

Yes, **narrative transportation**—the immersive experience of being "lost" in a story—can **change deeply held beliefs**, especially when individuals are highly transported, though effects depend on the quality of the narrative, the audience, and the context.

## 1. Introduction

Narrative transportation refers to the psychological state of being deeply absorbed in a story, such that the real world temporarily fades and the narrative world becomes central to the reader or viewer's experience. A robust body of research demonstrates that when individuals are highly transported into a narrative, they are more likely to adopt beliefs, attitudes, and intentions consistent with the story—even when these run counter to their prior, deeply held beliefs (Green & Brock, 2000; Green, 2021; Green, 2006; Appel & Richter, 2007; Mazzocco et al., 2010; Green & Clark, 2013; Appel & Richter, 2010; Green & Fitzgerald, 2017; Oschatz & Marker, 2020; Moore & Miller, 2020; Green, 2004; Igartua & Barrios, 2012; Boukes & LaMarre, 2021). This effect has been observed across domains, including climate change, health, social issues, and political attitudes (Merry & Payne, 2025; Green, 2006; Flores et al., 2022; Bieniek-Tobasco et al., 2020; Andrews et al., 2022; Igartua & Barrios, 2012; Kalla & Broockman, 2020; Gans & Zhan, 2025). However, the power of narrative transportation is moderated by factors such as the individual's tendency to become transported (transportability), the emotional and cognitive quality of the narrative, and the degree of similarity or identification with characters (Mazzocco et al., 2010; Kubrak & Starostina, 2023; Green, 2004; Ooms et al., 2019). While narrative transportation can sometimes overcome resistance to persuasion, it is not universally effective, and preexisting beliefs, social context, and narrative credibility can limit its impact (Polletta & Redman, 2020; Zebregs et al., 2015). This review synthesizes the evidence on how and when narrative transportation changes deeply held beliefs.

## 2. Methods

A Deep Search was conducted across over 170 million research papers in Consensus, including Semantic Scholar and PubMed. The search strategy included 20 targeted queries spanning foundational theory, mechanisms, contrasting perspectives, interdisciplinary contexts, and adjacent constructs. Out of 1,038 identified papers, 574 were screened, 363 met eligibility criteria, and the 50 most relevant papers were included in this review.

