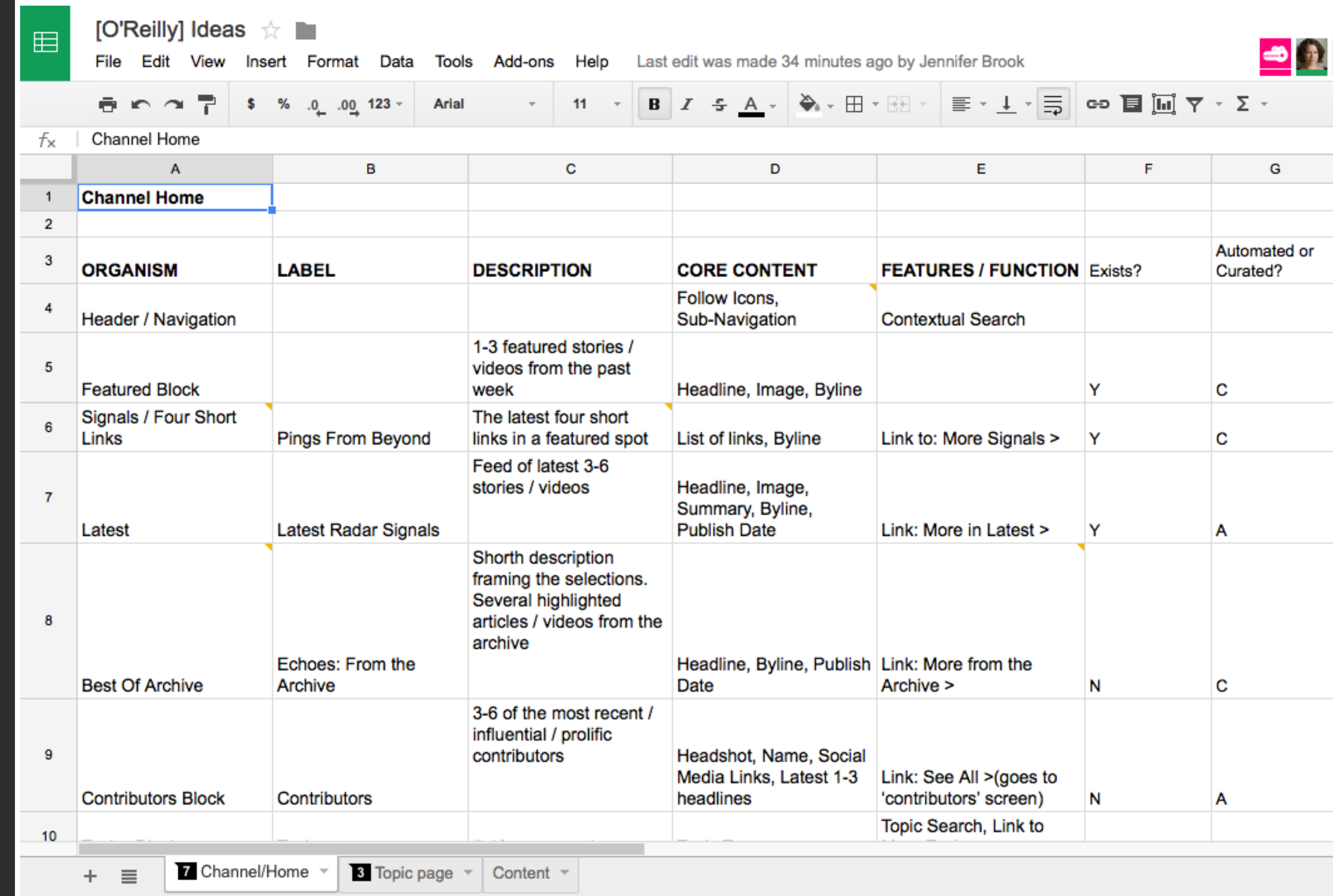
- UX Collective



“I also accompany every page's spreadsheet with a list of:

- **mindsets** that users bring to these pages
- **tasks** that the page can complete for users
- **goals** that the page must fulfill for the organization ”

