



Writing a story



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THE STYLE OF NARRATION


The style of narration is **the point of view** from which we look at our characters.

When writing a story, it's crucial to think about **who is telling it and to whom**. A character who is actively participating in the narrative may tell the story or it may be seen and heard from the viewpoint of someone who is not one of the characters but is familiar with them all.

Before choosing the style of narration for your story, ask yourself "Whose story will help you **achieve the goal**?"

#1. AUTHOR'S POINT OF VIEW

The first style of narration is from the **author's point of view**. The author speaks from a character in the third person. It is one of the most popular ways of narration.

 charity: water

What Helen Taught Us

She told us that clean water made her feel beautiful then. Her story is even more beautiful today.

When [we first met Helen in 2009](#), her community had just received a hand pump in the middle of their village.

For decades, Helen had spent most of her days walking and waiting to collect water. It was such a time-consuming process that she could only manage to bring home two Jerry Cans per day.

With two children, one husband and only 10 gallons of water, Helen had to make choices. And she always put herself last.

But all of that changed when her community got clean water.

#2. FIRST-PERSON

The second style of narration is from the **first-person point**, i.e. to speak from the character. In this case, you know what the main **character thinks and feels**. This approach helps to try the character's shoes and become emotionally closer.

My experience of feeling excluded

At the age of 16, I had the amazing opportunity to move to the UK from Nigeria.

While most people I came across went above and beyond to ensure I felt comfortable during this time of massive upheaval in my life, there were some individuals who weren't as educated about my culture. They would reference stereotypes or make ill-judged jokes. It was the first time I had felt excluded.

Having grown up in Nigeria, I experienced a bit of culture shock when I arrived in the UK. I often felt left out of conversations that referred to popular British concepts, games or TV shows.

I tried my best to learn and stay involved, but when you ask "What's that?" for the 100th time, you begin to feel like you're asking too many questions. You start to feel like maybe you just do not belong here.

#3. SECOND PERSON

The third style of narration is to speak from the **second person**. In this occasion the story is being told as a dialogue, using You or Yourself forms. Be careful with this style, not to sound too demanding.

Imagine you are a Ukrainian refugee

Imagine you are a Ukrainian refugee. Imagine you have left your home, your job, and almost all of your possessions behind. Perhaps your husband or son or father — or perhaps all of them — have stayed behind to fight. You head for the nearest border. Maybe that is Poland, maybe Moldova, maybe somewhere else.

You get there safely. You cross the border. Border guards wave you through with smiles. You are greeted by government officials and ordinary people bringing hot food and drink. Some don't have much but they share what they do have. They help you to move into the interior of the country so that others can cross the border in your footsteps.

Now what?

THE TITLE OF THE STORY

The **title** of your story is what will hook your audience. You don't need to catch everyone, but only your target audience. Titles should stimulate readers interest and be clear, appropriate, and not misleading.



"Question" title: "Where is Prageeth?" (short and very clear)



"How-to" title: "How Companies From Your Country May be Linked to War Crimes in Myanmar (And How You Can Stop It)" (long and engaging)



"Numbers" title: "10 myths about climate change" (numbers are specific and predictable)

ADDITIONAL TOOLS

Cut the story in pieces. Divide long stories into short ones. It might be done by adding a sub-heading to each part.

If this is a video – divide it with screensavers or other visual solutions.

In audio material – with jingles and transitions.

It is important that these cut-in scenes must follow the **logic of the narrative** – they should appear after one thought has ended and another has not started yet.

ADDITIONAL TOOLS

Important tip: leave your audience a decision or just hope. If you describe a problem, the outcome should be a solution, an action that a particular person can make to solve it. If you do not offer a solution, you simply throw people deep inside of a huge problem, not giving them a chance to swim out.