## Search Strategy

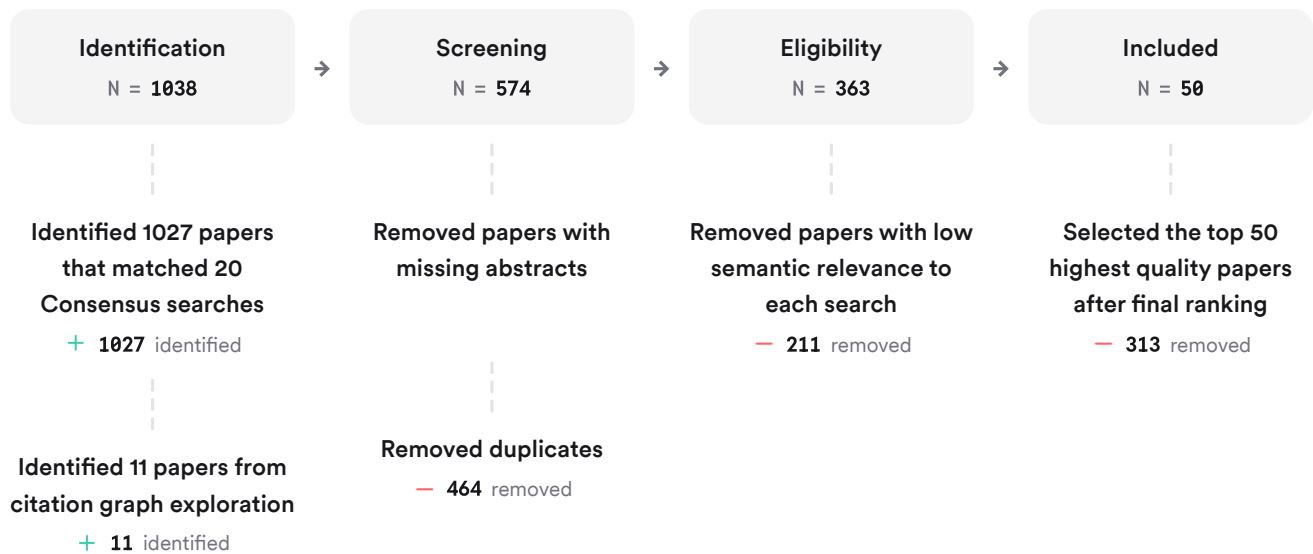


FIGURE 1 Flow diagram of search and selection process.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Narrative Transportation and Belief Change

- **Experimental and survey studies** consistently show that higher levels of narrative transportation predict greater adoption of story-consistent beliefs, even when these beliefs are deeply held or initially resistant to change (Green & Brock, 2000; Green, 2021; Green, 2006; Appel & Richter, 2007; Mazzocco et al., 2010; Green & Clark, 2013; Appel & Richter, 2010; Green & Fitzgerald, 2017; Oschatz & Marker, 2020; Moore & Miller, 2020; Green, 2004; Igartua & Barrios, 2012; Boukes & LaMarre, 2021).
- **Meta-analyses** confirm a positive, though moderate, relationship between narrative exposure and belief change ( $r \approx .17-.19$ ), with transportation acting as a key mediator (Braddock & Dillard, 2016; Oschatz & Marker, 2020).
- **Longitudinal studies** indicate that the effects of narrative transportation can persist or even increase over time, as beliefs acquired from stories are integrated into real-world knowledge (Appel & Richter, 2007; Oschatz & Marker, 2020).

### 3.2 Mechanisms of Narrative Transportation

- **Reduced counterarguing:** Immersion in a narrative reduces critical scrutiny and resistance, making audiences more open to new perspectives (Green, 2021; Fitzgerald & Green, 2017; Green & Clark, 2013; Green & Fitzgerald, 2017; Boukes & LaMarre, 2021; Moyer-Gusé et al., 2022).
- **Emotional engagement and identification:** Emotional shifts, empathy, and identification with characters enhance transportation and facilitate belief change (Mazzocco et al., 2010; Kubrak & Starostina, 2023; Nabi & Green, 2015; Winkler et al., 2022; Ooms et al., 2019; Wang & Tang, 2021).
- **Perceived realism and similarity:** Stories perceived as realistic or featuring relatable characters are more likely to transport and persuade (Green, 2004; Ooms et al., 2019; Graaf & Hustinx, 2015).

### 3.3 Moderators and Limitations

- **Transportability:** Individuals with a higher tendency to become transported are more susceptible to narrative-induced belief change (Mazzocco et al., 2010; Kubrak & Starostina, 2023; Green, 2004).
- **Preexisting beliefs and context:** Strong prior beliefs, social context, and narrative credibility can limit or even reverse the effects of transportation (Polletta & Redman, 2020; Zebregs et al., 2015).
- **Narrative quality:** Well-crafted, emotionally engaging, and vivid narratives are more effective at transporting and persuading (Kubrak & Starostina, 2023; Nabi & Green, 2015; Boukes & LaMarre, 2021; Wang & Tang, 2021).

### 3.4 Applications and Domains

- **Health, climate, and social issues:** Narrative transportation has been shown to shift beliefs and attitudes in domains such as climate change, health behaviors, and social policy (Merry & Payne, 2025; Green, 2006; Flores et al., 2022; Bieniek-Tobasco et al., 2020; Andrews et al., 2022; Igartua & Barrios, 2012; Kalla & Broockman, 2020; Gans & Zhan, 2025).
- **Political and controversial topics:** Narratives can moderate or polarize attitudes on contentious issues, sometimes bridging divides or, in other cases, reinforcing preexisting views (Flores et al., 2022; Cohen et al., 2015; Igartua & Barrios, 2012; Kalla & Broockman, 2020; Gans & Zhan, 2025).

