

Towervale Presentation Script for actors

Stage and character directions appear in black; script sections appear in blue.

The Character

Actors participating in the Towervale touring program will play the part of Merrick, a character from the world of Towervale. In the story, Merrick is a scribe, and a scribe's job is to record everything that happens in the story. Merrick's primary skills are as a writer, a storyteller, and an artist. He is particularly good at telling stories, illuminating the importance of reading and writing, and demystifying the role of art in storytelling. Your role as Merrick will help kids understand the power of their imaginations and give them two simple tools for improving their writing skills. These are your primary tasks, to help kids feel more confident in their ability to tell stories and give them simple tools for unlocking their creative skills. Merrick's secondary goal is to get young readers excited about the world of Towervale by introducing them to the story and its unique format.

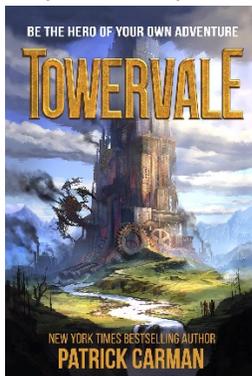
In terms of personality, Merrick is enthusiastic about his subject and loves to help young writers unlock their gifts. He is eager to please, enjoys laughing, and speaks to kids without talking down to them. When Merrick is with an elementary school audience, the kid in him is more fully on display and his energy is higher. With a middle school audience, Merrick dials it back some, because middle school students are less likely to respond to energy that's over-the-top. Kids respond best to authenticity, so don't overact the part of someone from some other world. Be yourself, connect as a real person, and kids will come along for the ride.

The presentation tools

A simple Powerpoint presentation will guide each section of the presentation, breaking the actor's talk into bite sized pieces. The slides will help the actor stay on track and maintain the right pace. The visuals are designed to inspire and engage kids and keep them focused on the presentation. This document will guide the actor through the various slides that appear in each section of the presentation.

Before the presentation

During the five or so minutes when students are coming into the presentation space, the first slide in the deck should be displayed on the screen. This will be an image of the book cover so kids can see the subject of the presentation.



Rather than remain stand-offish, the period of time when kids are entering the space is an excellent time to build rapport and get comfortable. Kids are generally very friendly and want to say hello. Wander the audience and introduce yourself, say hello, ask them how their day is going or what they're currently reading.

In elementary schools, the youngest will always be seated in front. These are the easiest kids to win over and a good place to start meeting them. If you can make a connection with even a small group of kids, it will boost your confidence going into the presentation.

Starting the presentation – 2 minutes

You may get an introduction from the librarian or you may not, it depends on the school. Either way, begin by introducing yourself and explaining where you came from and why you're there. This can be unscripted, but use the following text as your guide:

The slide show remains on the book cover (the first slide) throughout this section.

Hello everyone, my name is Merrick and I come to you today from the world of Towervale. I'm very pleased to meet you all! I'm called a scribe in the world of Towervale, and that means it's my job to write down everything that happens. That's a lot of writing! Today I'm going to give you two important tools you can use whenever you want to write a story. I use them myself, and they really work. These are very simple things that are easy to remember, and you can pull them out of your back pocket whenever you need them. I'll also tell you something amazing about yourself that you may have never realized. It's big!

Our time is short – only 30 minutes together – so let's get right to it!

In order to share the first writing tool, I'm going to tell you a story about me when I was your age. It may not seem like this story has any real purpose, but trust me, it does! Plus it will help us to get to know each other, because you'll know more about me when I was your age. Who knows, maybe we would have been best friends!

Telling the story – 5 minutes

This is the part of the presentation where the actor tells a short story about himself. Bring the great storytelling skills!

When I was your age I was very, very small. In fact, there was only one other person my age who was smaller than I was, and his name was Garvin. Garvin was tiny, but he had a gigantic blob of hair on top of his head. It was huge. Garvin was funny and goofy and incredibly fun to go on adventures with. We were inseparable.

One day we found a Tree Egg in the forest near where we lived. In Towervale, eggs grow on trees. I know, weird right? Each tree grows only one egg in its lifetime, so the eggs are quite rare. They are also big, about the size of a watermelon. They weigh about as much as a brick, so it's not hard to carry one off. Anyway, Tree Eggs have such strong shells they are nearly impossible to break open. Even finding

one is a big deal, but cracking one open, especially for the two smallest people in Towervale – well, it's close to impossible. But once Garvin and I found the Tree Egg, we were bound and determined to crack it open, for a legend said the treasure inside a Tree Egg was extraordinary. In fact, what lay inside a Tree Egg was more valuable than anything money could buy. We had to find a way to crack that Tree Egg open!

