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# Storytelling for Advocates

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Among the fundamental characteristics that all of us share as humans is that we rely on stories to shape our understanding of the world. Stories not only help give us context to the events and information we encounter on a day-to-day basis, they help provide meaning for all that we experience.

We tell stories for many reasons, and in service of many kinds of goals. Storytelling is an ideal way to teach and communicate with others about ideas and values. A good story with a happy ending will entertain and inspire. A tragic story may warn us against dangers we should avoid. As lawyers, we should always be mindful of the power of storytelling as a tool for persuasion.

## Storytelling in Litigation

Although opening statements and closing arguments in jury trials are two of the archetypal examples of storytelling by advocates, lawyers engaged in litigation of all kinds can and should give consideration to the function of storytelling in their work.

For brief writers, every statement of facts tells a story. In evidentiary hearings and trials, almost all direct examinations should tell a story about the case it supports, even if only a part of it. Even cross-examinations should employ the tools of effective storytelling to help build the narrative that the questioning lawyer is hoping to shape in the course of the examination.

**The Elements of Story**

Boiled down to its essential components, a story may be defined simply as the telling of a sequence of events, about one or more characters, that is of interest or concern to an audience. Those who study literature and the dramatic arts have shed helpful light on some of the basic components of a story that deserve our attention as we craft our own narratives. Among them are: (1) setting, (2) character; (3) plot; and (4) theme. By thoughtfully considering these and other elements, we can improve our ability to grab and hold the attention of our listeners and readers, and to become more effective advocates for our clients.

# Title search: Storytelling in Advocacy

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