



# Storytelling for Lawyers

By Philip Meyer

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Good lawyers have an ability to tell stories. Whether they are arguing a murder case or a complex financial securities case, they can capably explain a chain of events to judges and juries so that they understand them. The best lawyers are also able to construct narratives that have an emotional impact on their intended audiences. But what is a narrative, and how can lawyers go about constructing one? How does one transform a cold presentation of facts into a seamless story that clearly and compellingly takes readers not only from point A to point B, but to points C, D, E, F, and G as well? In *Storytelling for Lawyers*, Phil Meyer explains how. He begins with a pragmatic theory of the narrative foundations of litigation practice and then applies it to a range of practical illustrative examples: briefs, judicial opinions and oral arguments. Intended for legal practitioners, teachers, law students, and even interdisciplinary academics, the book offers a basic yet comprehensive explanation of the central role of narrative in litigation. The book also offers a narrative tool kit that supplements the analytical skills traditionally emphasized in law school as well as practical tips for practicing attorneys that will help them craft their own legal stories.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

"'Make no mistake about it - lawyers are storytellers. It is how we make our livings,' Philip N. Meyer tells us, and convincingly proves, in his extraordinary *Storytelling for Lawyers*. Brilliantly exploring how issues of voice, plot, characterization, language, and narrative structure inform every aspect of the practice of law, Meyer tells a story no one in legal scholarship or practice has ever told before. Everyone, in every area of law, from beginning students to the most erudite scholars and accomplished practitioners, will profit substantially from this book." --Lawrence Joseph, author of *Lawyerland*

"Readers of the book will come away with a deep appreciation of the possibilities for interplay between stories in law and in the broader culture, beyond anything that they can obtain from any other book with which I am familiar." --Neal Feigenson, author of *Legal Blame: How Jurors Think and Talk About Accidents*

"Breathtaking in its sophistication, *Storytelling for Lawyers* is an unparalleled introduction to the art of legal storytelling. Meyer leads us through a fascinating and sometimes counterintuitive exploration of the building blocks of a good story - characters, plots, themes, and all the rest. Lawyers and law students everywhere should read this book, mark it up, and keep a battered copy within easy reach." --Linda H. Edwards, author of *Legal Writing, Process, Analysis, and Organization* and *Readings in Persuasion: Briefs that Changed the World*

"No one knows the terrain, the feel, and the reach of stories better than Philip N. Meyer. What he tries to do, and does so brilliantly in *Storytelling for Lawyers* is to take readers 'inside' the story. It's hard to imagine a storytelling lawyer who couldn't benefit from Meyer's book." --James R. Elkins, Editor of Legal Studies Forum and *Lawyer Poets and That World We Call Law*

"How lawyers tell stories to juries and judges is the subject of Meyer's recently published book, *Storytelling for Lawyers*. The book is intended not just for law students learning how to craft persuasive arguments, but for lay people simply curious about how popular culture, literature and the canon of case law mesh in the modern legal system." --*Valley News*

"An excellent primer on narrative theory for lawyer-storytellers has now appeared... Meyer's book is a great story about lawyers telling stories. He brings his lawyer-storytellers to life and critiques their narrative efforts with great delight. I welcomed his reminder that the best lawyers can be and are artists."  
--MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL FACULTY BLOG

"Philip N. Meyer's splendid book, *Storytelling for Lawyers*, is both an explanation of this phenomenon and a master class on what makes an effective story and how to construct one." -David R. Dow, Rice University, Vermont Law Review

"For me, the ultimate test of any book that makes recommendations about the practice of law is whether I can use the information it conveys now. This book proved an immediate help for me in working on an appellate brief...I don't know that I'll make to the promised land of the perfect brief, but now I have stronger sense of what it will read like." -greenleafadvocacy.com

"Meyer's argument is not only about constructing a story, it is also about the use of compelling language...the text could be put to excellent use in a law & humanities classroom as a starting point for students to conduct similar narrative analysis of court filings and transcripts." -Jinee Lokaneeta, Law and Society Review

"*Storytelling for Lawyers* is a well-done exploration of legal storytelling and would be well placed in any lawyer's toolbox of practical works. This title is recommended for attorneys and for law libraries that collect practice-oriented materials." -Christine Timko, Law Librarian, Nevada Supreme Court Law Library, *Law Library Journal*

"In short, it is when he shows how virtually every major strategic decision has to be approached taking emotions and psychology into account that Meyer is at his strongest. Meyer has provided a valuable tool for legal practitioners-a series of steps to go through when putting together a brief, or going before a judge or jury, or preparing law students for what comes next." -Marshall Goldberg, *The Journal of Legal Education*

"If I were teaching a course devoted to advanced persuasive legal writing or to trial or appellate advocacy, *Storytelling for Lawyers* would be one of the required texts." -Diane Kraft, Assistant Professor of Legal Research and Writing, University of Kentucky College of Law, Legal Writing Institute *The Second Draft*

"Any law student or lawyer who wants to develop their skills practicing the facts should benefit from studying 'Storytelling for Lawyers.'" - Jennifer Romig, Listen Like a Lawyer Blog

#### About the Author

**Philip N. Meyer** is Professor of Law at Vermont Law School.

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