The Ocean Plastic Pollution Problem

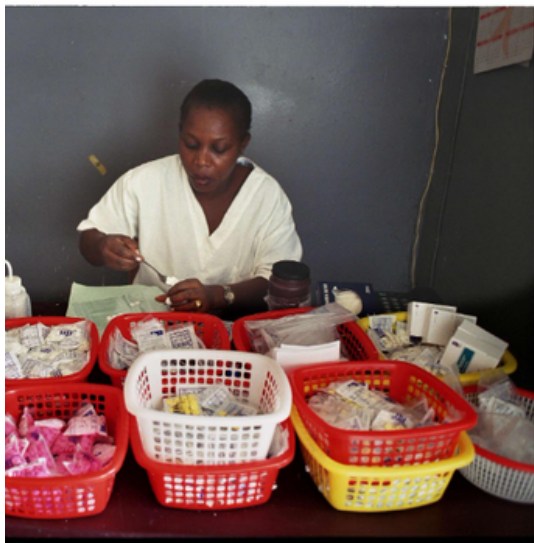
With [skyrocketing plastic production](#), [low levels of recycling](#), and [poor waste management](#), between 4 and 12 million metric tons of plastic enter the ocean each year—enough to cover every foot of coastline on the planet! And that amount is [projected to triple](#) in the next 20 years. Let that sink in for a moment.

Plastic Pollution Solutions: 7 Things You Can Do Today

Everyone can do something to help solve the plastic pollution problem, and millions of people worldwide are already [taking action to reduce their plastic use](#). Here are seven ways you can make a difference, starting today.

ADDITIONAL TOOLS

Remember the chronology. If there are a lot of events in your story, if it began a long time ago and went through many stages – it's better to tell the chronology in a strict sequence.



20 YEAR OF TREATING HIV/AIDS IN 01/08
DRC

