

Consulting on Three-Minute Thesis (3MT) Presentations

Writing Studio Staff Meeting | Wednesday, February 9, 2022

"Vanderbilt has hosted the Three Minute Thesis Competition for its students since 2013. 3MT® is a research communication competition developed by The University of Queensland.

It challenges students to present their research for a non-specialist audience. Students are allowed only two things: (1) up to three minutes to talk and (2) a single, static PowerPoint slide."

Details about the 2022 VU 3MT Competition can be found here:

<https://studentorg.vanderbilt.edu/gsc/3mt/>

Judging Criteria (<https://threeminutethesis.uq.edu.au/resources/judging-criteria>)

Criteria 1: Comprehension and Content

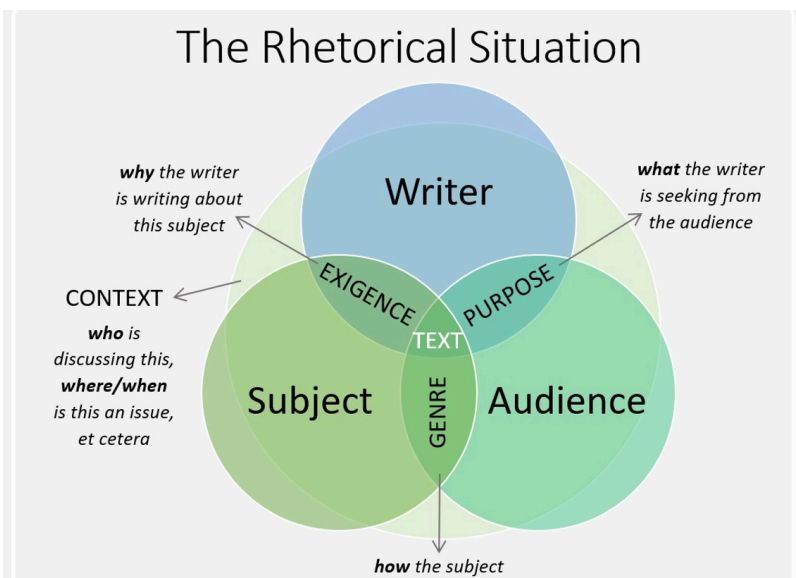
- Presentation provided clear background and significance to the research question
- Presentation clearly described the research strategy/design and the results/findings of the research
- Presentation clearly described the conclusions, outcomes and impact of the research

Criteria 2: Engagement and Communication

- The oration was delivered clearly, and the language was appropriate for a non-specialist audience
- The PowerPoint slide was well-defined and enhanced the presentation
- The presenter conveyed enthusiasm for their research and captured and maintained the audience's attention

Thinking Rhetorically

Students are allowed only two things for 3MT presentations:



(1) up to three minutes to talk and (2) a single, static PowerPoint slide.”

1. What elements of this rhetorical situation might cause writers to struggle as they translate their research into this particular medium?
 - a. There’s no room for multiple images/audio/references to other talks/materials
2. What types of adjustments will a presenter want or need to make?

Creating Effective Slides

What stands out to you about the design of each of the following slides?

Sample Slide 1.



"*Carpe Tempum*: Seize the Time"
Archana Krishnamoorthy
(2017 VU Winner)

Type Notes Impressions Below

-it's definitely visually interesting, though without the presentation, it's a little confusing what it's meant to represent - I like that there are very few words, because it allows the audience to focus on what the speaker is saying instead of having to read

- If the presentation relies on a central theme it could work to represent it visually but it would usually not be worth it to have to use your time to explain your slide

It's fun! I personally think the text could have been bigger bc it looks a little wimpy compared to the flashy image.

The image is not obvious but this also makes it intriguing

-

I like that this one has a visual hierarchy, in that my eye knows exactly what to look at and things are not overcrowded. The latin is a little much, but that's okay.

