



Communicating Beyond Academia

Exploring “Popular” Science Writing



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Academic (Formal) Writing

- Formal language
- Third person* (outside of methods)
- Conventional structure
- Objective tone
- Audience: other scientists



Popular (Informal) Science Writing

- Accessible language
- Liberal use of 1st, 2nd and 3rd person
- Many structures and styles
- More subjective
- Audience: Everyone!



MASSIVE SCIENCE

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Search Meghan

A 540 million year-old microscopic protist sex mystery is solved

How tiny, shelled protists reproduce helps explain their strange evolutionary patterns

 **Meghan Zulian**
Oceanography and Marine Science
University of California, Davis

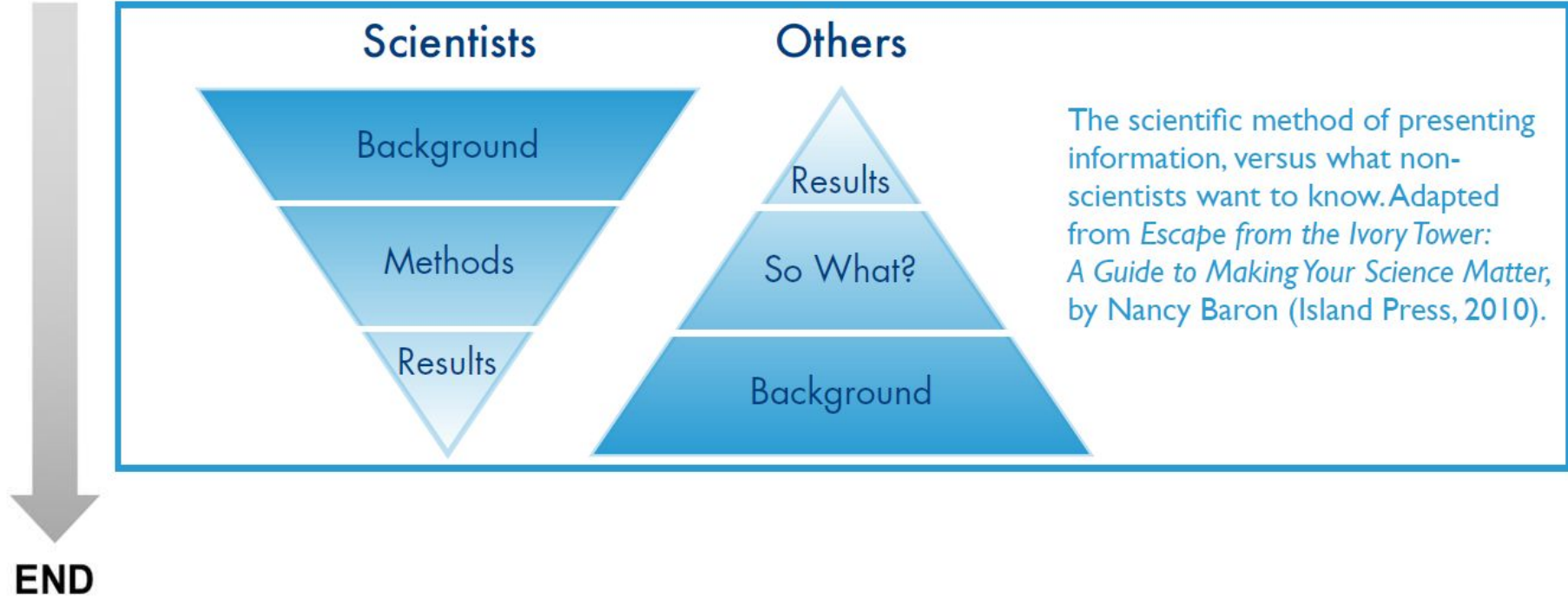
October 9, 2020

via [YouTube](#)

