

Week 9: Dramatism, Narrative, and Symbolic Convergence Theory

***COMM 2100 Introduction to Comm Theory
SI Session***

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Dramatism

A technique of analysis of language and thought as modes of action rather than as means of conveying information

- Symbolic action: words as intentional action, giving life to particular motives and goals.



Murder Mystery Game

In a Murder Mystery Game, what would you want to know as a player?

- Clues about the murder? (act)
- Who committed the crime? (agent)
- Where is was done? (scene)
- With what instrument? (agency)
- Why did he/she do this? (purpose)

Language is the genesis of guilt

Guilt: every form of tension, anxiety, embarrassment, shame, disgust, and other noxious feelings inherent in human symbol-using activity.

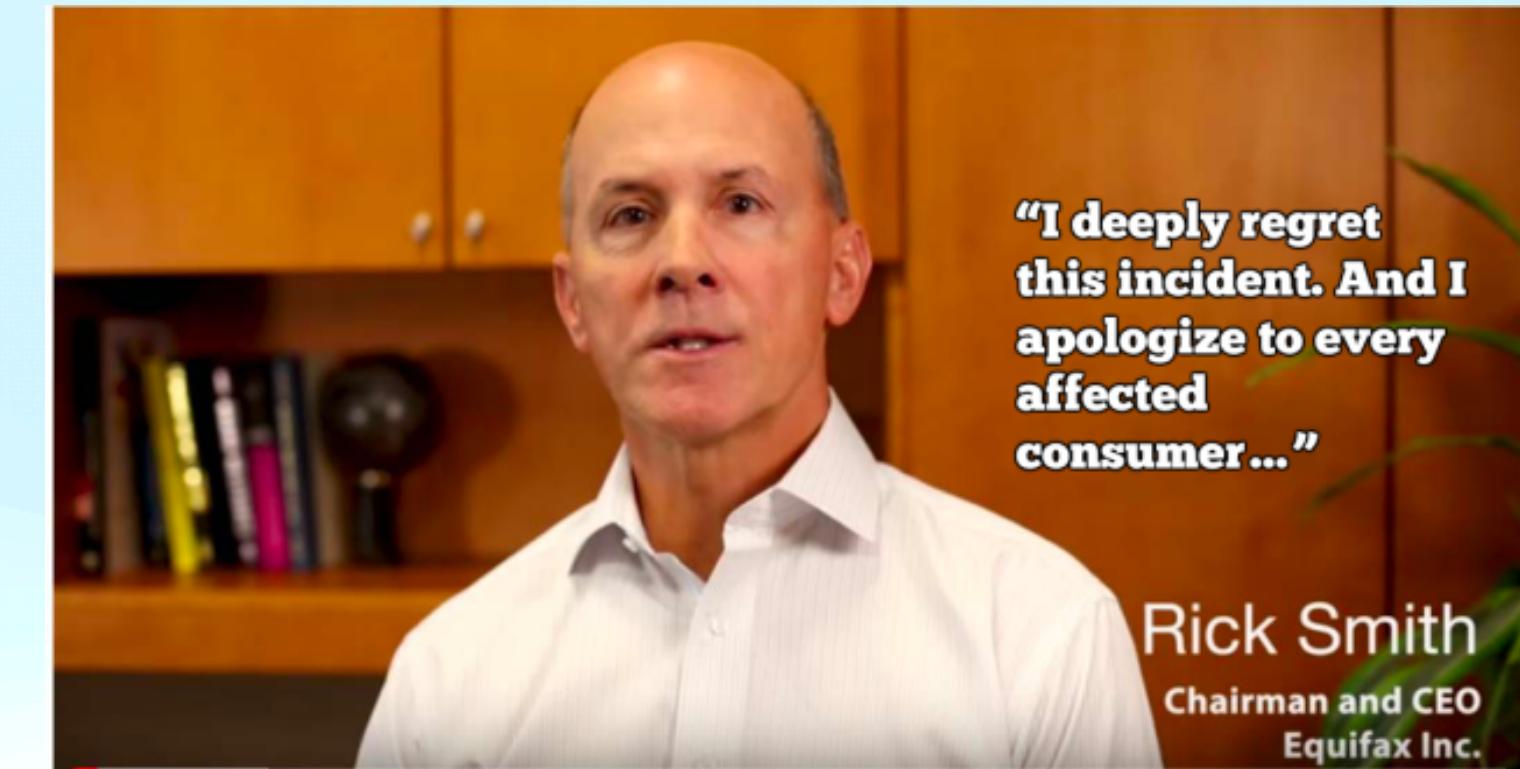
- “Man is
- the symbol-using inventor of the negative
- separated from his natural condition by instruments
- of his own making
- goaded by the spirit of the hierarchy
- and rotten with perfection.”

