

Find Your Story

Now that you have your question, your research, and your analysis, it's time to put it together into a story. This story will be what you use to build your documentary from. It will be the background narration and the guide for you to choose which images and footage you show and music you use.

1. Identify your characters! Who are the main players in your story. Remember, having strong characters will help your audience be drawn in and engaged, so be sure to research the players in your historical story closely and find details in your primary and secondary sources that help you describe them thoroughly:

2. Identify your major conflict. There may be other minor conflicts that are a part of your historical story, but every major answer to a research question will include within it at least one major conflict.

Ex. In a documentary about the Apollo mission to the moon, the conflict might be between the government and protestors who were against the excessive government spending on space when people in our country suffered in poverty.

3. Where and when is your story set? It can be useful to ground your film in this space so your viewers know where they are in space and time from the beginning.

4. Now try answering your research question to a friend or to yourself. What moment felt hard? Where did you get lost? What parts might you want to keep?

5. Now try it again! This time, make sure to focus the story around your main character(s). Keep them the focus of your retelling. What worked better this time? Was anything even harder? What do you want to keep?

6. Now that you've tried telling your story verbally a few times, it's time to start writing. Start with identifying the beginning and the end, and put your conflict somewhere in the middle. Let the story build and remember, there's no one right way to tell a historical story! So long as it's grounded in research and fact, you're doing it right!