### Key Papers

Paper	Methodology	Population/Context	Key Results
(Green & Brock, 2000)	4 experiments	General population	Higher transportation led to greater story-consistent beliefs, regardless of fact/fiction label
(Appel & Richter, 2007)	Experimental, delayed assessment	Adults	Fictional narratives changed real-world beliefs, with effects increasing over time
(Braddock & Dillard, 2016)	Meta-analysis (k=37–40)	Multiple studies	Narrative exposure positively related to belief and attitude change ( $r \approx .17-.19$ )
(Mazzocco et al., 2010)	2 studies, attitude change	Social issues	Only highly transportable individuals showed attitude change from narratives
(Igartua & Barrios, 2012)	Experimental, controversial film	Spanish adults	Narrative exposure changed attitudes and weakened link to political self-positioning

FIGURE 2 Comparison of key studies on narrative transportation and belief change.

## Top Contributors

Type	Name	Papers
Author	M. Green	(Green & Brock, 2000; Green, 2021; Fitzgerald & Green, 2017; Green, 2006; Green & Clark, 2013; Green & Fitzgerald, 2017; Green & Carpenter, 2011; Kubrak & Starostina, 2023; Green, 2004; Nabi & Green, 2015; Boukes & LaMarre, 2021; Green et al., 2012; Fitzgerald & Green, 2017)
Author	T. Brock	(Green & Brock, 2000; Green, 2021; Fitzgerald & Green, 2017; Boukes & LaMarre, 2021)
Author	Markus Appel	(Appel & Richter, 2007; Appel & Richter, 2010; Winkler et al., 2022; Gebbers et al., 2017)
Journal	<i>Journal of Communication</i>	(Green, 2006; Cohen et al., 2015; Oschatz & Marker, 2020; Igartua & Barrios, 2012)
Journal	<i>Media Psychology</i>	(Appel & Richter, 2007; Appel & Richter, 2010; Johnson & Sangalang, 2017; Nabi & Green, 2015; Winkler et al., 2022)
Journal	<i>Discourse Processes</i>	(Isberner et al., 2018; Green, 2004)



FIGURE 3 Authors & journals that appeared most frequently in the included papers.

## 4. Discussion

The evidence strongly supports the idea that narrative transportation can change deeply held beliefs, especially when individuals are highly immersed in the story (Green & Brock, 2000; Green, 2021; Green, 2006; Appel & Richter, 2007; Mazzocco et al., 2010; Green & Clark, 2013; Appel & Richter, 2010; Green & Fitzgerald, 2017; Oschatz & Marker, 2020; Moore & Miller, 2020; Green, 2004; Igartua & Barrios, 2012; Boukes & LaMarre, 2021). The mechanisms underlying this effect include reduced counterarguing, emotional engagement, and identification with characters, which together lower resistance and facilitate the integration of new perspectives (Green, 2021; Fitzgerald & Green, 2017; Green & Clark, 2013; Green & Fitzgerald, 2017; Boukes & LaMarre, 2021; Moyer-Gusé et al., 2022). However, the effect is not universal: individuals with strong preexisting beliefs, low transportability, or skepticism toward the narrative may resist or even reject story-consistent beliefs (Mazzocco et al., 2010; Polletta & Redman, 2020; Zebregs et al., 2015). The quality and realism of the narrative, as well as the social and cultural context, also play crucial roles in determining the extent of belief change (Kubrak & Starostina, 2023; Green, 2004; Nabi & Green, 2015; Boukes & LaMarre, 2021; Wang & Tang, 2021; Graaf & Hustinx, 2015).

While narrative transportation is a powerful tool for persuasion, it is most effective when the story is well-crafted, emotionally engaging, and features relatable characters. The effect is particularly notable in domains where traditional, fact-based persuasion often fails, such as climate change, health behaviors, and social or political issues (Merry & Payne, 2025; Green, 2006; Flores et al., 2022; Bieniek-Tobasco et al., 2020; Andrews et al., 2022; Igartua & Barrios, 2012; Kalla & Broockman, 2020; Gans & Zhan, 2025). However, more research is needed to understand the boundaries of this effect, especially in highly polarized or resistant audiences (Polletta & Redman, 2020; Zebregs et al., 2015).