- Josh Clark, big medium



The screenshot shows a Google Sheet titled "[O'Reilly] Ideas" with a last edit by Jennifer Brook 34 minutes ago. The spreadsheet is for "Channel Home" and contains a table with 10 rows and 7 columns (A-G). The table lists various content blocks and their associated details.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Channel Home						
2							
3	ORGANISM	LABEL	DESCRIPTION	CORE CONTENT	FEATURES / FUNCTION	Exists?	Automated or Curated?
4	Header / Navigation			Follow Icons, Sub-Navigation	Contextual Search		
5	Featured Block		1-3 featured stories / videos from the past week	Headline, Image, Byline		Y	C
6	Signals / Four Short Links	Pings From Beyond	The latest four short links in a featured spot	List of links, Byline	Link to: More Signals >	Y	C
7	Latest	Latest Radar Signals	Feed of latest 3-6 stories / videos	Headline, Image, Summary, Byline, Publish Date	Link: More in Latest >	Y	A
8	Best Of Archive	Echoes: From the Archive	Shorth description framing the selections. Several highlighted articles / videos from the archive	Headline, Byline, Publish Date	Link: More from the Archive >	N	C
9	Contributors Block	Contributors	3-6 of the most recent / influential / prolific contributors	Headshot, Name, Social Media Links, Latest 1-3 headlines	Link: See All >(goes to 'contributors' screen)	N	A
10				Topic Search, Link to			

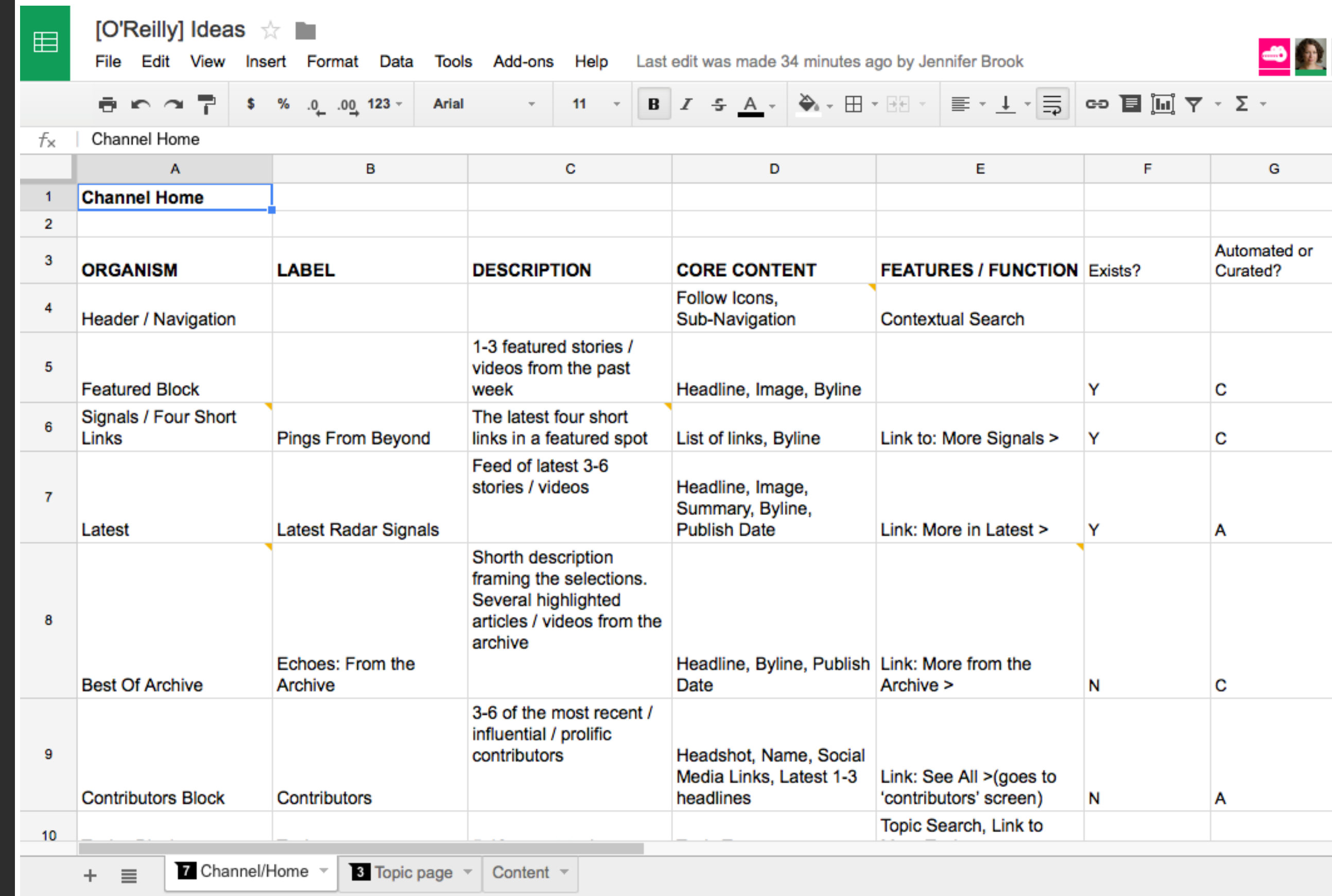




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The screenshot shows a spreadsheet application window titled "[O'Reilly] Ideas". The spreadsheet is for a "Channel Home" page. It has a header row with columns A through G. The data rows are numbered 1 through 10. A dropdown menu is open for cell A4, showing options: "Channel Home", "Header / Navigation", "Featured Block", "Signals / Four Short Links", "Latest", "Best Of Archive", and "Contributors Block".