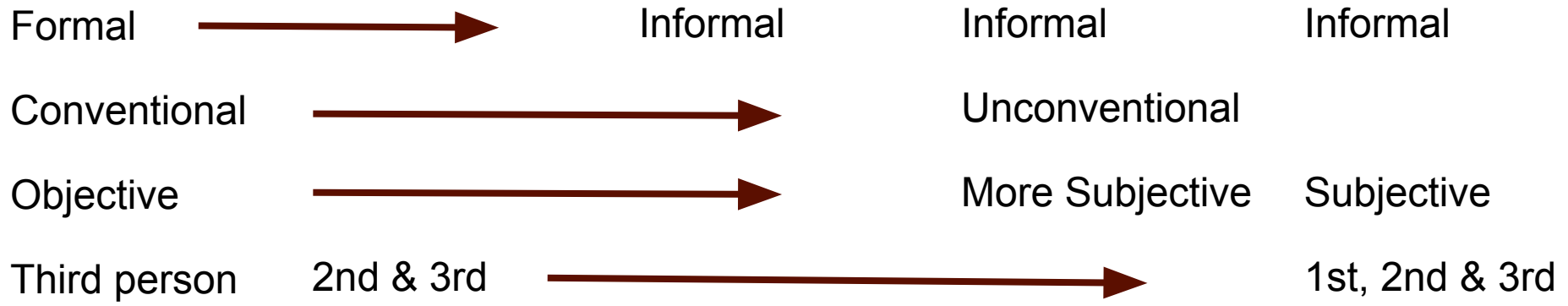
The image shows a screenshot of a webpage from Massive Science. The page features a navigation bar with the site name and several menu items. Below the navigation is a search bar and a user profile. The main content area displays a featured article with a large, eye-catching title and a sub-headline. The article is accompanied by a small profile picture of the author and the date of publication. On the right side of the article, there is a large, dark image showing several spherical, textured objects, likely microscopic protists, with a bright light source behind them, creating a dramatic effect.

Academic (Formal) vs. Popular (Informal)

START



The scientific method of presenting information, versus what non-scientists want to know. Adapted from *Escape from the Ivory Tower: A Guide to Making Your Science Matter*, by Nancy Baron (Island Press, 2010).



Audience:
scientists in
your field

Audience:
scientists in &
outside your
field

Audience:
any scientists

Audience:
anyone

Audience:
anyone &
their feelings

White paper

Formal

Formal

Conventional

Third person

Presents facts, yet

Informal

Very subjective

Persuasive

Audience

Anyone and their feelings

Writing Tips

Figure out what works for YOU

- When in the day do you write best?
 - Morning? Afternoon? Evening?
- How do you write best?
 - Hourly or longer blocks?
 - Pomodoros?
- BLOCK OUT THAT TIME



Editing and Feedback Buddies

- A few, various perspectives and levels of experience
- As least one you trust to give non-judgemental feedback on your roughest writing

Writing Resources + Opportunities

Resources

<https://www.compassscicomm.org/tools-resources/>



A Guide to Making
Your Science Matter

ESCAPE
from the
IVORY
TOWER

Nancy Baron

MASSIVE SCIENCE Menu Search Meghan

Do you want science writing training from Massive Science?

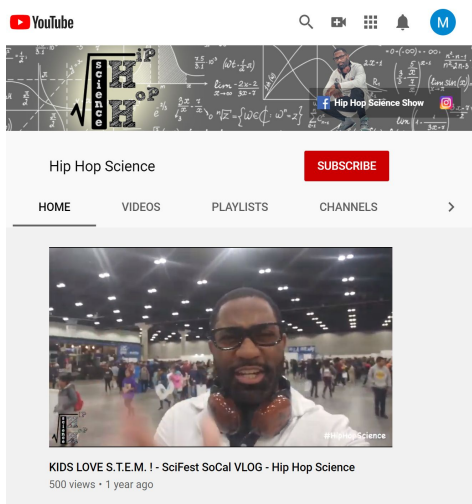
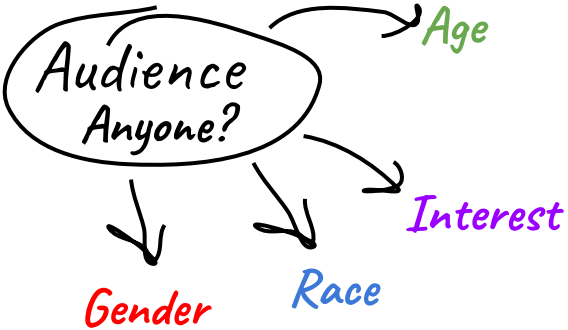
Join our science storytelling community