### Claims and Evidence Table

Claim	Evidence Strength	Reasoning	Papers
High narrative transportation leads to story-consistent belief change	 Strong	Multiple experiments, meta-analyses, and longitudinal studies	(Green & Brock, 2000; Braddock & Dillard, 2016; Green, 2021; Green, 2006; Appel & Richter, 2007; Mazzocco et al., 2010; Green & Clark, 2013; Appel & Richter, 2010; Green & Fitzgerald, 2017; Oschatz & Marker, 2020; Moore & Miller, 2020; Green, 2004; Igartua & Barrios, 2012; Boukes & LaMarre, 2021)
Narrative transportation reduces counterarguing and resistance	 Strong	Experimental and theoretical work on mechanisms	(Green, 2021; Fitzgerald & Green, 2017; Green & Clark, 2013; Green & Fitzgerald, 2017; Boukes & LaMarre, 2021; Moyer-Gusé et al., 2022)
Effects are moderated by transportability, prior beliefs, and narrative quality	 Moderate	Studies show individual and contextual differences	(Mazzocco et al., 2010; Kubrak & Starostina, 2023; Polletta & Redman, 2020; Green, 2004; Zebregs et al., 2015; Ooms et al., 2019; Graaf & Hustinx, 2015)
Narrative transportation can bridge divides on controversial issues	 Moderate	Evidence from climate, health, and political domains	(Merry & Payne, 2025; Flores et al., 2022; Bieniek-Tobasco et al., 2020; Andrews et al., 2022; Igartua & Barrios, 2012; Kalla & Broockman, 2020; Gans & Zhan, 2025)
Narrative transportation is not universally effective; resistance and null effects occur	 Moderate	Some studies show limits, especially with strong prior beliefs	(Polletta & Redman, 2020; Zebregs et al., 2015; Hui et al., 2021)

**FIGURE** Key claims and support evidence identified in these papers.

## 5. Conclusion

Narrative transportation is a robust mechanism for changing deeply held beliefs, especially when individuals are highly immersed in a well-crafted, emotionally engaging story. Its effects are strongest when resistance is low, the narrative is relatable, and the audience is open to being transported.

### 5.1 Research Gaps

Despite strong evidence for the persuasive power of narrative transportation, more research is needed on its limits, the role of social context, and strategies for overcoming resistance in highly polarized audiences.

#### Research Gaps Matrix

Topic/Outcome	Health/Science	Politics	Social Issues	Resistant Audiences	Long-term Change
Narrative Transportation	14	10	12	6	8
Moderators (e.g., transportability)	7	5	6	4	5
Mechanisms (e.g., emotion, identification)	9	7	8	3	6

FIGURE Matrix of research topics and study attributes, highlighting areas with limited research.

### 5.2 Open Research Questions

Future research should explore how to maximize the persuasive power of narrative transportation in resistant audiences, the role of social context, and the long-term durability of belief change.

Question	Why
How can narrative transportation be optimized to change deeply held beliefs in highly resistant or polarized audiences?	Understanding this could improve interventions in public health, politics, and social issues.
What is the role of social context and group identity in moderating the effects of narrative transportation?	Social context may amplify or dampen narrative effects, especially in group settings.
How durable are belief changes induced by narrative transportation over months or years?	Assessing long-term effects is crucial for evaluating the real-world impact of narrative persuasion.

FIGURE Open research questions for future investigation on narrative transportation and belief change.

In summary, narrative transportation is a powerful, evidence-based mechanism for changing deeply held beliefs, but its effectiveness depends on the interplay of narrative quality, audience characteristics, and social context.

These papers were sourced and synthesized using Consensus, an AI-powered search engine for research. Try it at <https://consensus.app>

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