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
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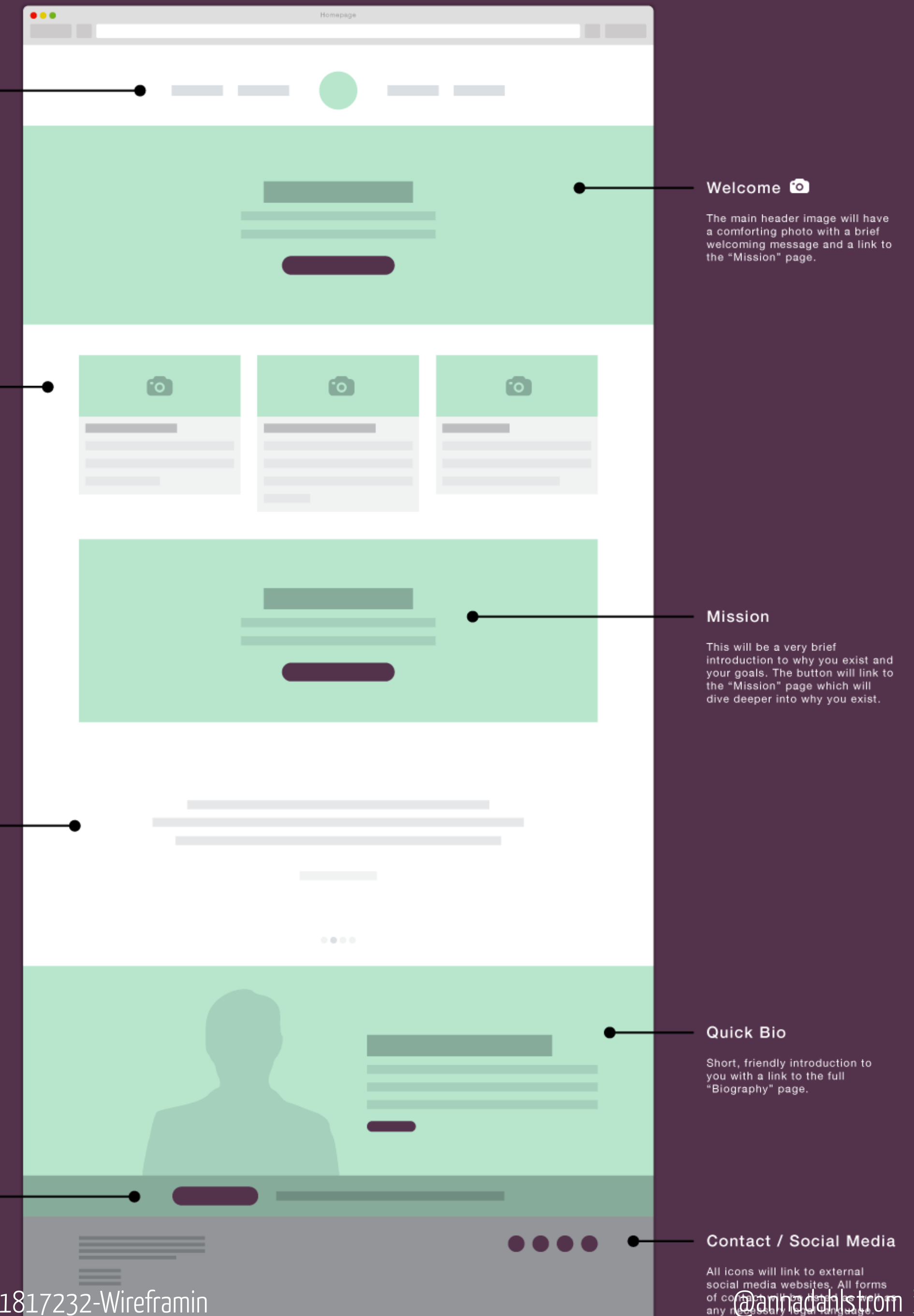
The **purpose** of this page is to...

As a **first time** visitor\* I should be able to...

As a **returning** visitor\* I should be able to...