Stage note: repeating Garvin's description several times during the story is important to the pay off at the end. Keep telling kids what he looks like. Use your hands to denote a very small boy, then use both hands to denote the giant blob of hair over your own head. This drives the point home and helps kids visualize what Garvin looks like.

First we took the Tree Egg to my workshop and hit it with a hammer about a thousand times, but that darn egg shell was like a block of iron! Garvin – that little kid with the giant blob of hair on top of his head – suggested that we take the Tree Egg to the edge of the stone forest, where there are high cliffs. If we dropped it and it landed on a big rock, that would surely crack it open. It was a long walk, but we soon found ourselves standing on a high cliff. Together, we threw the Tree Egg over the edge and watched it fall and fall and fall. It landed on a giant rock, just as we'd hoped, then bounced into the air like a rubber ball. We followed a pathway down and down and down onto the floor of the stone forest and found the egg. It barely had a scratch on it! We were very disappointed, but we were not giving up!

Garvin picked up the egg and stared at it, trying to figure out what we should try next. And then we heard the sound of a stone giant off in the distance. In Towervale, Stone Giants live in the stone forest. They're gigantic, as tall as a building and made entirely of rocks. And this one was coming towards us. With every step it took, the ground shook under our feet.

We both had the same idea at the same time, and the giant blob of hair on top of Garvin's head seemed to grow even bigger as he said what I was thinking: "Hey, let's get that stone giant to stomp on this thing! That's gotta work!"

I agreed it was a fantastic idea, and off we went. It didn't take long before we were standing at the feet of a stone giant as it looked down at us like it wasn't sure if it should step on us or not. And then Garvin – that little tiny kid with a giant blob of hair on top of his head – yelled up at the stone giant. "Say there, I don't suppose you'd be willing to stomp on this here Tree Egg would you? We're trying to crack it open so we can see what's inside."

I set the Tree Egg on a big flat rock and watched as the stone giant lifted its foot up in the air and then BAM! Down it came, pulverizing the flat rock into gravel. When the stone giant lifted its foot, the Tree Egg was just sitting there as if nothing had happened. Garvin was like "Oh come on!" And leaning down to look at the egg, the stone giant lost interest in our efforts and walked away.

But then something amazing happened! The Tree Egg began to crack. It was slow at first, then all at once it split in half. We'd done it! And bonus, the stone giant had left so we didn't even need to share the treasure! We both leaned in close at the same time, wondering what we'd find. There, hidden under that rock hard shell, what we saw was each other, because inside, there was a mirror.

Garvin looked at me and I looked at him, and we looked back at each other in the mirror.

“Hey I get it!” Garvin yelled. “The treasure is us. It’s our friendship.”

And I had to admit he was right, because the friendship really was the best treasure we could have hoped for. And it still is, these many years later.

The Lesson in the story – 5 minutes

Now comes the reveal of the first writing tool and the amazing thing about each person in the room.

Here’s something that might sound hard to believe: just now, in the last five minutes, I became a better writer. I really did! And here’s why: the only real difference between telling a story out loud and writing one down is a pencil and a piece of paper. All the same machinery in your brain that needs to go to work to become great writers happens when you tell a story. So the first trick, and it’s a really easy one, is this: whenever you’re going to write a story, tell it first. Maybe you’ve only got a part of the story figured out. Find a friend and tell it anyway, because chances are, they’ll have some good ideas for you about how to keep going. And then, when you sit down to write your story, you’ll be like – “hey, I just told this story. I can totally write this!” It’s so much easier to write your story after you’ve said it out loud. And there’s a big bonus – just telling the story made you a better writer. I never miss a chance to tell a story when I’m in Towervale, because I know it helps me write the stories I need to tell.