However, dramatism is not only about language, but also about action.

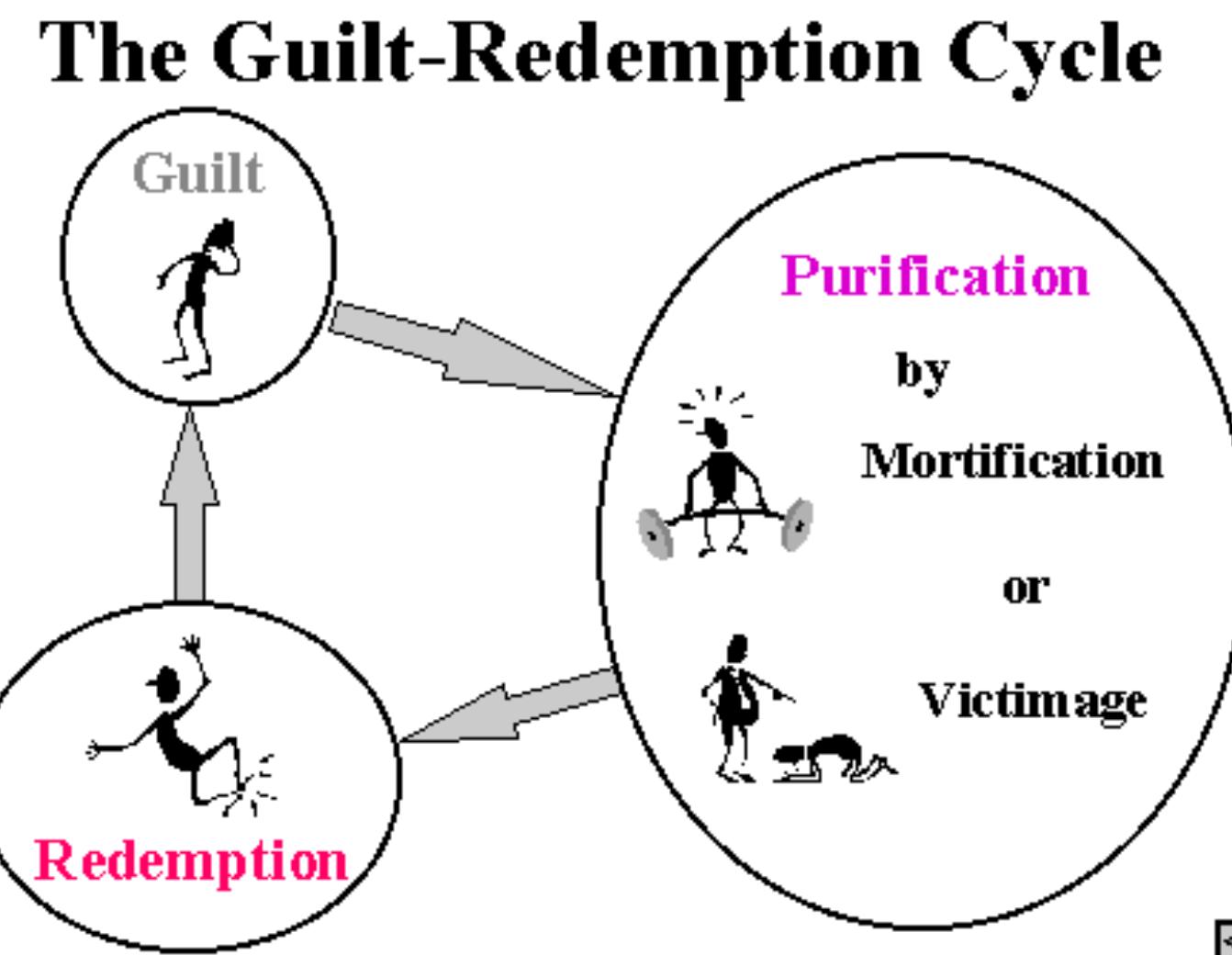
Guilt-Redemption cycle: a universal motive for rhetoric

Two off-loading guilt way

- Mortification: confession of guilt and request for forgiveness.
- Victimage: naming an external enemy as the source of our ills.



Apology as a PR strategy



Scapegoating as a PR strategy

Identification: the common ground between speaker and audience

Without it, no persuasion

- The key to persuasion.



Fireside Chats

A lens to interpreting symbolic action

Dramatistic pentad

ACT	What is being done
AGENCY	Mean by which an action occurs
AGENT	Person doing the act
SCENE	Setting/background for action
PURPOSE	Reason or rationale behind action

Narrative Paradigm

Narration involves symbolic actions that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them.

