# Data journalism – deep reading of professional examples

The aim of this session is to get you to investigate how professional storytellers & designers use the techniques we’ve discussed this morning to tell stories effectively. We will pick a ‘data-driven story’ example from the ABC: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/interactives/>

Spend 10 minutes reading through the story you have been assigned and have a play with any interactive visualisations.

* What do you like about the story?
* Does it change your mind on the issues that are raised?
* Did you learn anything new?

Next take a deeper look at the strategies the authors have used to tell their story. For your example, describe how the storytelling team have used the following:

1. **Context** – how have the authors identified their audience? What knowledge do they assume they know, what new concepts are they going to introduce?
2. **Structure –** how is the story structured? Is the takeaway up front, or does it get revealed gradually? Have the authors used a setup/conflict/resolution structure in their narrative? Are they using a different structure? If so, how are they using tension or conflict to maintain your interest?
3. **Visualisation technique –** For at least one visualisation in the story:
   1. How do the team walk readers through the story in this data viz?
   2. How do they provide structure to the data? (using **gestalt** **principles**: proximity, similarity, enclosure, closure, continuity, connection)
   3. How do they focus the audience’s attention? (using **preattentive attributes**: orientation, color, size, curvature or added marks, intensity, location, motion)
   4. If interactive: how do they use **design** **affordances** to guide the audience to interact with the data?
4. **Narrative –** how have the authors made the data personal or relevant for their audience? What techniques have they used to make the narrative memorable?

We’re going to share your thoughts back with the class:

1. Come up with three bullet points (for setup, conflict and resolution) and a ‘big idea’ sentence for this story to summarize it for everyone else.
2. Give us one example of good use of technical elements (structure, design, visualisation or narrative), and one example where you thought the authors could improve.

If you’re looking for more examples of excellent data storytelling, check out:

* Guardian Data Blog: <https://www.theguardian.com/data> or the Australian version <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/australia-datablog>
* FiveThirtyEight: <https://fivethirtyeight.com/tag/data-visualization/>
* Nathan Yau/FlowingData is a goldmine of good dataviz: https://flowingdata.com
* For an alternative take, check out the NYT R&D group: <http://nytlabs.com>