Become a Consortium member
Sign up for our training program (\$10)

[Join the Consortium](#)

- Learn how to become a powerful storyteller by working with our professional team of editors and researchers.
- Build your audience by publishing science stories with Massive and our partners.
- Contribute work on your own timeline: we have flexible deadlines.
- [Learn more about our training](#)

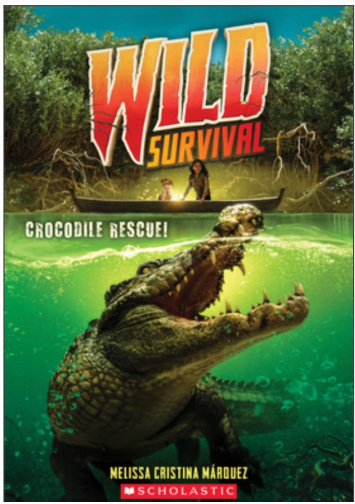
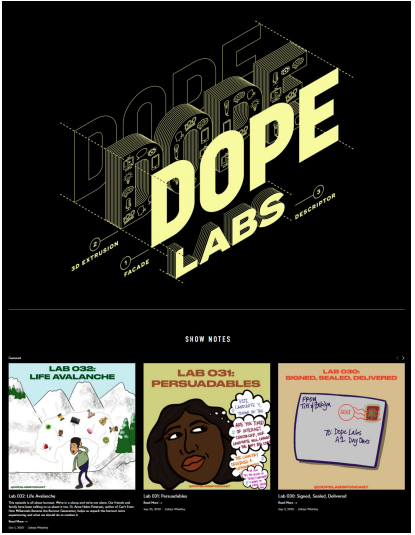
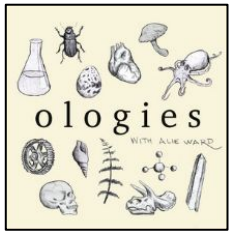
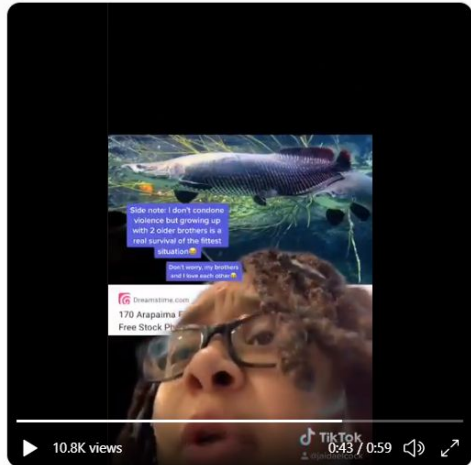
Sci-comm I-cons



Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson
 @ayanaeliza

Marine biologist, policy nerd, Brooklyn native. Founder @OceanCollectiv & @UrbanOceanLab. Co-host @how2saveplanet. Co-editor @AllWeCanSave — link to

Jaida Elcock @soFISHtication · 19h
 It's time for some #animalfacts so let's talk about a beautiful freshwater fish known as the Arapaima! I was told before getting into and cleaning an arapaima exhibit to "be careful... like to nibble fingers" 🤪
 Shoutout to @TheGardenGroves for this fantastic fish suggestion 🐟



