



Aristotle's 7 Elements of Good Storytelling

Aristotle's seven elements of good storytelling helps us empathise with the people we design for by asking the right questions. Asking the right questions will help us understand and tell the most essential stories about our users' needs, motivations, and problems. Aristotle's points can also show us how storytelling can help increase empathy in a Design Thinking project.

1 Plot

What are the character(s) doing? What are they trying to accomplish? The story plot tells us about a person's change in fortune (either from good to bad, or from bad to good), and is usually about overcoming some kind of obstacle or challenge. In a Design Thinking project, the story plot tells us about struggles and how people try to improve aspects of their lives.

2 Character

Who are the people? What are their traits, their personalities? What are their backgrounds, needs, aspirations, and emotions? Storytelling in Design Thinking, most obviously, relates to gaining an empathic understanding of the people for whom we are designing. When we tell stories about our users, it is not sufficient to know facts about them, like their appearances or income; for a fully fleshed out character, we need insights into their needs, motivations, and emotions.

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3 | **Theme**

The theme of a story tells us the overarching obstacle that needs to be crossed, or the end goal of the project. Use a theme to help keep yourself focused and provide your team with a strong narrative to keep you going.

4 | **Dialogue**

What are the people saying? Do they say different things when you observe them as compared to when you interview them? Are they angry, disappointed, sad, or happy? While observing their dialogue, are you losing focus on the things they did not say?

It is also crucial to keep track of how we, the observers, speak to the people we are observing. Having a superior or condescending tone when conversing with our users is a sure way to get their guards up and put a limit on how much we can learn from them.

5 | **Melody/Chorus**

To be effective, your stories should have a chorus that resonates with your emotions and convictions. The power of storytelling often lies in its ability to stir emotion and motivate us to find a solution.

6 | **Décor**

Décor is about the setting. It's about the physical environment in which your characters perform their acts. What's the décor, setting, and physical environment in which your users perform their acts like? Effective storytelling does not ignore the setting, because often the interactions between characters and the set will tell us a lot about their motivations and behaviours. As a design thinker, you should pay attention to the opportunities or obstacles present in your users' environments.

7 | **Spectacle**

Are there any plot twists in your stories? Any unexpected insights about your users? The spectacle is something that the audiences who listen to your story will remember, and will generate discussions and ideas. If your design thinking story includes a spectacle, it will be a powerful tool to drive the project forward.