I think it's the kind of image that an audience sees and wants explanation of it which probably made it a compelling presentation/ made the slide a compelling addition to make the audience more interested in the presentation.

It's definitely intriguing. I'm not sure I'm convinced by the font, but I don't know what font would be better

I agree with the impressions above. My first thought was, "what does that even mean?"

While that might sound like a bad thing, I think peaking the interest level might be a good strategy.

It seems to approach a scientifically/mathematically/temporally complex topic in a playful, approachable way; looking at the image, I'd expect it to be a bit confusing in pure research form, but I'm definitely open to learning everything I can because it's visually appealing.

PM

- There is no explicit context for the image present within the slide itself.
- Visually stunning slide - very attention-grabbing. Few words - might compel listeners to focus on the speaker's presentation instead of trying to read points on the slide. And the design of the slide might give listeners a satisfying "aha" moment once they understand the explanation behind it
- Most of the images are understandable/familiar to audience
- makes ya think--which is good--but maybe not the best when they're supposed to be paying attention to what is said
- Visually compelling and creates a sense of curiosity that will probably engage viewers / begin trying to connect the images and phrases in the slide before the presentation even begins
- The images in the slide do not seemingly or obviously or inherently fit together. This could be good if it functions as a springboard for the presenter to use their 3 minutes to show how these images fit together. It could be a negative if the presenter does not effectively demonstrate these connections during their talk.

Sample Slide 2



“A House is Not A Home (But Why You Ought to Offer Hospitality in Each)”

Elizabeth Lanphier

(2017 VU Finalist)

Type Notes Impressions Below

AM

I wish she had used a different font for the “house, home, homeland” at the bottom to make it stand out more as topics of her presentation.

I don't like the fadedness of the colors/ words; I think in a slide for this setting you would want things to be more bold.

I'm assuming that house, home, and homeland are three concepts that are being presented in this thesis. I like the emphasis on these terms. The background of the slide maybe feels like wasted space.

-I think there should be more of a visual hierarchy set up, perhaps by different font sizes - this would allow the audience to better understand what the relationships between the words are. A little cluttered. But it also gets the main focus across.

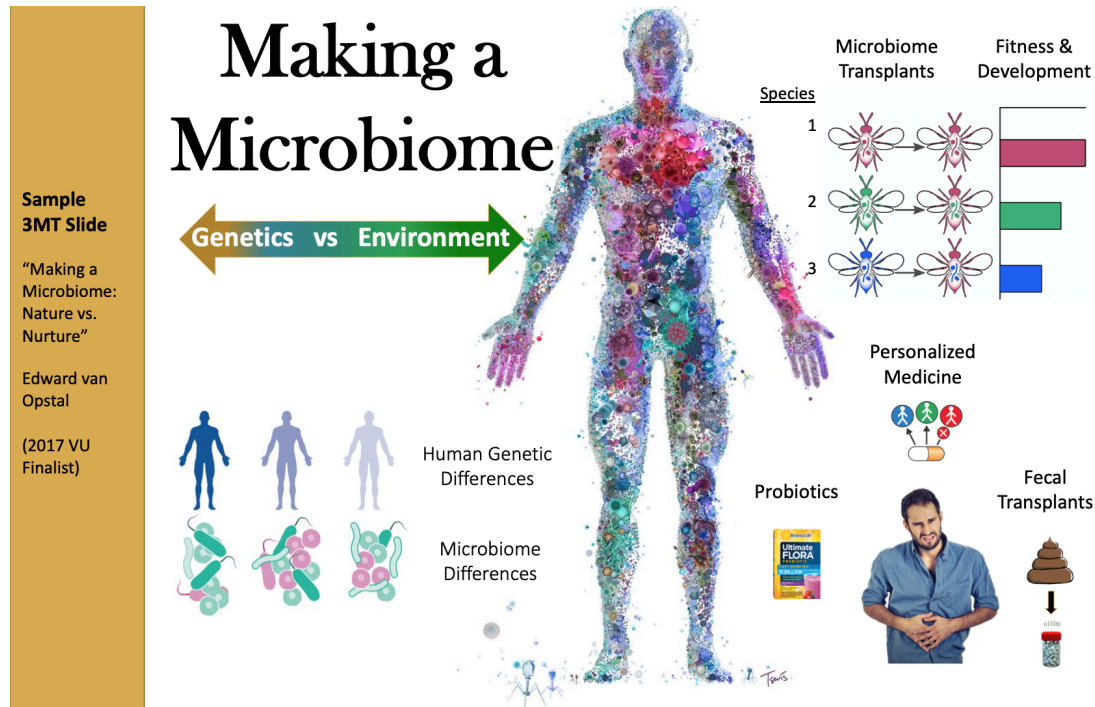
I think it depends on what the presentation topic is, but I'm wondering why "greetings" and "howdy" are words here and there aren't many other represented languages when one of the keywords appears to be "homeland"