\* If need be break down by persona

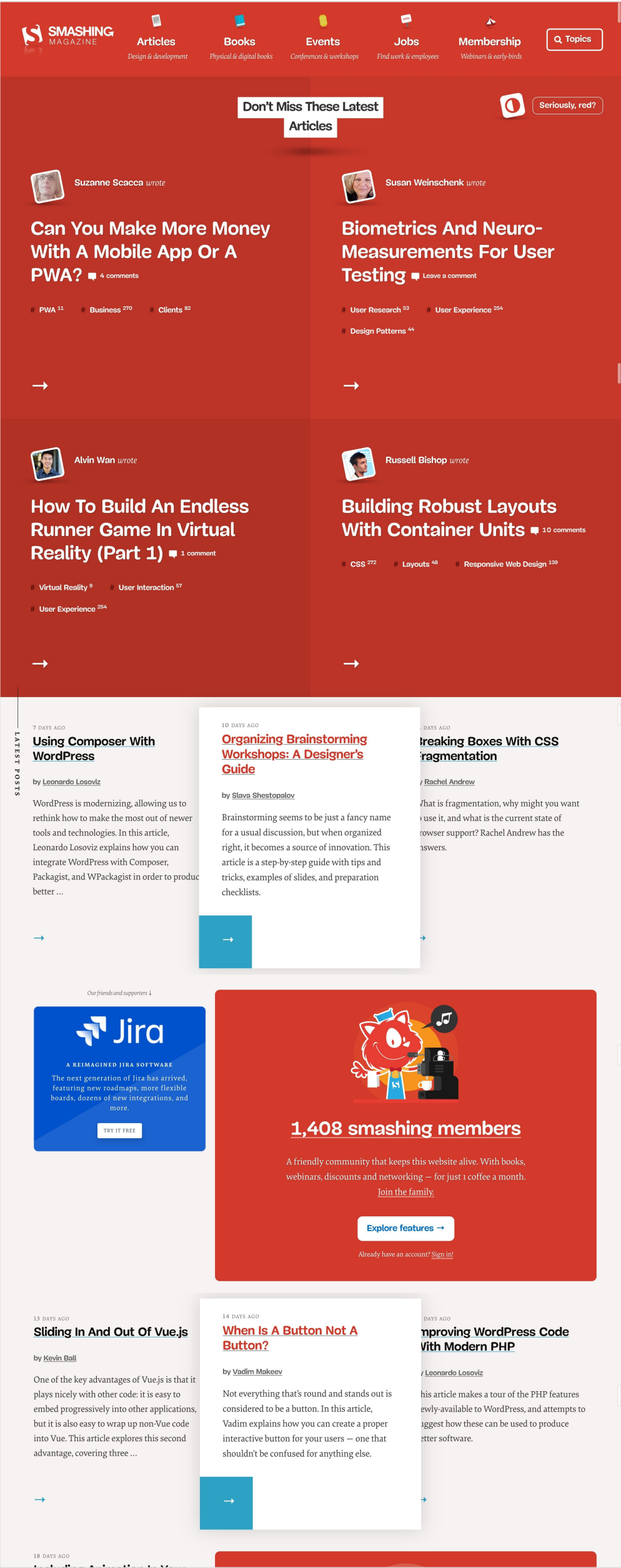
<https://dribbble.com/shots/1817232-Wireframing>





“Content needs to be choreographed to ensure the intended message is preserved on any device and at any width.”

- Trent Walton





A person's hands are shown interacting with a laptop. One hand is pointing at the screen, while the other is on the trackpad. The background is a blurred office setting. A quote is overlaid on the image in white and red text.

“ **Great design** connect us emotionally to a product. Within milliseconds, we form opinions that influence our engagement and understanding of what we see. ”

- **Adam Churchill, UIE**



5.