2002: In May, MSF opens the very first free HIV/AIDS outpatient treatment centre in Kinshasa. Located on Kabinda avenue, the centre also offers free HIV tests for all.

LAYLA AERTS



20 YEAR OF TREATING HIV/AIDS IN 03/08
DRC

2008: Six years after the opening of MSF's outpatient treatment centre, our teams open an inpatient unit to provide free care for patients with advanced HIV. Inaugurated in May 2008, the Kabinda Hospital Centre (CHK) has an initial 24-bed capacity, including four beds for patients co-infected with tuberculosis who must be treated in isolated units.

TOMMY TRENCHARD/PANOS PICTURES



< SHARE

ADDITIONAL TOOLS

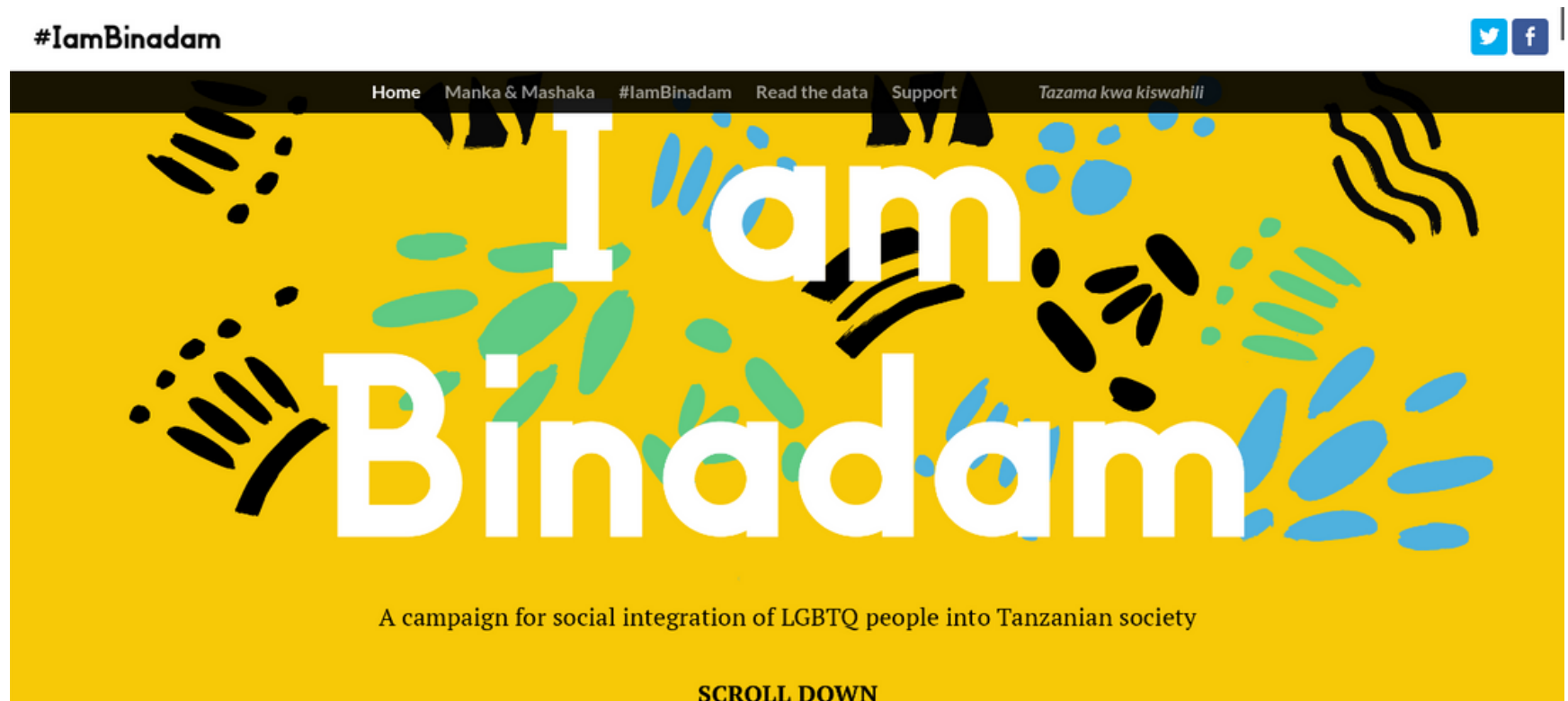
Mix the types of content. It's a modern trend – to use not only photos and design elements within the text, but also video pieces, interview or audio fragments. This will help your audience to fully immerse themselves in your story and feel like a real participant of the events.

