

THE DRAMATIC PATTERN OF INTRODUCTIONS AND FAIRY TALES

The typical introduction to a research paper draws some of its ability to motivate readers from the dramatic pattern it shares with fairy tales:

1. Current Situation / *Once upon a time . . .*

The fairy tale defines a stable world that it will disrupt; the research paper defines a current way of thinking that it will show to be wrong, or at least inadequate.

2. Research Question / *But then, the dragon . . .*

The fairy tale disrupts its world with a problem creature; the research paper disrupts the current way of thinking with a problem question.

3. Significance of the Question / *And now the dragon's fire . . .*

The fairy tale puts its main character in danger; the research paper shows its readers what they will lose without an answer to its question.

4. Answer / *And they lived happily ever after.*

In the fairy tale, a helper with special powers steps in to remove the danger, thereby saving the day; in the research paper, the writer with special knowledge (learned from research) steps in to answer the question, thereby saving the day.