*Define* how best to tell the story



Everything is there  
for a reason



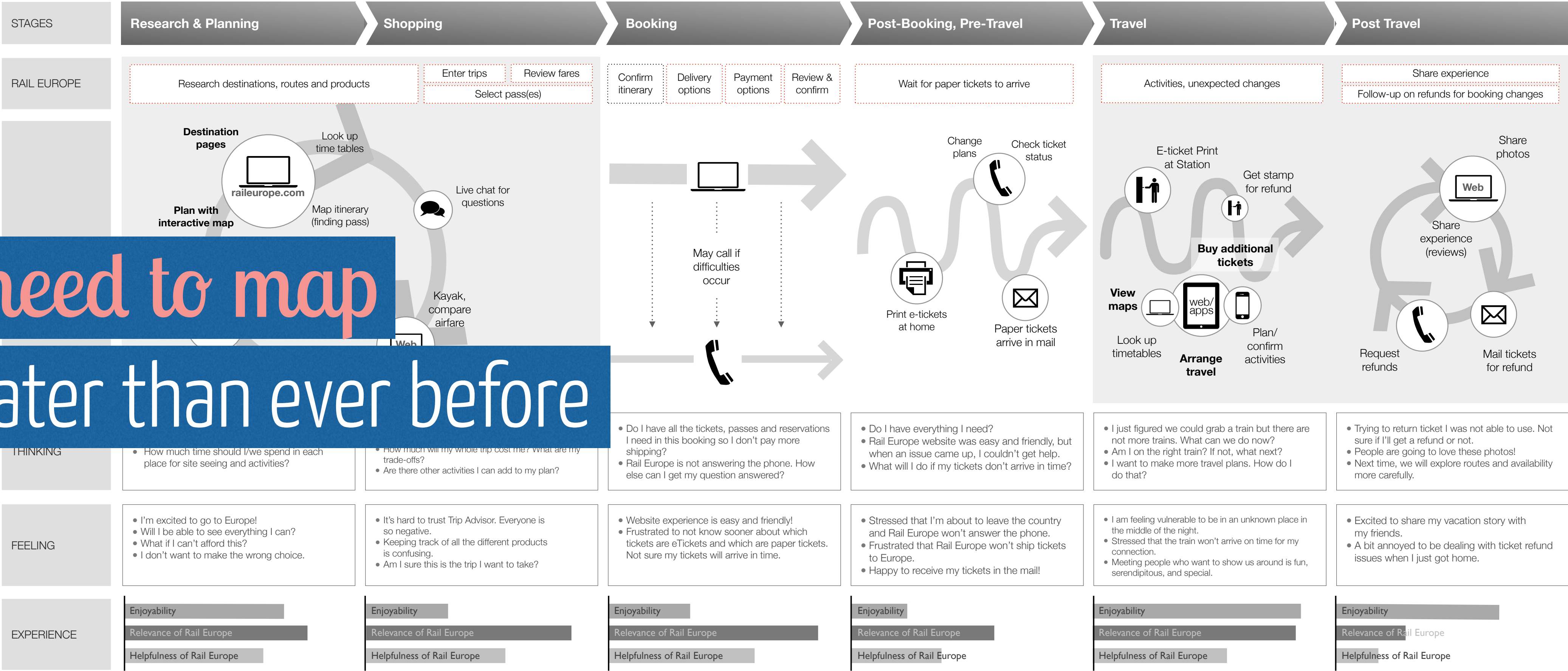


Rail Europe Experience Map

Guiding Principles

People choose rail travel because it is convenient, easy, and flexible.	Rail booking is only one part of people’s larger travel process.	People build their travel plans over time.	People value service that is respectful, effective and personable.
---	--	--	--

Customer Journey



The need to map is greater than ever before

Opportunities

GLOBAL			PLANNING, SHOPPING, BOOKING			POST-BOOK, TRAVEL, POST-TRAVEL	
Communicate a clear value proposition.  STAGE: Initial visit	Help people get the help they need.  STAGES: Global	Support people in creating their own solutions.  STAGES: Global	Enable people to plan over time.  STAGES: Planning, Shopping	Visualize the trip for planning and booking.  STAGES: Planning, Shopping	Arm customers with information for making decisions.  STAGES: Shopping, Booking	Improve the paper ticket experience.  STAGES: Post-Booking, Travel, Post-Travel	Accommodate planning and booking in Europe too.  STAGE: Traveling
Make your customers into better, more savvy travelers.  STAGES: Global	Engage in social media with explicit purposes.  STAGES: Global		Connect planning, shopping and booking on the web.  STAGES: Planning, Shopping, Booking	Aggregate shipping with a reasonable timeline.  STAGES: Planning, Shopping, Booking		Proactively help people deal with change.  STAGES: Post-Booking, Traveling	Communicate status clearly at all times.  STAGES: Post-Booking, Post Travel