And the more ways of communication you use, the deeper the immersion will be, the greater will be the payoff.

There are many ways to do so. For some stories even interactive sites are being created. Form of a game helps to include the spectator deep into your story for a long time, catching your main idea.

LONGFORM SCROLLYTELLING

#IamBinadam – a campaign for social integration of LGBTQ people into Tanzanian society



Other examples: “Protect the Protest” campaign, Troll Patrol project, Combatting sexual harassment on public transport in Egypt: Zahara’s story, TEEN. GIRL. ACTIVIST, Surviving the winter by AJLabs.

GAMES

This is a True Story - a video game to help raise awareness about the water crisis.



Other examples: Games for Change, NewsGamer, The Fair, Unequalopolis, Rights Arcade, GeGame.

VIDEO

The mini-series "At Home" - the story of Aïcha, Kady, Madihawa and Moussa: four young teenagers from Mali and Côte d'Ivoire who arrived in France after crossing the Mediterranean Sea.



Other examples: Save the Amazon to save the planet: Towards COP27, Let's Talk About Gender and sexuality, Climate Justice And Human Rights Explained, Facing discrimination, Being Who I Am, Girl Effect videos.

PHOTO COLLECTIONS

Pictures from a year of humanitarian response by **Médecins Sans Frontières.**

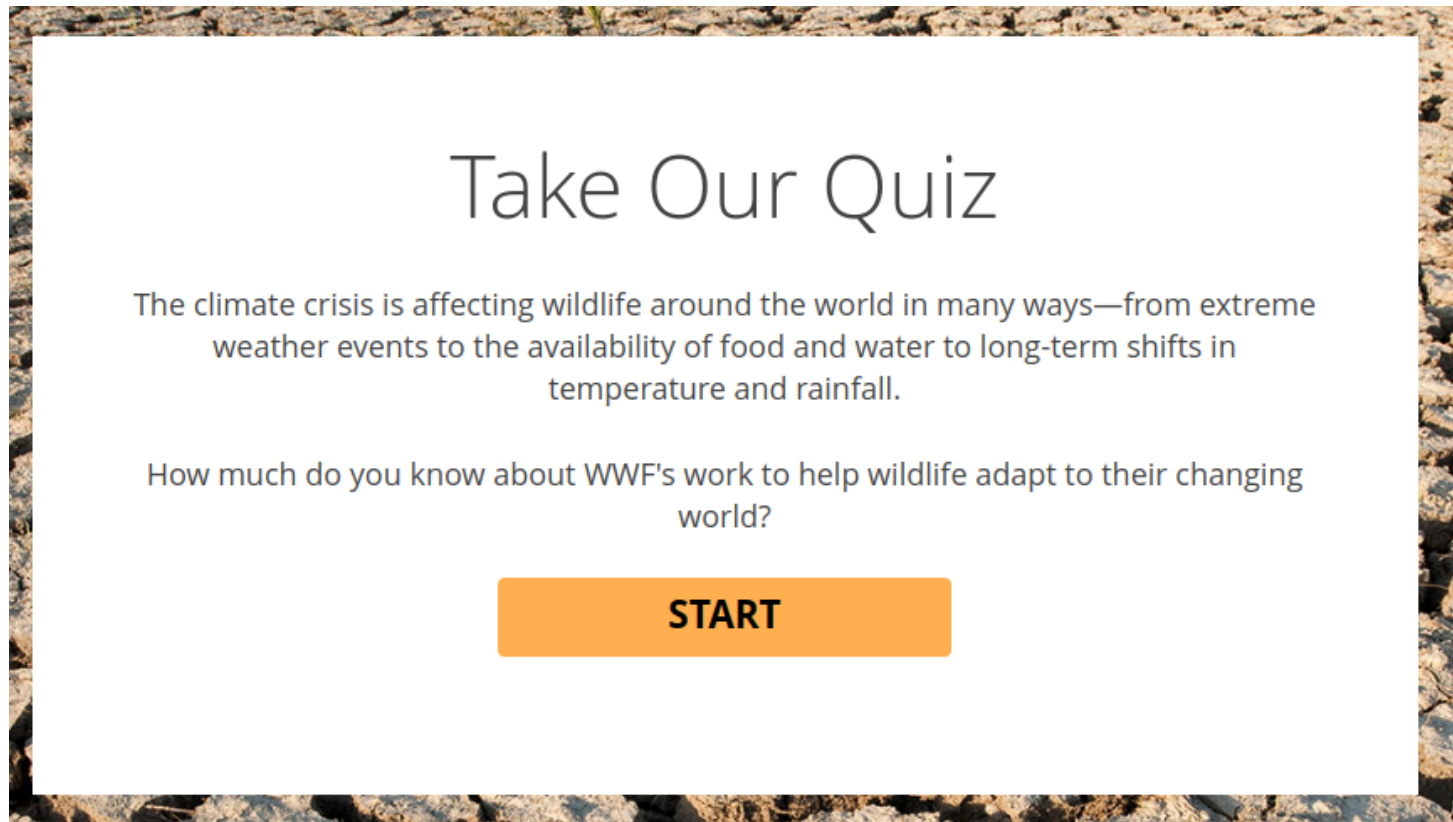


A child plays with a balloon, as part of a mental health activity, at Al-Sweida camp for internally displaced people. Marib, Yemen, December 2021.

Other examples: Best Greenpeace images of 2022, 50 Years of UNESCO World Heritage in partnership with National Geographic, Poison in the haze: documenting life under Ahvaz's oppressive orange skies, "My place is here".

