

# Storytelling

## Creating Memories along the Byway



### Byway Storytelling

The byway story refers to the inherently interesting and valuable tale that most roadways can tell about the history, culture and environment of the surrounding landscape and communities. It should be tied to the byway's primary intrinsic quality.

Telling the story is a creative process that includes many types of residents in the community—from the young to the old, and newcomers to longtime residents. Use many storytelling mediums, in addition to enlisting good storytellers.

The story is an aspect of byway planning that people often find highly interesting, fun and compelling. Through the story, citizens can express what is unusual and special about their communities.

### The Beginning

Use a catchy title for your story. Use language that creates some question. Know your audience and find out what it is about that audience that you can use to "hook" them. Relate and connect.

For example, "Legend has it that there are ghosts along this byway! Do you think you will see a ghost?"

You want to start your story with an attention-getter. Create the setting and spike the audience's curiosity with a question focusing attention on the heart of the upcoming story. Use mystery, curiosity, suspense or a possible new perspective to be gained.

Creating a bit of tension or uncertainty will get the group's attention. Create the setting with a word-picture or touch one or more of the senses. Have the audience possibly imagine something exciting, descriptive, or maybe even beautiful. Be clear about the location or setting – the circumstance. Rely on the imagination in creating the word-picture.

Put a lot of energy into the beginning to get the audience to focus. Do this in the first three seconds of the story. Use the 3-30-3 Rule: 3 seconds to get someone's attention, 30 seconds to engage a person and 3 minutes if they are very interested. A fairly

large percentage of people may invest 1 to 18 seconds. Another sizable percentage will spend between 40-60+ seconds (Ham) to engage. Use this. Think about this, especially when you are planning to tell your story on an exhibit without an interpreter.

### Moving Further Into the Story

Make the story easy to follow. Remove non-essential details and elements once you have set the outline in the beginning. The rule of thumb is that the simpler you keep the story, the more effective the story telling will be. Keep the focus, do not use jargon and do not over-hype the story. Let it unfold.

### The Story

Engage the audience's five senses. The more your story addresses the senses, the more you become connected with the audience. If you are a storyteller, use eye contact with the audience. Engage people's feelings and emotions. Keep it honest and authentic. The audience will trust you if you "keep it real." It may take revealing something honest about yourself to them. You are trying to tap into their sense of belonging to a community. You can draw parallels between the byway or one of its sites and their own community, family, group, church or favorite gathering place. It may be that something along the byway is threatened in some way and a parallel can be drawn with "bygone days" or some catastrophic event. Use visual descriptions or circumstances from the past that can put the person in a 'you were there' framework. If appropriate, a touch of humor doesn't hurt.

### The Closing

At the end of the story, reveal something. Summarize and unveil the source of tension. Show that something was accomplished or resolved. Elicit a positive response to the outcome of the story. Conclude on a satisfactory note.

*"The story's the thing." - Freeman Tilden, author of [Interpreting our Heritage](#).*

## REFERENCES

Interpretive Planning. Forest Service, Center for Design and Interpretation, Rocky Mountain Region, [https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5167249.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5167249.pdf)

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