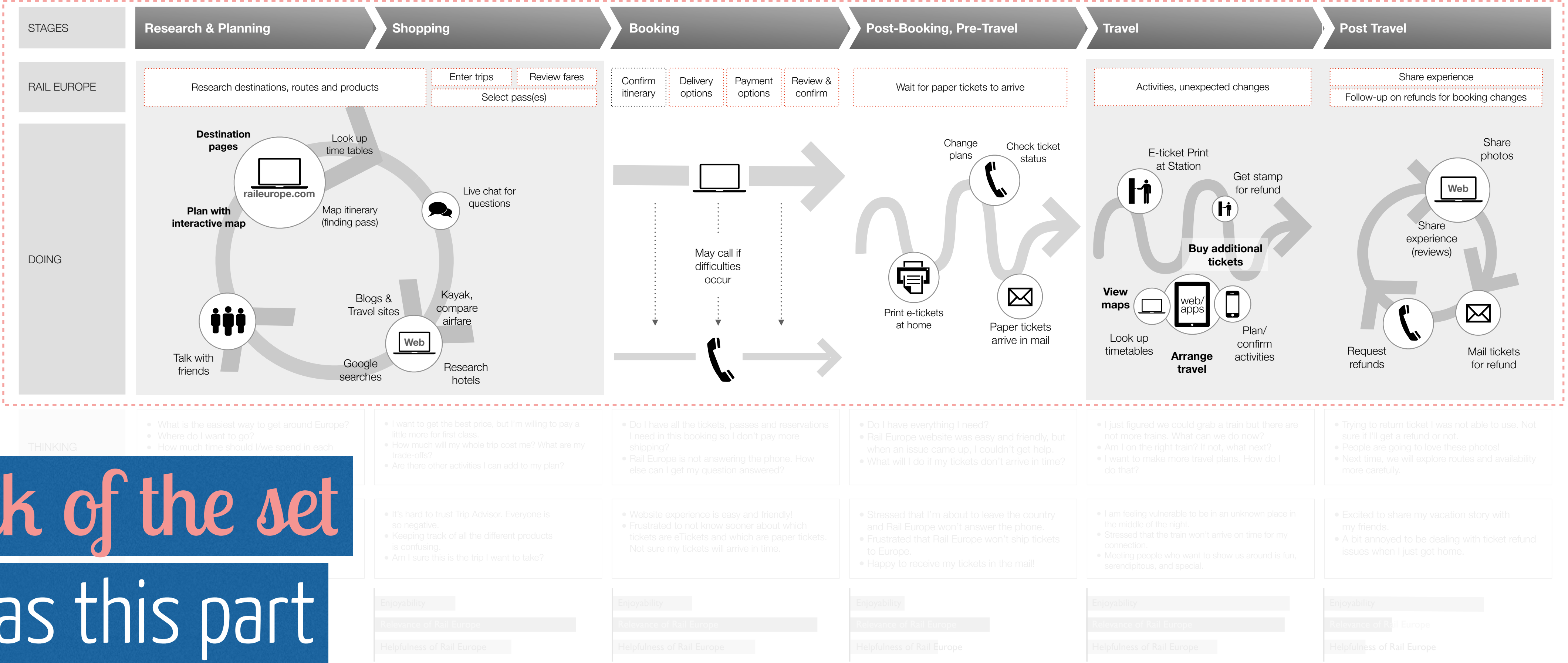


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Customer Journey



Think of the set  
a bit as this part

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Make your customers into better, more savvy travelers.	Engage in social media with explicit purposes.		Connect planning, shopping and booking on the web.	Aggregate shipping with a reasonable timeline.		Proactively help people deal with change.	Communicate status clearly at all times.



“**The cinema** is indeed a matter of both: what’s in and what’s out, not just what’s in; what’s visible and what’s not visible. In other words, it’s more than framings and visual patterns; it’s overtones, sympathies, hauntings.”

- **Richard Brody, The New Yorker**



Photo by Jose Lebron on Unsplash

@annadahlstrom 



“We need to storyboard how visual elements come into focus with intention.”

- Kanze

*Example: Disney World Theme Park Lander*

#### **Scene 1**

- A full screen video for a roller coaster attraction begins playing.
- The video is filmed from a rider's point of view.
- The coaster is about to go over the tallest peak.
- The video pauses right before it drops.
- A question box slides into the foreground - "Children / Adults / Dates?"

#### **Scene 2**

- You make your selection and the video resumes.
- The coaster plummets downwards then descends into a dark tunnel.
- Video ends fades to black.
- A lander page fades in from black to take its place.



“ Relevant information is *signal*  
whilst irrelevant information is *noise* ”

- NN/g



1. **Define** what story you're telling whom and why
2. **Identify** and develop the characters
3. **Identify** the main story and the mini stories
4. **Define** the story of the page/view
5. **Define** how best to tell the story



