

Science and Stories: The Everglades



There's a growing understanding that science needs science-communicators: people who can translate research and scientific facts for larger audiences.

A science-communicator can speak to people like elected officials, who make important decisions about these issues, or the general public, to help them better understand the science. In this exercise, you are going to be a science-communicator for the Everglades, telling the story of the Everglades and South Florida's water.

Imagine the Everglades. Depending on what you've experienced or heard, you might imagine a lot of different things.

What do you think about when you think about the Everglades?

Step 1: Tell Your Story

There are many stories to tell about the Everglades, including yours. You're an important part of this story. The Everglades provides drinking water for over 8 million Floridians. That's one out of every three people that live in the state. Write a few lines that illustrate the importance of water in your life, or that illustrate the importance of water in your community. Think about how you use water at home or how businesses use water.

Step 2: Do a Little Research Everglades 101

Telling a story about science doesn't mean making things up, or changing facts to make them seem more exciting. It means talking about the facts in a way that people can relate to them. To start, you want to make sure you have the facts you need to tell a complete story. In this case, you'd want to read about the Everglades, the relationship between the Everglades and water, and solutions that can help.

We've put all that information in an **Our Everglades, Our Water fact sheet** for you.

Read it over and underline, highlight, or take notes on:

1. Points that show why the Everglades is important to people who live in South Florida
2. Problems the Everglades has faced and is facing
3. Solutions to those problems

For additional information, you can check out this article:

WLRN article: [Everglades 101: Just How Does This Thing Work Anyway?](#)

Step 3: Tell Science Like a Story Pre-Writing

Sometimes when we talk about science, we just list facts. But people learn really well from stories, and there is a place for stories when we talk about those scientific facts.

A traditional narrative format follows a plot pattern you may be familiar with: Exposition, Rising Action, Climax (the height of the conflict), Falling Action, and Resolution.

Randy Olson, the author of *Houston, We Have a Narrative*, looked at stories and looked at how scientists were talking about science, and saw there was a big difference. Scientists weren't including a plot in their stories. They were sharing a lot of facts, but not tying them together for their audiences.

He created the "And, But, Therefore" framework to help scientists tell their stories. Below, you can see how the elements of the ABT framework correspond to the parts of a traditional narrative framework



The ABT framework can be found in our most popular stories:

Moana is a young Polynesian girl who lives on an island
AND though she loves the water, she stays on the island to keep her family happy
BUT a mysterious disease starts to affect the island
THEREFORE, she embarks on a quest to find Maui, a demigod, and save her home

It works with scientific facts:

Roseate Spoonbills are wading birds that live in the southern Everglades
AND they eat the fish that live in shallow waters
BUT the southern Everglades doesn't have enough freshwater to support those fish populations
THEREFORE Roseate spoonbills are moving north where they have more food

And it works with describing scientific research processes:

Roseate Spoonbills eat the fish that live in Florida Bay, the southern part of the Everglades
AND they build nests where they have enough food
BUT we've observed that they're moving north
THEREFORE we're measuring the salinity of the water in Florida Bay to see if it's too saline for their food sources

And it works with arguments based on that research:

Roseate Spoonbills are wading birds that live in the southern Everglades
AND they eat the fish that live in shallow waters
BUT the southern Everglades doesn't have enough freshwater to support those fish populations
THEREFORE Roseate spoonbills are moving north where they have more food
THEREFORE We need to make sure that Florida Bay gets the freshwater that it needs.

Think about what you read about the Everglades and identify the following narrative elements:

And = Exposition/Background Information:

But = Conflict:

Therefore = Resolution:

Step 5: Share Your Story

Think about ways to share your story. You can tell folks over the dinner table, create an infographic or post to share online, or write your elected officials.

Share Your Story With Congress:

If you want Congress to hear your story about Florida's clean water and the Everglades, we'll help you write to them. Ask your parent or guardian if they're okay with you sending a letter to Congress about the Everglades.

It's important for Congressional representatives to hear from their constituents, the people who live in their district. Members of Congress vote on national laws, but they also vote on the federal budget. They help decide how much money is spent on things like education, highways, housing, or environmental projects, like Everglades restoration.

Whenever you're writing to an elected official, you should accompany your story with a specific "ask", a decision you want them to make. In this case, you could ask your Congressional representative to make sure to support Everglades restoration funding.

Consider this outline:

1. Introduce yourself
2. Include your "ask" – politely ☺ – so they know why you are writing to them
3. Explain why the Everglades is important to you and your community
4. Tell the story of the Everglades to provide context for your ask
5. Repeat the ask and thank them for their time and work (this part is done for you)

**During Earth Week, April 19 – April 26, go to this link: <https://bit.ly/evergladesstory>
Follow the instructions to write your Congressional representative. The email will automatically be sent to them.**