Nine Dates with Content and Coffee

Date 3: Content as Story

The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Content: how to tell a story

Theme and Structure
Theme

What is a theme?

- The First World War
- The First World War lasted from 1914 to 1918.
- The First World War is a watershed in the history of wars.
What is a theme?

- Diana Li Scholarship
- The Diana Li Scholarship is worth four years’ tuition fees.
- The Diana Li Scholarship has helped many students from poor families to finish their university education.
Structure

- Theme
- Sub-themes
- Sub-sub-themes
- Introduction-Body-Summary
Structure

- Introduction – introduce theme and sub-themes
- Body – each theme in one paragraph, supported by sub-themes
- Summary – repeat / refine theme; do not start something new / err on the light side
‘What I have Lived for’

Theme: My life is governed by three passions

- Sub-theme 1: (1st passion) longing for love
- Sub-theme 2: (2nd passion) search for knowledge
- Sub-theme 3: (3rd passion) pity for mankind
**Body: sub-theme 1**

Why seek love?
- s-s-t 1: brings ecstasy
- s-s-t 2: relieves loneliness
- s-s-t 3: love = heaven
- Result?
Body: sub-theme 2

What knowledge to pursue?

- s-s-t 1: hearts of men
- s-s-t 2: why the stars shine
- s-s-t 3: mathematics
- Result?
Body: sub-theme 3

Pity for whom?

- s-s-t 1: children in famine (economical; poverty)
- s-s-t 2: tortured victims (political; pain)
- s-s-t 3: helpless old people (human; loneliness)

Result?
‘The Laws of Sociodynamics’

Theme: society is governed by three laws

- Sub-theme 1: (1st law) someone has to pay up
- Sub-theme 2: (2nd law) humans are motivated by own interests
- Sub-theme 3: (3rd law) positive reinforcement causes disaster
Body: sub-theme 1

- s-s-t 1: Eastern Europe not isolated
- s-s-t 2: forms of free lunches
- s-s-t 3: what environmental regulation should do
Body: sub-theme 2

- s-s-t 1: incentives subtle and difficult
- s-s-t 2: pluralism of incentives
- s-s-t 3: problems when incentives are mismatched
Body: sub-theme 3

- s-s-t 1: why consequences are on such a large scale
- s-s-t 2: the hubris of bureaucracy
- s-s-t 3: the press (checks and balance) can help
The Laws of Sociodynamics

Thesis/themes re-stated in summary:
Good societies follow these laws:

- 1\textsuperscript{st}: facing true costs
- 2\textsuperscript{nd}: providing proper incentives
- 3\textsuperscript{rd}: being willing to expose errors and inefficiency
Write Your Own Story

Theme: what you want to say
Develop sub-themes
Develop sub-sub-themes
Write attractive introduction
Write clear paragraphs in body
Write light summary
Theme: The Diana Li Scholarship has helped many students from poor families to finish their university education.

Sub-theme 1:
- sub-sub-theme 1
- sub-sub-theme 2
- sub-sub-theme 3

Sub-theme 2:
- sub-sub-theme 1
- sub-sub-theme 2
- sub-sub-theme 3

Sub-theme 3:
- sub-sub-theme 1
- sub-sub-theme 2
- sub-sub-theme 3