

The Power of Personal Stories

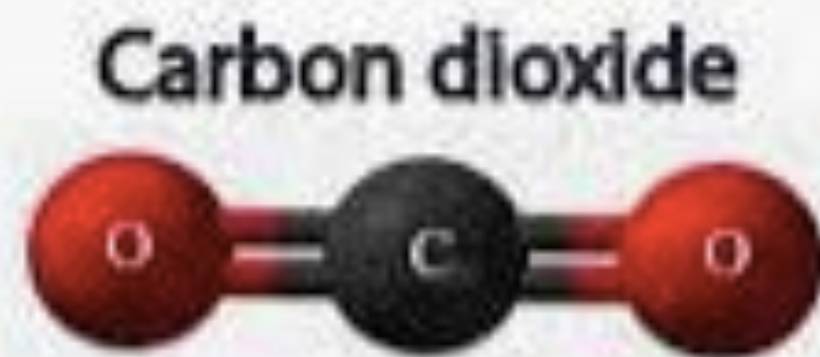
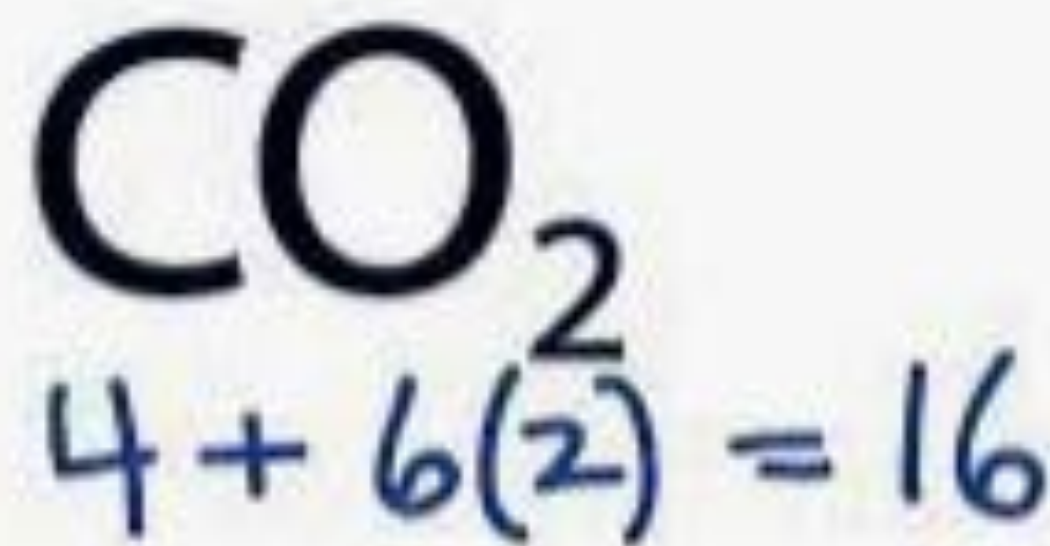
Caroline Levine, Cornell University



What makes a story a story?



Any account that unfolds over time, connecting events or experiences.



"Biological annihilation" of species worldwide says study

Catastrophic declines in populations of both common and rare vertebrate species over last 20 years, says US scientific journal

Cheetahs



Original habitat

Current presence

Probable

Possible

Feline
Acinonyx jubatus

100,000 cheetahs at start of 20th century
 Today, less than 7,000 mainly due to habitat loss



