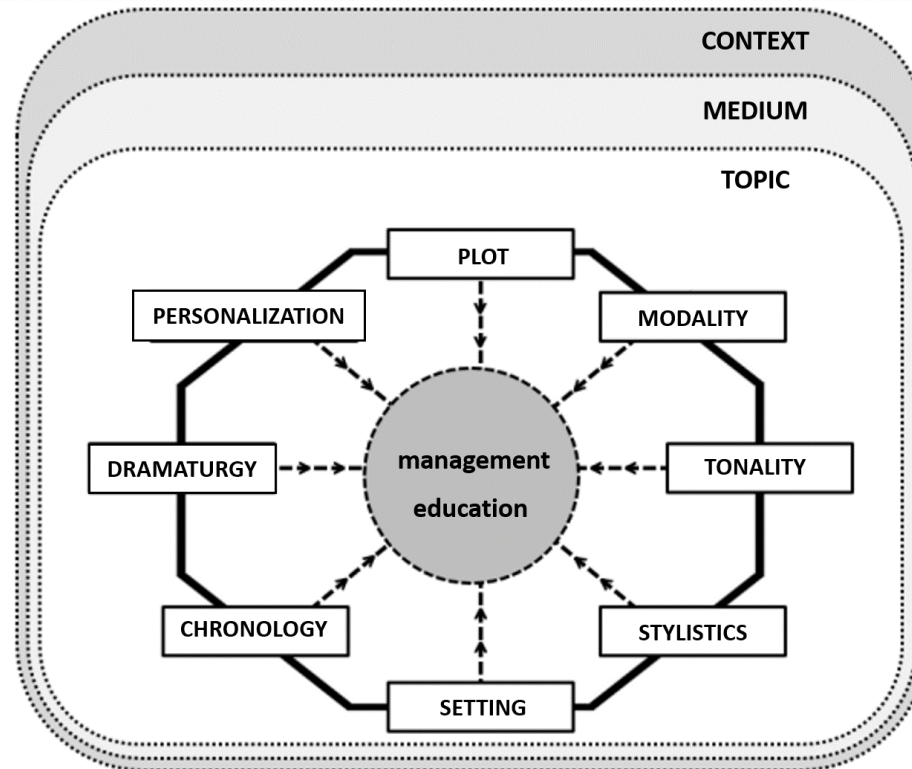


Sus-telling | Handout Sus-telling Characteristics

This handout gives you a brief overview of the internal and external characteristics of sus-telling, or storytelling in sustainability communication. In the first column you will find the characteristics, in the second column a short description of what exactly the characteristic includes and in the third column an example to illustrate the characteristic again.



Internal characteristics	Description	Examples
Plot	A clear arrangement of characters and storyline.	For example, a love story. Two people find each other and discover their feelings for each other, but are then separated by external events or divided by intrigue; the rest of the story is about how the lovers find each other again.
Personalization	The plot focuses on one or more characters (not necessarily people) and their experiences.	The story is told from the point of view of or focusing on individual characters whose thoughts, emotions and actions we vicariously experience.
Dramaturgy	The plot has a structure consisting of conflicts, their development and resolution.	A dramaturgical element such as a conflict or the development of a character can shape the whole plot, or it can be a small episode; dramaturgy – the specific sequence of different elements such as conflicts, their development and resolution – makes us feel tension and release; it determines the pace of the story.
Chronology	The narrative structure has a recognizable beginning, middle and end.	The chronological sequence of different events can be a powerful element in telling a story – e.g., by telling a story backwards, incorporating unmediated flashbacks, or anticipating future events, etc. After all, a logically connected sequence of events most closely matches our life experiences.
Setting	The story provides information about the temporal, spatial or cultural context in which it takes place.	Stories have a location (e.g., a mining town in England), a specific cultural setting (e.g., a working-class neighborhood) and take place at a specific time (e.g., 1950s).
Stylistics	The internal tension of the plot is created through the use of stylistic devices.	Stylistics covers a wide range of devices depending on the communication channel (e.g., video, audio, podcast), from the use of poetry or allegory to rhyme and rhythm to dramatic irony (the audience knows more than the characters themselves). In videos, the speed of the sequences of images or the music may change. In pictures, the color scheme or imagery. In podcasts, the music can also change or sounds can be used.
Tonality	The story is told in a certain tone of voice. The characteristics used and especially the stylistics of a plot create a certain mood.	Stories can be told with a very clear moral and be instructive, but they can also have an entertaining, sarcastic or serious and factual tone. When attention is

Modality	The story is presented in ways that are more or less interactive or immersive.	drawn exclusively to problems and challenges, the mood created tends to be negative; when attention is drawn to concrete solutions, it tends to create a positive mood. Some stories strike a balance between positive and negative elements. Stories may challenge the audience to fill in gaps in the narrative themselves, to use their own imagination, or even to actively engage with the audience by appealing to them or offering different courses of action from which the audience can choose and so influence the further course of events.
Normativity	Sus-telling is linked to the intention of contributing to sustainable development. This intention is based on values.	
... education	Stories can be developed to strengthen people's ability to self-reflect and emancipate themselves.	Stories can be designed to challenge audiences to rethink their own values, concepts and ideas, thereby challenging their own entrenched views.
... orientation	Stories can be developed to change people's behaviors or actions so that they are more in line with sustainable development goals.	Stories can be designed to advocate and promote certain types of change (e.g., recycling, not using plastics, etc.) to contribute positively to sustainable development.
External characteristics		
Context	The story is developed in a specific social context (e.g., professional field).	Professional fields in which narratives are commonly used include journalism and science communication, formal and informal education (including museum and exhibition education), public relations (PR), health communication, marketing and change management.
Medium	A narrative is disseminated to its audience using one or more communication channels.	Oral transmission of narratives is the oldest and most natural channel of transmitting complex information between people. Other communication channels include film, radio, television, comic or video, text, podcast and picture series.
Topic	The plot develops around a subject and a context in which the story is told.	Topics of storytelling can be product characteristics or health risks (education about the causes of diabetes). In sus-telling, these can also be broader sustainability topics such as core issues and research fields in sustainability

science, but also specific everyday consumption areas that are relevant in terms of their sustainability impacts, such as nutrition, mobility or housing.

Sources: Fischer, D., Selm, H., Sundermann, A., & Storksdieck, M. (2020). "Storytelling for Sustainability: A Definition and Its Implications for Education and Communication." In P. Molthan-Hill, D. Baden, T. Wall, H. Puntha, & H. Luna (eds.), *Storytelling for Sustainability in Higher Education: An Educator's Handbook* (38-51). London: Routledge.