QUIZ

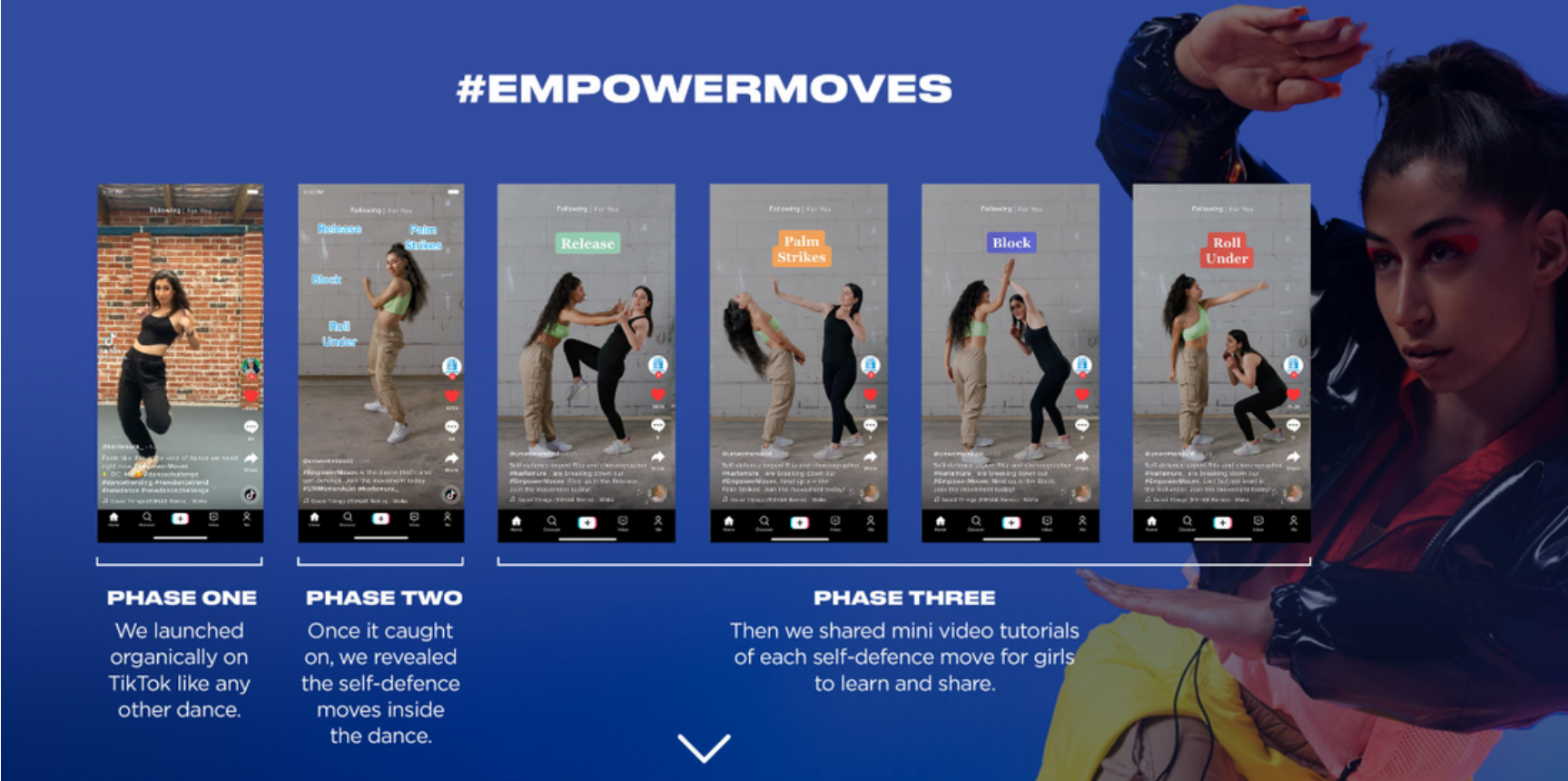
Quiz about **WWF's work** to help wildlife adapt to their changing world.



Other examples: How well do you know your African geography, 50 LGBTQ Trivia Questions and Answers to Honor LGBTQIA+ Communities, Myths and facts about violence against women, Gapminder (quizzes on different topics), Zero discrimination quiz.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The **#EmpowerMoves campaign**, a TikTok dance which incorporates self-defence moves.



#EMPOWERMOVES

PHASE ONE
We launched organically on TikTok like any other dance.

PHASE TWO
Once it caught on, we revealed the self-defence moves inside the dance.

PHASE THREE
Then we shared mini video tutorials of each self-defence move for girls to learn and share.

Other examples: Fridays For Future posts about activists, CharityWater interactive trip to Zimbabwe, Earth Hour Tiny actions – Big impact campaign, Snapchat and WWF #LastSelfies.

OTHER FORMATS

- Hear The Blind Spot and other Data4Change projects
- Tracking Democracy and Freedom Around the World (Interactive Map)
- Cartoons to denounce the normalisation of violence against women
- "Intersectionality Transforms Our Realities" campaign
- Plus - a story based on real events
- HIDDEN HEROES - a tribute to people who shaped technology
- Earth House Evolution
- AOTEAROA in 20 - people of New Zealand in 2020
- Soundhouse: Intimacy and Distance
- BEAR 71 - a virtual reality experience
- The Museum of Annoying Experiences
- Excellence and Innovation in Visual Digital Storytelling (Online Journalism Awards)