

**National Journal Communications Council**

**Media  
University**

**AMU 401: Narrative Storytelling in the Digital Age**

# Elements of a Compelling Narrative

February 6, 2015

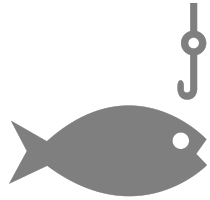


# Recognizing the Three Components of a Compelling Narrative

Effective Stories Combine Strong Hooks, Rich Plotlines and an Authentic Voice

## 1. Hook

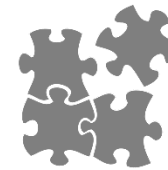
*Captures Audience Attention*



- Establishes “what’s at stake” for the character
- Piques interest in continuing to consume the narrative
- Uses specific visuals or situational details to grab viewers

## 2. Plot

*Carries the Audience Forward*



- Picks up from the hook to chronicle the character’s evolution
- Contains a clear beginning, middle and end which lead to a compelling call-to-action
- Plays with linear or non-linear structures

## 3. Authenticity

*Supports the Narrative*

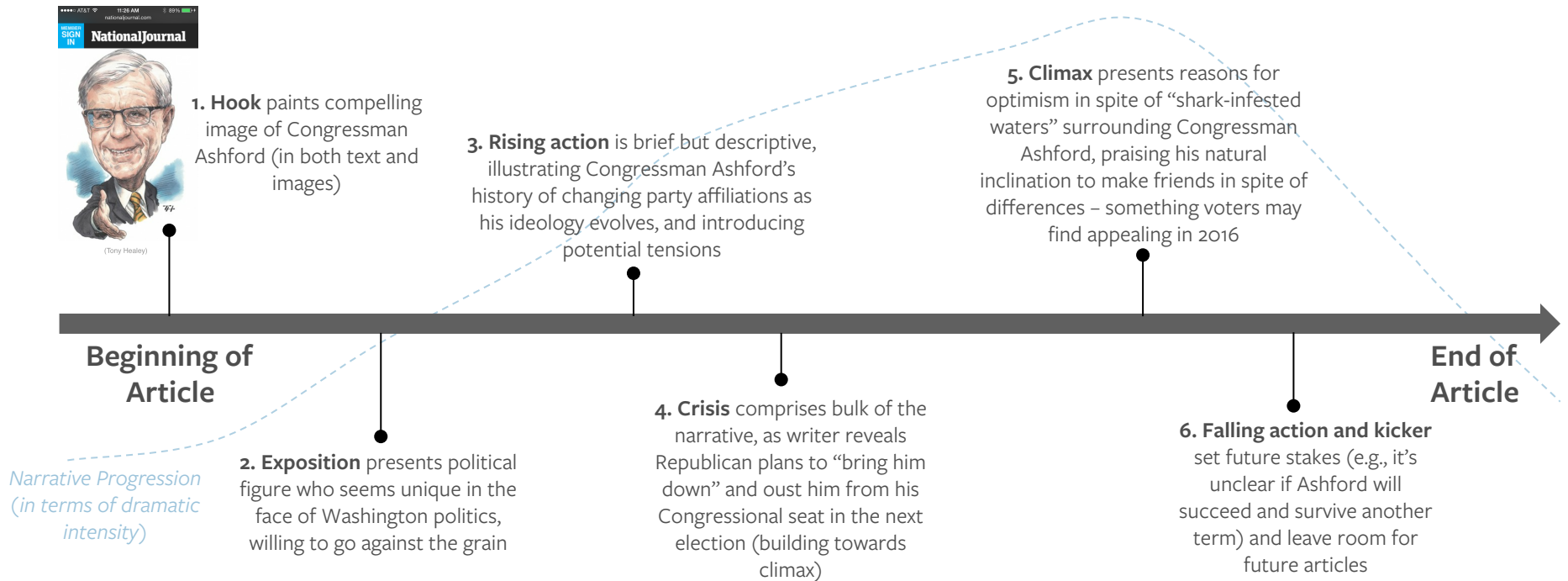
- Adds and sustains interest through key plot points by illustrating conflict rather than describing it
- Creates a connection between audience and story
- Brings narrative to life for the audience through appropriate details, rather than jargon





# Plot in Focus: Pulling the Narrative Pieces Together

Remember the Rules, but Seek Opportunities for Creative Execution



## Case in Brief

**Profiled Story:** National Journal article, "Brad Ashford's Kindness Campaign"

**Organization Type:** Media Company

**Format:** Article, 5 minutes to read

Source: Nora Caplan-Bricker article, "Brad Ashford's Kindness Campaign," National Journal Communications Council research and analysis.





### 3. Authenticity in Focus: Finding the Right Narrative Voice

Credible, Honest Voices Sharing Unique Perspectives Always Trump Production Values

More Patient Stories

**Evan Levy**  
As a sophomore, Evan was playing football for Cornell and had dreams of becoming a doctor. But at just 20, he was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis. Over the next two years, he was placed on a multitude of medications. Eventually, he became resistant to the therapies and none of the drugs worked. His colon was failing. Evan was dying.

+ more

TV Ad  
Extended Interview  
Dr. Toyooki Sonoda. See profile.  
Dr. Brian Bosworth. See profile.

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Supplemental links give additional context, deeper content experiences and opportunities to engage

Well-chosen narrative subject connects to audience through engaging details and delivery (e.g., “grandma-sized pack of pills”) and mode of presentation that doesn’t compete for the audience’s attention (i.e., simple video presented in black and white)

Detailed vignette introducing the main character provides a textual hook to entice viewing of the video component, stopping just short of revealing key details to set the stakes

Strategically placed social sharing options offer a seamless call-to-action on public or private channels

#### Case in Brief



**Profiled Campaign:** New York-Presbyterian Hospital “Amazing Things” Campaign  
**Organization Type:** Medical Provider / Hospital System  
**Format:** Video, 1 minute