Giraffes

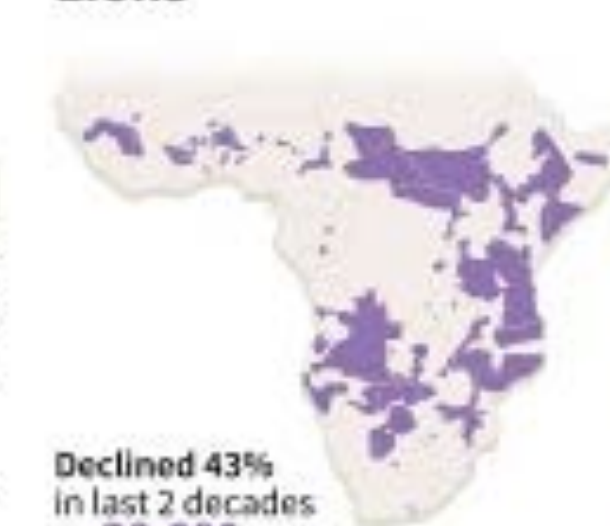


Giraffa camelopardalis

In 30 years, numbers fallen 40% to 97,500 in 2015 due to habitat loss, poaching



Lions



Declined 43% in last 2 decades to 20,000 in 27 African countries

Have already disappeared in 90% of previous range

Panthera leo



Orangutans

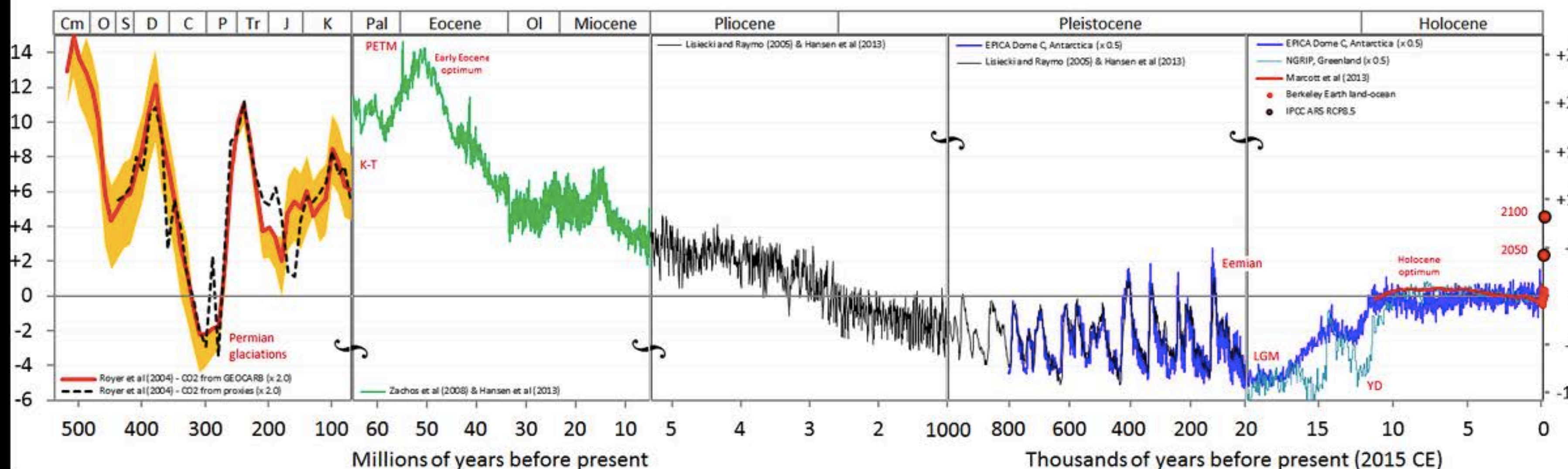


Sumatran Orangutan
Pongo abelii
 14,613
 Habitat loss (deforestation)

