

Persuading with a Story

We remember and are persuaded more by stories than facts. Use these tips for persuasive and memorable stories.

1 Find Great Stories: Don't forget all the great stories you hear, read, or experience. You want to capture them when they happen or when you hear about them. Noonan did this by finding the story of the Rangers scaling the cliffs on D-Day.



Story Buckets - create systems for saving stories. We encounter stories daily, but we need to remember them. The key is having a system to easily save stories for future use.

Use tools like

- Readwise for Kindle highlights
- Web/Twitter bookmarks
- Spreadsheet

2 Start with the Action: Skip the backstory and jump to the action.

A well-told story reveals the stakes and keeps people wanting to know what happens next.

3 Zoom in on a Few Specifics: To make the story come alive, you want specifics. Can you use real details that make it feel like you were there in the moment? Is there some dialogue or a statistic that drives home the main point of your story?

4 End with an Insight: Lastly, you want to end with a recap—a sentence or two to sum it all up and say exactly what you want your audience to think about.

President Reagan Persuading with Story

In the weeks leading up to the 40th anniversary of D-Day, presidential speech writer Peggy Noonan had a challenge. How do you write a speech that commemorates the sacrifice made by thousands of Americans and allied troops to free Europe in World War II? How do you capture the enormity of that moment? How do you write it in a way that President Reagan could deliver, make it memorable and impactful to the veterans, and honor those who had given all in the fight for freedom?

After weeks of wrestling with this speech, Noonan decided to zoom in on one main story instead of trying to capture everything. She focused on one place and told the story of 225 men and what the battle was like for them. After a short paragraph setting the stage, she went right to the action and told the story of the fighting on June 6th.



The Bottom Line:

To create a persuasive story, start by collecting them in "story buckets." Use the best one for your next talk. When you tell the story, jump straight into the action, add specific details or dialogue, and end with an insight and what you want the audience to think about.

President Reagan's Pointe du Hoc Speech

"...We stand on a lonely, windswept point on the northern shore of France. The air is soft, but 40 years ago at this moment, the air was dense with smoke and the cries of men, and the air was filled with the crack of rifle fire and the roar of cannon. At dawn, on the morning of the 6th of June, 1944, 225 Rangers jumped off the British landing craft and ran to the bottom of these cliffs. Their mission was one of the most difficult and daring of the invasion: to climb these sheer and desolate cliffs and take out the enemy guns. The Allies had been told that some of the mightiest of these guns were here and they would be trained on the beaches to stop the Allied advance.

The Rangers looked up and saw the enemy soldiers -- the edge of the cliffs shooting down at them with machine guns and throwing grenades. And the American Rangers began to climb. They shot rope ladders over the face of these cliffs and began to pull themselves up. When one Ranger fell, another would take his place. When one rope was cut, a Ranger would grab another and begin his climb again. They climbed, shot back, and held their footing. Soon, one by one, the Rangers pulled themselves over the top, and in seizing the firm land at the top of these cliffs, they began to seize back the continent of Europe. Two hundred and twenty-five came here. After 2 days of fighting, only 90 could still bear arms.

Behind me is a memorial that symbolizes the Ranger daggers that were thrust into the top of these cliffs. And before me are the men who put them there.

These are the boys of Pointe du Hoc. These are the men who took the cliffs. These are the champions who helped free a continent. These are the heroes who helped end a war."

Start with the Action

In seconds Reagan's words take you back to Normandy in 1944. You can imagine the scene in your mind's eye, and you know the stakes of the moment.

Zoom in on a Few Specifics

The words are vivid and packed with action and the determination of that battle.

There were not many numbers, just a few key facts about how the Rangers went from 225 to just 90.

End with an Insight

Lastly, you want to end with a recap—a sentence or two to sum it all up and say exactly what you want your audience to think about.