# Storytelling

methods for experience design

Identify & understand  
the **problem space**

Define & deliver  
the **experience**

Present & analyse  
the **outcome**





Everything  
has a (back)story

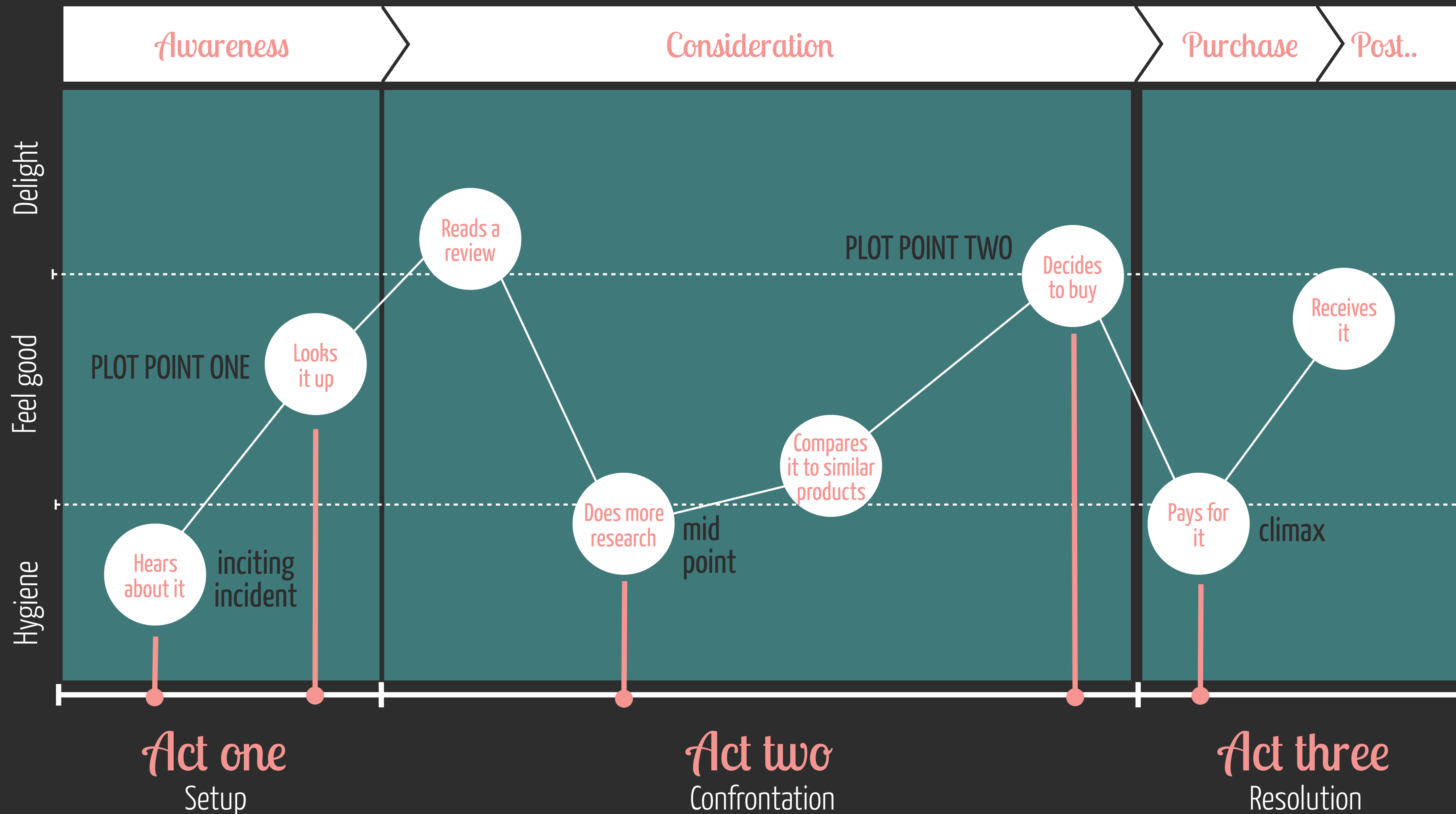
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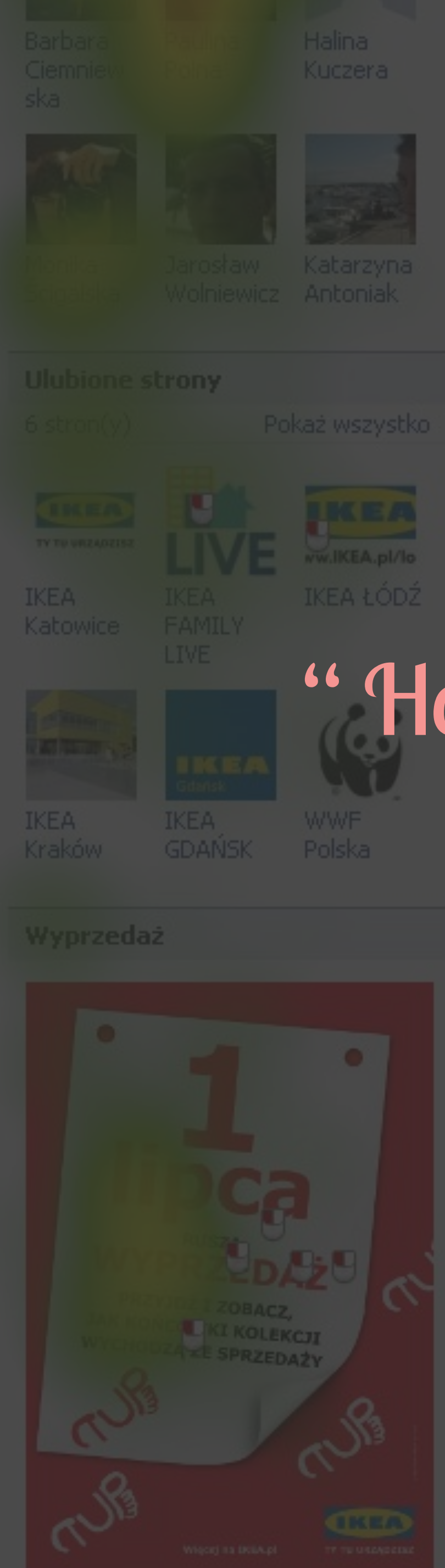
<http://www.boredpanda.com/funny-fake-book-covers-nyc-subway-prank-scott-rogowsky/>



