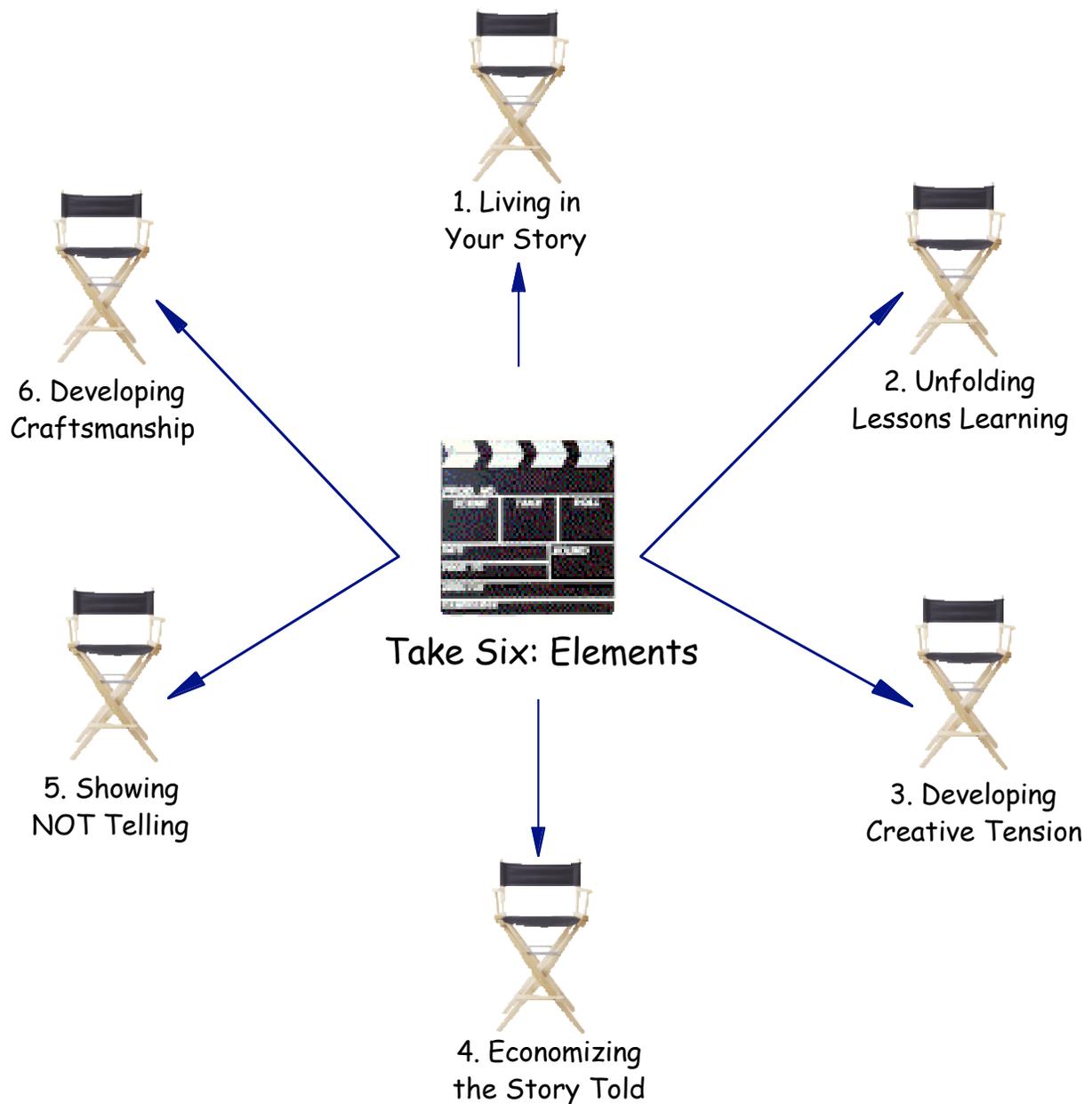


Take Six: Elements of a Good Digital Story

There is a great deal to consider in constructing a digital story. While there are endless approaches to crafting stories depending on purpose and audience, at least six elements are considered fundamental to this particular digital storytelling style.



[Adapted from The Center for Digital Storytelling's *Cookbook*. Their work with essential story elements has inspired and informed my own work with digital storytelling. www.storycenter.org]

1. Living Inside Your Story: The perspective of each story is told in first person using your own voice to narrate the tale. You share through the story who you are, what you felt, and what this event or situation means for you in such a personal way that it engages viewers in a very real and emotional experience. Rather than a detached telling that this happened and that happened, viewers experience you living inside this story. Your story is shared through the heart of personal meaning NOT the head.

2. Unfolding Lessons Learned: One of the most unique features of this specific digital storytelling style is the expectation that each story express a personal meaning or insight about how a particular event or situation touched your own life. The development of this feature originated with Dana Atchley and Joe Lambert. A good story has a point to make, a moral conclusion, a lesson learned or an understanding gained. Each story needs to have a point that is revealed in the end either implicitly with the media or stated explicitly with words.

3. Developing Creative Tension: A good story creates intrigue or tension around a situation that is posed at the beginning of the story and resolved at the end sometimes with an unexpected twist. A hook is created to intentionally draw the viewer into wondering how it will unfold and how will it all end. What does the title mean? Will the man get his fish? What does young girl find when she leaves home? Does Amber ever make friends and be a part of the classroom? What is the meaning of having a life without a father? The tension of an unresolved situation engages and holds the viewer until the end. Pacing is an invisible part of sustaining story tension as we know so well from the era of Hitchcock films. A surprise turn of events is always enjoyed by the viewers as long as a few clues are tucked into the telling of the story.

4. Economizing the Story Told: A good story has a destination – a point to make –and seeks the shortest path to its destination. Each digital story is no more than 3-5 minute based on a script that is no more than one (1) page or five hundred (500). The art of shortening a story lies in preserving the essence of the tale—using the fewest words and images to make your point. By holding clarity about the essence of the story, the additional narrative can be pared down.

5. Showing Not Telling: Good stories use vivid details to reveal feelings and information rather than just saying something was tall, happy, scary, or difficult to do. It was a dark and stormy night does not have to be said directly in the script. Unlike traditional oral or written stories, images, sound and music can be used to show a part of the context, create setting, give story information and provide emotional meaning not provided by words. Both words and media need to reveal the story through details rather than being directly stated.

6. Developing Craftsmanship: A good story incorporates technology in artful ways demonstrating craftsmanship in communicating with images, sound, voice, color, white space, animations, design, transitions, and special effects. All media elements are selected to extend the meaning rather than being bells and whistles that become distracting, overused or misused. Good craftsmanship creatively combines media elements to convey significant meaning rather than being used for “decorating” the story.

Take Six: Elements of a Good Digital Story

Practice reflecting on how well sample digital stories incorporate the *Take Six Elements*. How do you rate each of the six elements? Where are the strengths? Where areas need more shaping to increase the quality of the story?

Story Title:	Missing	Got It Present	WOW! Fully Developed
1. Living in Your Story			
2. Unfolding Lessons Learned			
3. Developing Creative Tension			
4. Economizing the Story Told			
5. Showing Not Telling			
6. Developing Craftsmanship			

Ideas for Increasing Story Quality: