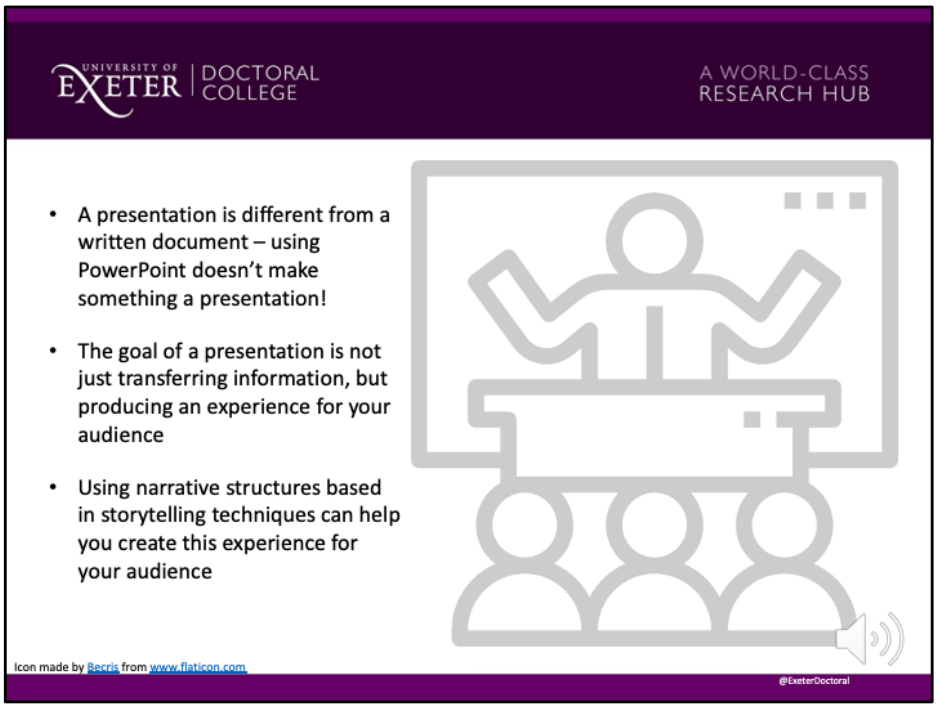
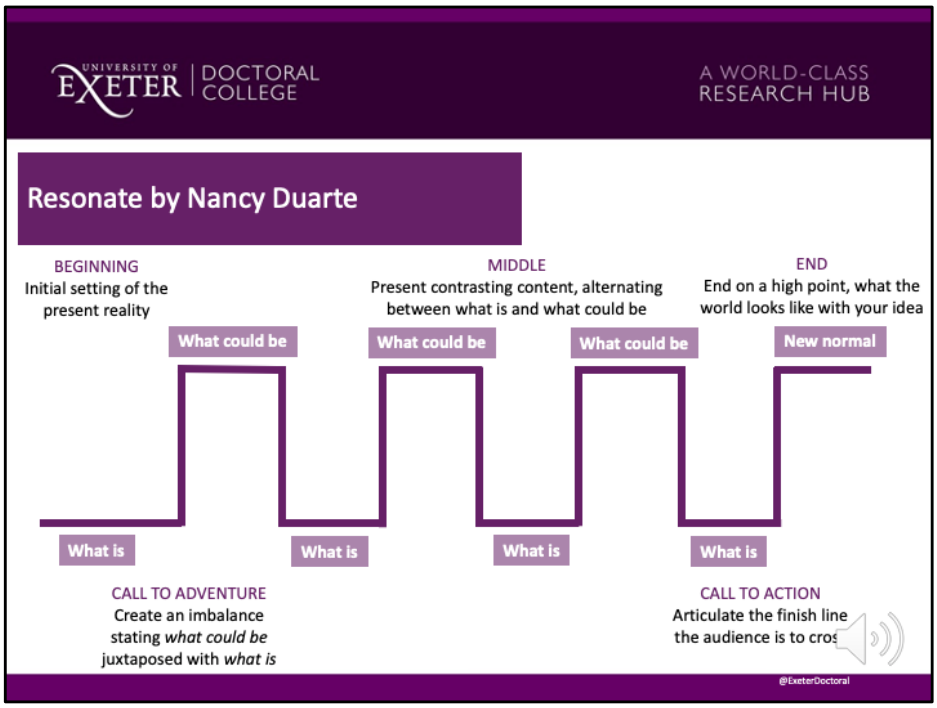
Tell a story through your presentation.



A presentation is different from a written document - using PowerPoint doesn't make something a presentation. The goal of a presentation is not just transferring information but producing an experience for your audience. Using narrative structures based in storytelling techniques can help you create this experience for your audience

The situation-conflict-resolution is a classic three element storytelling structure, linked by the words *but* and *therefore*. Think of nearly any children's story and you can map this structure over it. We start with the set-up; this sets the scene for the story and introduces the hero. In the context of a research presentation, your hero is your theme, topic or question. But your hero experiences conflict. This is the drama in our story. This conflict is a challenge for your hero to overcome. It could be problems in the world, problems in your data, or a challenge you pose to your hero. Therefore, your hero responds to these challenges. This is how you tackle your theme, topic or question. Your hero responds to these challenges to reveal new possibilities, resolve problems, and maybe draw you conclusions.

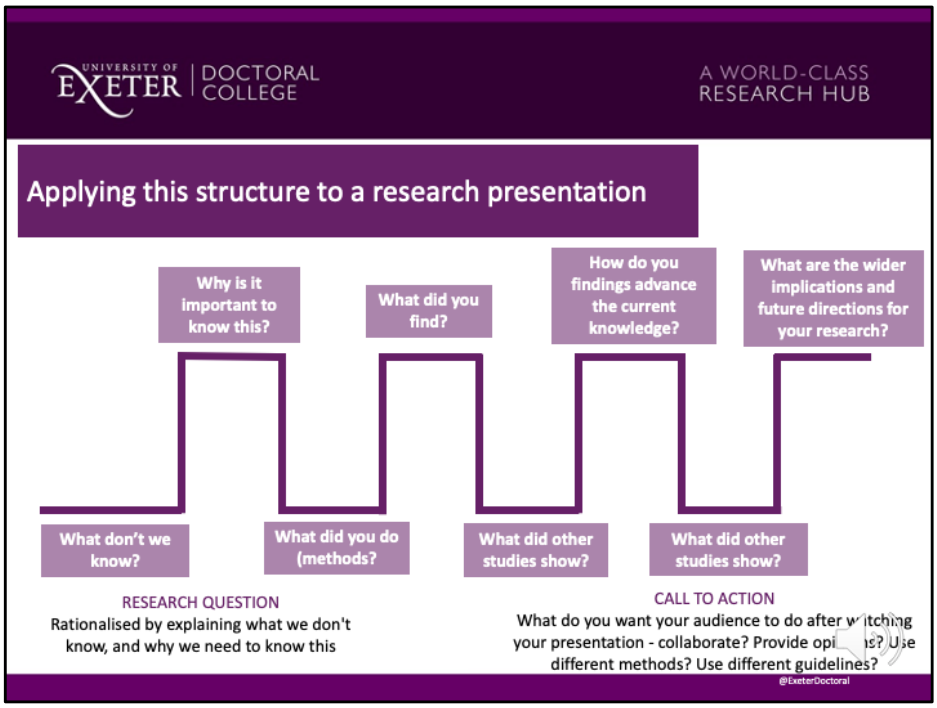


A further development of the three-part structure to consider is from presentation expert Nancy Duarte. Nancy Duarte presented this structure at TED, and in her book, Resonate.
This structure begins with an initial setting of the present reality- the *what is.* You establish the status quo, what's going on currently, and then you compare it to what could be. The bigger the gap or the contrast between what is and what could be, the better. The hero, your theme or question, gets a call to adventure, and this creates an imbalance in the world, juxtaposing what could be with what is.

The middle goes back and forth between what is and what could be, meeting resistance from the audience and drawing them towards your idea.

The end is a call to action, and you finish by telling the audience what the world looks like with your idea. You end on a high point.

You can watch Nancy Duarte's Ted Talk on 'The Secret Structure of Great Talks' in the resources.



To apply this structure to a research presentation, start by highlighting what we don't know, or what the problem is. Emphasise why it is important to know this or solve this problem. This leads to your research question.

You will need to explain your methods here – though if your methods are novel you could spend some time going back and forth between traditional methods and your novel methods. If you are focused on the findings, go back and forth between what you found and what other studies found, how your findings advance current knowledge, and how this fits into the context of previous work.

The end is the call to action – what do you want your audience to do after watching your presentation - collaborate? Provide opinions? Use different methods? Use different guidelines?

Finish on the highpoint, the wider implications and future directions for your research.

Now, work through the activities below to apply these storytelling techniques to your own presentation.