Numbers forecast to shrink to 47,000 in 2025



Temperature of Planet Earth

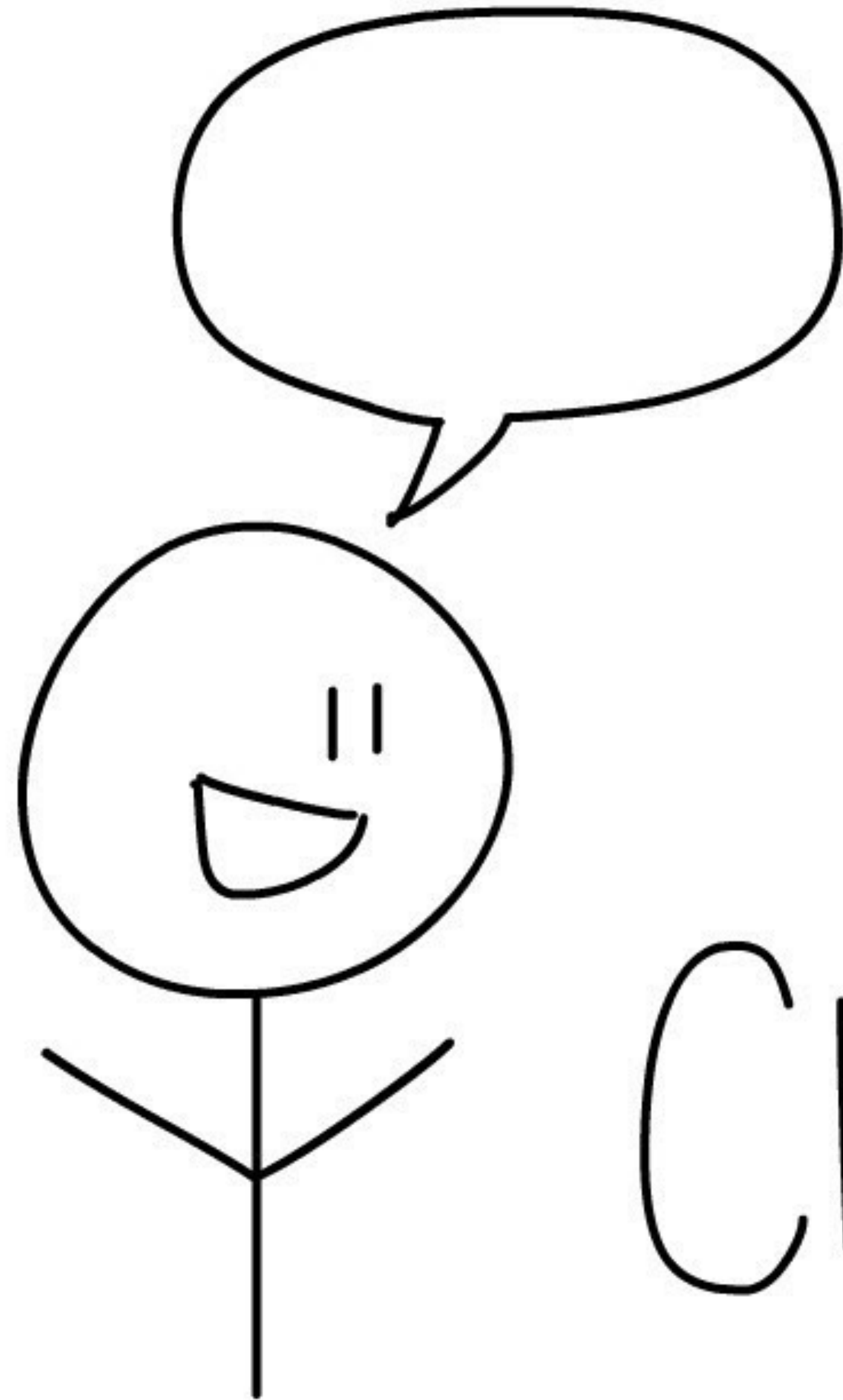


Why is it important to tell personal stories?

- ★ **To make a connection**
- ★ **To bring experience close to home**
- ★ **To be memorable**
- ★ **To motivate feeling and action**

I. Telling your own story





THE **SECRET** TO
TALKING ABOUT
CLIMATE CHANGE



1. Telling your own story

2. Listening and drawing out stories from others

3. Linking individual stories to collective action

What makes a good climate story?

- **Focus on a small number of specific moments (two or at most three);**
- **Give your audience enough context to understand the situation—but not too much (a story shouldn't be too long, detailed or digressive);**
- **Give a sense of your own emotions, but keep mostly to a description of what happened and not to your own reactions;**
- **End with action—what you decided to do as a result, and why.**

I need a volunteer!

**someone who does NOT already have a climate
story ready to tell...**

Groups of 2: climate storytelling practice

1. One person takes the role of the active listener; the other takes the role of the storyteller;
2. The listener asks questions to prompt the storyteller to think of important events and turning-points, such as: “What first got you concerned about climate change?” “What prompted you to join this group?” “When have you felt the most intensely about the issue?” “What are you most worried about losing, and why?”
3. Once the storyteller has hit on a good topic for a brief story, the listener asks follow-up questions, drawing out particularly moving or interesting moments;
4. The storyteller practices telling the story, ending with action that they have taken or will take in the future;
5. The two switch places and do steps 1-4 again.