- Assertion:
 - Narrative as the basis of all human communication.
 - People are storytelling animals. So narration is about storytelling.
 - We make decisions based on “good reasons”, which vary depending on the communication situation, media, and genre.
 - Rationality is determined by the coherence and fidelity of our stories
 - The world is a set of stories from which we choose and recreate our lives.
- Paradigm: a universal model that calls for people to view events through a common interpretive lens.

Q: How is the narrative paradigm different from the previous paradigms? Like the paradigm in rhetoric theory?

Narrative Rationality

A way to evaluate the worth of stories based on the twin standards of narrative coherence and narrative fidelity.

- Narrative coherence: Internal consistency with characters acting in a reliable fashion. The story hangs together.
 - No contradictions in the story. Always internal consistency.
 - It convinces the audience that the narrator hasn't left out important details.
- Narrative fidelity: Congruence between values embedded in a message and what listeners regard as truthful and humane; the story strikes a responsive chord.



Q: Using the two standards, how would evaluate this Modern Family episode?

Ideal Audience

an actual community existing over time that believes in the same values.

- They can be easily targeted!

Q: In the era of TikTok/Youtube/Netflix/Hulu, do you think the ideal audience exists today?

Symbolic Convergence Theory

We are entering group/organization communication!

- Sharing group fantasies creates symbolic convergence.

A symbolic explosion of lively agreement within a group in response to a member's dramatizing message.

Dramatizing message



Symbolic convergence

Imaginative language by a group member describing past, future, or outside events; creative interpretations of there-and-then.

analogy

anecdote

fable

Two or more private symbol words incline toward each other, come more closely together, or even overlap; group consciousness, cohesiveness.

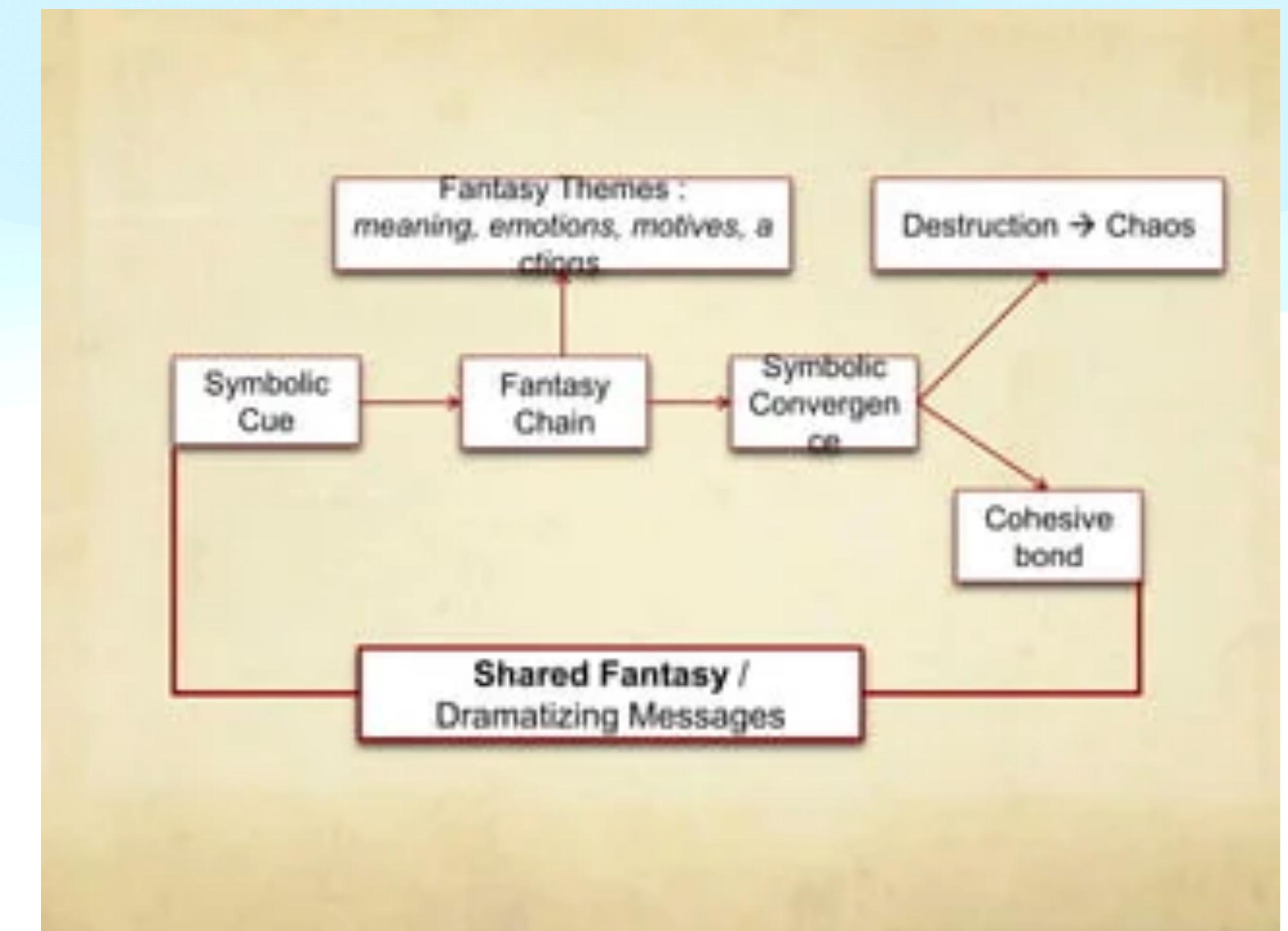
Fantasy: not "not true"