Remember I said I would tell you something amazing about yourself, so here we go. I want you to imagine we could invent a camera, but this camera would be different. Somehow this camera could go around this room and take a picture of what everyone thinks Garvin looks like. Snap snap snap snap – and the camera would know what you each think Garvin looks like. That would be a pretty cool camera. But here’s the magic of that idea:

If we could actually do that, then take all those pictures and blow them up real big and put them on all the walls around this room – and we could all walk around and look at all the Garvin’s. That would be fun. And here’s the magic - if we could do that, we wouldn’t end up with one set of Garvin with the big hair twins. We’d have....250 different Garvin’s! That’s because you all got to decide for yourselves what you thought Garvin looked like. Maybe you’re thinking about it right now.

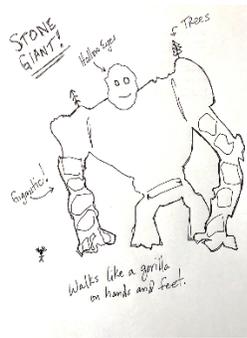
And that tells you something amazing about yourself. What it tells you is this:

Your imagination is the only one. Wow!

Of all the billions of people in the world, there’s only one imagination like yours. It’s one of your most powerful possessions. It can take you to incredible places, and I’m going to show you one way you can put that amazing imagination to work right now.

The second lesson – word pictures – 5 minutes

Now you’ll move ahead in the slide show. The picture is this one:



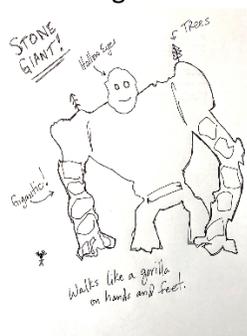
This is a very fast drawing I did of a stone giant. I always do fast drawings first, because they're easy and they tell me a lot about what something looks like. I have journals in Towervale full of nothing but pictures like this. You'll notice that I put some words on this picture. Putting the two together – words and pictures - creates something I call a Word Picture. I can see exactly what this looks like in my imagination, even if I'm not standing next to a stone giant. I put a few notes on the page as I draw, to remind me of important things: it's so big trees are growing off of it, it moves like a gorilla, it's gigantic (see, there's Garvin right down in the left corner!). It has hollow eyes.

Here's what the stone giant really looks like, after I take my time and draw the final version that goes in the story:

Switch to the next slide:



Now you can switch back and forth between the first and the final drawings. So flipping back you'd say something like:



Here's the original. But when I look at this drawing I don't see what you see. I see this.

Switch back to the final drawing.



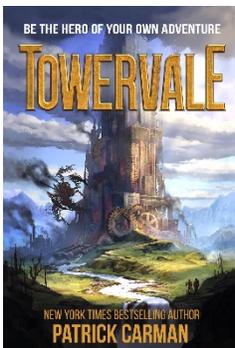
And you can do the same thing because remember – you also have an amazing imagination! Word pictures don't have to be perfect, because your imagination will turn those drawings into something like this. You'll see what it really looks like. And this is such an important tool for being a great writer. Let's say you have an idea for a story and there's a dragon in the story. You can see it in your imagination, so you draw a stick line, four stick legs, a stick neck and a really cool stick flame. That's your whole dragon! Someone walks by and says "what is that thing? Is it a dog? What is it?" But you know what it is! So you put a few notes on your word picture: it's purple, it's got these big claws, it's got leathery wings – I promise you, you're going to see that dragon flying around the room. That's how powerful your imagination is, and why word pictures are so useful. Do as many as you can before you start writing your story, and your story will practically write itself.

Remember these two simple things and always do them before you write: tell the story out loud and draw a bunch of word pictures. It's what I do, and my only job in Towervale is to write the story of what happens there.

Speaking of Towervale, let's find out all about where I come from right now.

All about Towervale – 10 minutes

This section is for explaining both how Towervale works and what the story is about. You'll start on this slide, which is next after the stone giant:



Towervale is not like anything you've ever read before for two reasons. The first thing is right on the cover of the book at the top. It says "Be the hero of your own adventure."

In the world of Towervale, you are the hero of the story! It's one of the reasons I'm here, to remind you of how important you are. Only you know what the hero of Towervale looks like, because the hero is you. But a spell has been cast on you so you don't remember all that you have done. I'm here to remind you of those things and bring you back. Your best friend is waiting for you, and so is the biggest adventure of your life.

The second thing about Towervale that's not normal is that it's so secret I put it together so it's not in order. You're going to read the first 35 pages of this book and then the book will say "don't turn the page! You'll be on the *wrong* page of the story!" Instead, you'll need a key to find what page to turn to, and the key is a level of a video game.

Switch to the next slide. You may need to switch back and forth a couple of times for the video to kick in, it's a quirk of Powerpoint, but if you go back and forth a time or two the video will begin to play.



The book will tell you where to find the game – it's included with the book – and you can find it in app stores or online. It will all be very clear what to do. You can play the game right now if you want to, but you won't be able to beat the levels, because the book tells you how to beat the levels. The answer is in those 35 pages you just read! When you win the level, which should take about 10 or 15 minutes, the game will tell you what page to turn to in the book. With Towervale, you can't win the game without the book, and you can't read the book without the game. You get to do both!

Now switch to the next slide, which is another video of the game. Again, you may need to go back and forth on the slides to get it to start playing.



I'll show you what it looks like when you win a level. See, you're picking up the last item you need, and then the game says "now turn to page 106, top of page." Now you set the game aside and go back to the book, find the right page, and keep going. This will happen six times as you make your way through the world of Towervale.

Now switch to the next slide



Now a little bit about your story, and we'll be all finished.

You don't remember this, but you started your life in a place called the Caves of Iron, an underground world filled with a giant machine. You are very good at working on this machine and making all sorts of parts for it. The machine is very strange, because it hardly ever does anything. Most of the time it just sits there, not running. But once in a while, all the gears start turning. It's very loud and dangerous when this happens, but it only lasts for about an hour. Then it stops and you go back to work. No one who lives in the Caves of Iron has any idea what the machine is doing when it starts up. It's a mystery!

But remember – you are the hero of Towervale – and everything is about to change. I will come to you at the very beginning of the book and tell you how important you are. This is news to you! You're going to find out that the ruler of this world, the Towermaster, has been trying to find you for a long time. He's afraid of you, because you alone have the power to destroy him. And he's finally figured out where you're being hidden! I know all about how important you are, and I show you a secret way to escape the Caves of Iron and go up into the real world of Towervale.

Switch to the next slide

Towervale is filled with five different realms you'll encounter during your adventure.



This is the realm of Sky and Chain, and if you were to cut these giant chains it would float away. Everyone who lives here can fly.

Switch to the next slide



And here's the stone forest I talked about in my story earlier. Instead of trees, there are pillars of stone that rise out of the ground. This is where the stone giants live.

There are lots of realms in Towervale, and you'll need to visit them all as you try to find creatures and people who will help you defeat the Towermaster.

Switch to the next slide.



And it's all about this place – the tower that sits at the center of Towervale. The Towermaster, who is nine feet tall, lives at the top of the tower. And the tower is protected by the Barzog, a giant machine made of metal and junk.

I'll tell you a secret: The Caves of Iron are under the tower, and when that machine turns on, it does something very interesting.

It makes the tower grow taller.

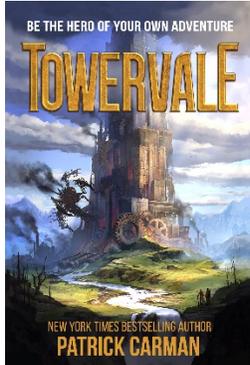
More and more tower is pushed out of the ground every time the machine turns on, and by the time you arrive in your story the top of the tower is all the way up in the clouds. Here's the very bad news about that: the higher the tower goes, the more powerful the Towermaster becomes!

And so your adventure is all about finding creatures and people who will help you find a way to bring down the tower and destroy the Towermaster.

Ending the presentation – 3 minutes

This section is for letting kids know how to get a book and saying goodbye.

Switch to the last slide.



If you want to read about all that you have done, and if you want to play the Towervale game levels, you don't even have to go to a bookstore. I'm leaving books right here in your library! Every person here will receive a Towervale bookmark after I leave that contains two things:

This last section is very important, so really bring it home here at the end:

On one side, there's a secret level to the game that isn't even in the book. You can go home tonight and play it if you want, and if you beat the level, you'll see what your best friend in Towervale looks like!

And the next paragraph is the most important part, because if they don't give the bookmark to their parents, they won't purchase a book:

On the other side of the bookmark, it will tell you exactly how to get a book. Just show that to your parents and they'll know what to do. Then you can come back tomorrow and pick up your very own copy of Towervale.

And now it's time for me to return to the world of Towervale, where I await your arrival.

The world of Towervale needs you! I'll find you when you get there, you can count on it.

Thank you and have a great day!