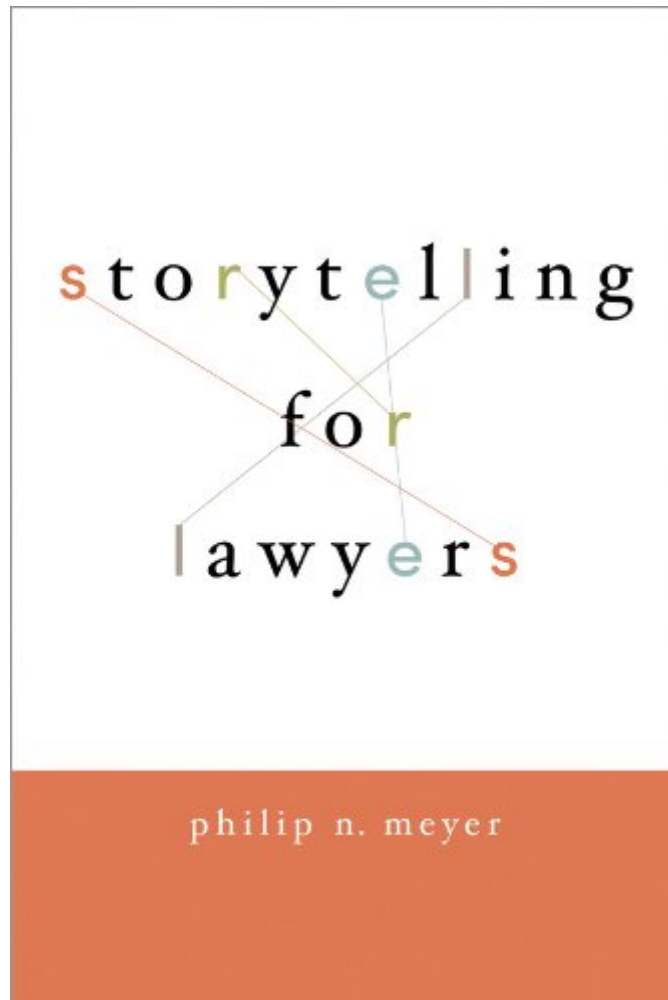


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# Storytelling For Lawyers



## Synopsis

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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## Customer Reviews

Meyer's *Storytelling for Lawyers* is an important contribution to the literature on narration in law practice. We know that successful courtroom rhetoric can best be viewed through the prism of storytelling. But the literature does not contain a practical and detailed analysis of the elements of narration as used in law practice—that is, plotting, characterization, point of view, style, and settings in place and time. Meyer's book fills this gap. It is blessedly free of jargon and full of practical examples of good legal storytelling. But the importance of this book goes well beyond providing practical assistance to litigators. It serves as a much-needed introduction to the principles of narration for teachers and students of literature, creative writing, and popular culture, who have lacked a readable introductory guide to the elements of successful storytelling.

It is a rare book that not only makes important theoretical insights, but also provides helpful practical advice, but that is exactly what Phil Meyer has accomplished. His discussion of Gerry Spence's final argument in the Karen Silkwood case is itself worth the price of admission. Meyer leaves the old law school paradigm of arguing "rule and facts" far behind as he shows how the best lawyers are creative artists of the first magnitude. He also shows how practicing lawyers can use similar narrative strategies to their clients' benefit. Both lawyers and non-lawyers will find this book a good read..

Meyer proves his initial point that much of what lawyers do is storytelling, and he achieves his goal of providing a primer on narrative theory for lawyer-storytellers. The book is sophisticated but written in an engaging way using non-technical language. Examples from legal and literary works abound, and they range from courtroom arguments and appellate briefs on the one hand to an essay by Joan Didion and Vonnegut's "Slaughterhouse Five" on the other. Meyer's favorite stories are found in Hollywood movies, and although he seems unaware of the accomplishment, Meyer provides fresh interpretations of such movies as "High Noon" and "Jaws." I strongly recommend "Storytelling for Lawyers" for all law students, lawyers, and judges.

Last year I did three jury trials in three weeks. At the conclusion of the third trial I realized that I have not changed the way I present a case to the jury since 1992. I invested in a number of books to improve and change the way I present a case in trial. Professor Meyer's book is one of the few legal books I have read that provides useful and practical tips that can be utilized in private practice.

All litigators would benefit from reading this book. There is compelling evidence that the root of

persuasion is storytelling and this book covers those aspects of storytelling that are most important for lawyers. The book is well-written, fun to read and full of real-life examples of persuasive lawyering. It is a must-read for anyone wanting to take their trial work to the next level.

As a trial attorney and supervisor of attorneys I have always been fascinated with the craft of storytelling. Professor Meyer's book, using examples from literature, movies and trials, helps us understand what goes into a good story that is well told. Trials are ultimately about connecting with juries in a way that draws them into something that is mysterious and wonderful and awe-inspiring. Contrary to what you might read in the newspapers, juries want to get it right. They work hard at their job and they deserve advocates that can give them what they need to come to the correct result. Telling the story of the accused can help juries see that the "accused" are just like them; just like their neighbors, friends and children. Stories have always been a way to open our eyes to see the truth. Professor Meyer's book is one of the best I have read on the craft of storytelling. I highly recommend this book to lawyers and non-lawyers alike.

It's well put together. It takes awhile for the book to take flight. You need patience, but it is worth the read.

I am not a lawyer, nor a writer, but rather a reader. I found the correlation of legal storytelling with screenplay, literary narrative quite interesting. Legal trials are theater.

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