Fantasy theme

the content of the fantasy that has chained out within a group

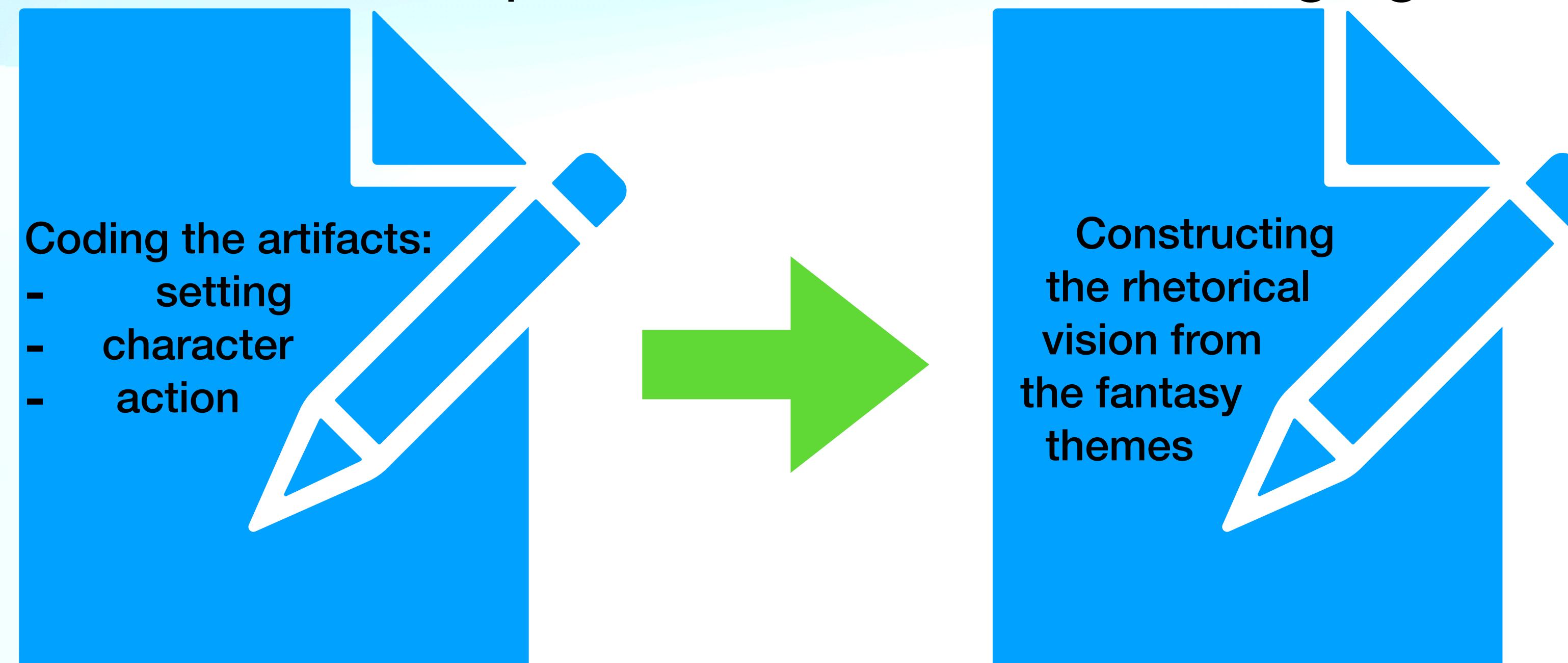
- Fantasy: “the creative and imaginative shared interpretation of events that fulfills group’s psychological or rhetorical needs.” (p. 276)
- The theme is SCT’s basic unit of analysis.
- Symbolic cue: an agreed-upon trigger that sets off group members to respond as they did when they first shared the fantasy.



Step out of group communication

Fantasy Theme Analysis

- Fantasy theme analysis is a type of rhetorical criticism used to detect fantasy themes and rhetorical visions; the interpretive methodology of SCT.
- Four features: characters; plotlines; scene; sanctioning agent.



*Thank you!
See you next week!*