# Don't just plan for the ideal

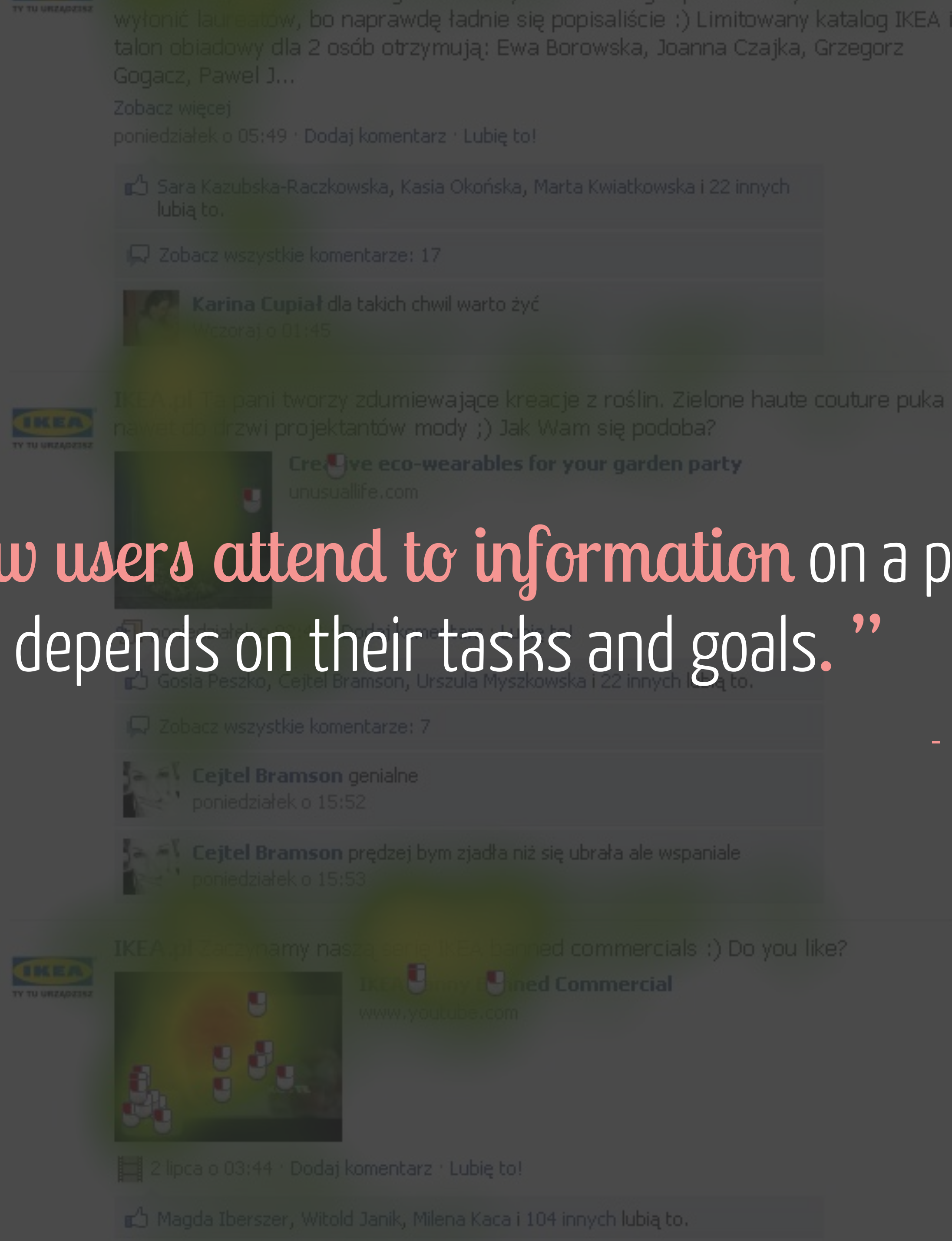






“How users attend to information on a page depends on their tasks and goals.”

- NN/g





The aim of every story  
is to connect emotionally





The right story to the right people in the right way













Who are you telling what,  
how, when and where?





Photo by [Dylan Gialanella](#) on [Unsplash](#)

And **why?**

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Thank you.  
Questions?

.....  
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# Storytelling in Design

Principles and Tools for Defining,  
Designing, and Selling Multi-Device  
Design Products



Anna Dahlström

Thank you.

Questions?

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