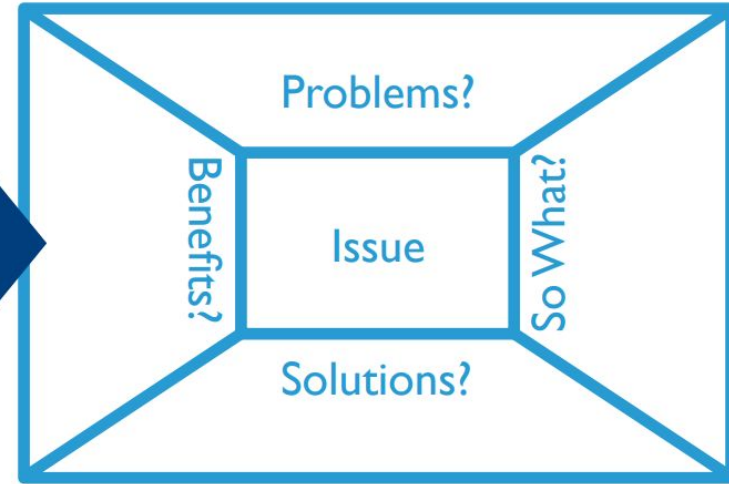
Crocodile Rescue! (Wild Survival #1)

Twelve-year-old Adrianna Villalobos and her older brother Feye travel the globe with their parents, the hosts of a suspenseful nature show called "Wild Survival!" The show features daring animal rescues and the work the family does at their animal sanctuary. They've recently gotten an offer to take the show from YouTube to a TV network, and Adrianna is thrilled. So far, she's always been behind the scenes, but now she gets to join the rest of her family onscreen. She can't wait to bring her passion for animals to a wide audience.

Message Box Activity

Breakout rooms

- 2 groups of 5
- Start with study
 - Each find one
- Read write-up by Kat
 - Adjust



Group 1: <https://climatechange.ucdavis.edu/news/cacti-and-other-iconic-desert-plants-threatened-by-solar-development/>

Group 2: <https://climatechange.ucdavis.edu/news/for-red-abalone-resisting-ocean-acidification-starts-with-mom/>

Message Box Activity

► The Issue

The **Issue** section in the center of the box identifies and describes the overarching issue or topic that you're addressing in broad terms. It's the big-picture context of your work. This should be very concise and clear; no more than a short phrase. You might find you revisit the **Issue** after you've filled out your Message Box, to see if your thinking on the overarching topic has changed since you started.

► The Problem

The **Problem** is the chunk of the broader issue that you're addressing in your area of expertise. It's your piece of the pie, reflecting your work and expert knowledge. Think about your research questions and what aspect of the specific problem you're addressing would matter to your audience. The **Problem** is also where you set up the **So What** and describe the situation you see and want to address.

Message Box Activity

▶ The So What

The crux of the Message Box, and the critical question the COMPASS team seeks to help scientists answer, is “So what?”

Why should your audience care? What about your research or work is important for them to know? Why are you talking to them about it? The answer to this question may change from audience to audience, and you’ll want to be able to adjust based on their interests and needs. We like to use the analogy of putting a message through a prism that clarifies the importance to different audiences. Each audience will be interested in different facets of your work, and you want your message to reflect their interests and accommodate their needs. The prism below includes a spectrum of audiences you might want to reach, and some of the questions they might have about your work.

Message Box Activity

► The Solution

The **Solution** section outlines the options for solving the problem you identified. When presenting possible solutions, consider whether they are something your audience can influence or act upon. And remind yourself of your communication goals: Why are you communicating with this audience? What do you want to accomplish?

► The Benefit

In the **Benefit** section, you list the benefits of addressing the **Problem**—all the good things that could happen if your **Solution** section is implemented. This ties into the **So What** of why your audience cares, but focuses on the positive results of taking action (the **So What** may be a negative thing—for example, inaction could lead to consequences that your audience cares about). If possible, it can be helpful to be specific here—concrete examples are more compelling than abstract. Who is likely to benefit, and where, and when?