A little cluttered for me, but I do get the sense of "welcome-ness" as a central tenet/question in this presentation.

PM

- the concept is good but the differences in font and the overall balance makes it a little distracting
- evocative questions and broad categories at the bottom of the slide set up the parameters of this presentation in a digestible way, but the graphic feels a little generic
- I would have preferred a different color/style for the font at the bottom - this is very "microsoft word meme font" to me. But the slide is simple and leaves listeners with questions that will be answered by the presentation. I'm interested in the fact that all the words/greetings are in English when this presentation will be talking about belonging - possibly focused on/in the US or the "English-speaking world"?
- I would ask the client to reconsider the layout of the slide. As is, there are three different fonts. It would seem more consistent if the fonts in orange are the same and the font in the word bubbles is unique. Also, the decorative bubbles are too large and visually overpowering. I'd recommend making them smaller and making sure the words do not overlap with the bubbles.
- The words at the bottom set up terms that I would expect to be elaborated upon during the talk.

Sample Slide 3



“Making a Microbiome: Nature vs. Nurture”

Edward van Opstal

(2017 VU Finalist)

Type Notes Impressions Below

AM

-This one is a bit visually overwhelming, but it might pair well with a complex scientific concept...

- I like the fact that there's some element of humor here. The rest of the slide looks super scientific and fun, but then the lower right corner you've got a man who is clearly uncomfortable and there's a poop icon

- I wish there was more hierarchy to this slide so there is some coherence to how the ideas proceed from one another.

This one feels like the author took what would normally be 5 slides and contracted it down to one.--I second this!

-lots of info/pictures but the contrast helps make it digestible

PM

- Although colorful, the slide contains a lot of information that causes the eyes to travel too much, trying to find what piece of information is the most important/where should one focus first

- -Not the most streamlined slide; the color and elements of humor are fun though, as someone above mentioned! I wish there were more structural elements instead of everything just pasted on a white background
- This looks like a lot to digest (HA! ← lol - I'm eating this comment up → + :)). My eye isn't sure where to start or how to move through all the information
- I don't know how to read this slide visually or where I am supposed to be looking.
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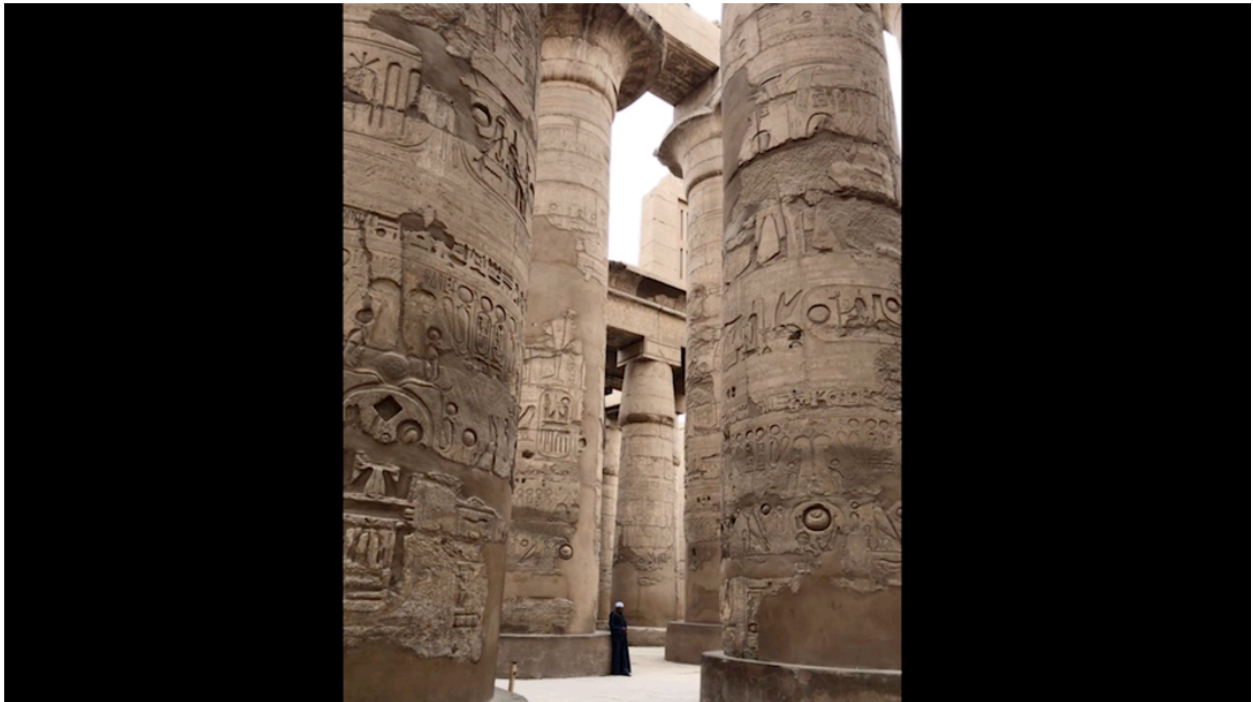
Analyzing Successful 3MT Presentations

Presentation #1: “Reconstructing the Experience of the Ancient Egyptian Temple of Karnak”

Gillian Smith

3MT Asia Pacific Finalist 2019

(<https://vimeo.com/365417152>)



After watching and reading over the presentation transcript, consider the following questions and enter your notes below

- 1) What stands out to you as particularly rhetorically effective in this presentation?

PM

- I love that it immediately pulls in the senses of the listener
- Ends with current significance, makes this research feel relevant to modern societies

- Beginning with a story that draws the reader in and uses known objects/dimensions (e.g. the size of a football field) to explain something listeners likely have little specific knowledge about
- Her gestures performed what she was saying, which was cool
- The image does not have any text but that is successfully navigated by the speaker. The audience will not have any trouble in “entering” the space of the temple.
- Her performance style is also very engaging and effective: her pacing, pauses for dramatic effect, and hand gestures all helped convey the information clearly and memorably!

AM

- The first paragraph pulls the listener in by placing them in the space that she studies.
- She captures the imagination/visuals, and puts us inside the temple
- The presenter both shows AND tells us about her research: mixing vivid description with explanatory sentences to keep us on track as listeners.

2) What strategies does this presenter use to structure the presentation and the “story” she tells?

PM

- establishes basics before building (combining sensory experience with archeological methods)
- It’s clear that she is trying to use movement (hand gestures, walking across the stage) to help structure. One thing I found distracting, though, was the way she limited her range of arm movements and overused the gesture of one the one hand/on the other hand. It actually made it harder to follow the differences between ideas because it was repeated so much.

AM

- She uses her body to help tell the story.
- she begins with a hook—to get us invested in being present; explains the unsolved questions, and then provides an overview of her methodology and how she’s approaching this mysterious temple to answer these questions
- She first tells that my research does X using Y strategy and then (in a

3) What else structures her presentation?

PM

- historical story>connection>her own research>importance>future outlook

AM

- The discovery of her argument almost mirrors walking through the temple because you are introduced to it and discover the drawings and their meaning with her
- her use of her body is really effective. The opening/closing movement to mirror the outer/inner world was so, so good!

4) What strategies inform the design of this presenter's slide?

PM

- similar to the "carpe tempum" one, there is a lot of information condensed within one, single picture which allows the information to unravel as the presentation continues

AM

I think that the image she chose was particularly helpful because it is slightly angled from a down-up position. I don't know what the technical term is, but the fact that the picture has the viewer from the eye level of the architectural structure, we can appreciate the "looming" aspect of what she is discussing.

- By not having lots of things on her slide, she keeps our eyes on her, which is good because she is a dynamic presenter.
- I felt there was an aura of mystery to the image, which evoked my curiosity

Presentation Transcript (produced for this workshop from the video): "Reconstructing the Experience of the Ancient Egyptian Temple of Karnak" – Gillian Smith

Picture this: You are in a hall the size of a football field filled with over one hundred massive sandstone columns, each over twenty meters tall. You walk amongst the columns, dwarfed by their grandeur. The space is dark and cool. Your senses are heightened, and you realize that every surface is covered in a language you recognize, but can't understand. This is the entry to the Temple of Karnak. Built in Egypt over three thousand three hundred years ago, it is a feat of engineering. Today we call this space the Hyperstyle Hall, and its ritual use and symbolic meaning has remained a mystery. Scholars have struggled to understand this convoluted space and how it might have functioned. [0:54]

My research investigates this mystery by combining sensory experience with the analysis of archeology. I compiled and analyzed over seven hundred individual images and inscriptions to identify patterns in their content and iconography. I also created a digital model of the hall reconstructing the parts that have since disappeared. I was interested in the exact spatial arrangements of the elements and their natural lighting conditions. I wanted to know what could and could not be seen. [1:27]

What I discovered is that the walls and columns display visual cues in a rhythmic manner, communicating that this space is for coming and going, not gathering and ritual. Like stage directions in a play, these images employ beliefs, aesthetic, and narrative to motivate movement through the hall. The hall acts as a physical filter marking the boundary between the secular world outside and the sacred sanctuaries deeper inside the temple—from light to dark, open to mysterious—preparing the person for the encounter with the divine. [2:04]

But using this method, my research has enhanced our understanding of what influenced Egyptian architecture. Using this new method we can start to better understand the relationship between human beings and their built environments. Even now after three thousand years, visitors walk the same pathways through this temple in awe and in admiration of its enduring ability to stand as a physical testament to the scope, limits, and ingenuity of human thought. [2:39]

View a Second Presentation

Below are four presentations from you to choose from, each on a separate page. Select one, watch the video on your own and be prepared to discuss it with your small group (if time allows) and/or with the full group.

A) “Catalyzing Change: Light at the End of the Tunnel” - Ashwin Charles Benedict

2017 ASIA-PACIFIC 3MT WINNER & PEOPLE’S CHOICE

<https://vimeo.com/236860983>

B) *“Dengue Detective”* - Yasmin Mustapha Kamil

3MT Asia Pacific Finals 2018 Winner & People’s Choice

<https://vimeo.com/292832662>

Notes/Responses:

C) "Carpe Tempus: Seize the Time" by Archana Krishnamoorthy

Vanderbilt 3MT Winner 2017

<https://youtu.be/4TrJWAe0r70?t=22m40s>

Notes/Responses:

D) "Transmedia Traditions: Re-Making Medieval Romance" – Mimi
Ensley

NOTRE DAME 3MT 2017 WINNER

<https://youtu.be/fIF1ti5PNXI> [runs 0:33-3:22]

Notes/Responses: