

STORYTELLING ANALYSIS

BILL GATES CLIMATE CHANGE VIDEO



Bill Gates is headlining a number of great videos, and Bill and his team are putting out some excellent examples of visual storytelling. One example is his video on Climate Change. I'm going to break down the video and point out some of the things that make this 79 second video so effective.

:00 Seconds

The video opens with Bill walking onto the set which features a large light table and a purple background. Bill is carrying a box of props and is wearing a dark blue sweater which gives him good visual separation from the strongly lit purple backdrop.



:01 Seconds

By the 2 second mark Bill has done two things to set up his story. First he dumps the props out of the box and says, "Well, let's talk about climate change." As this point the audience is both informed and intrigued. We have been informed that the topic will be climate change, and are curious about the use of all the items that are on the light table.



:07 Seconds

Bill picks up a windmill object and a solar panel object. These appear to be custom toys created for the video. The use of these toys serve two purposes, first, the use of toy-like objects make it clear that this will be a simplified explanation, and second, the use of physical items reinforces what Bill is discussing. This section is introducing that even though the cost of wind and solar power is decreasing it isn't enough to solve the climate change problem.



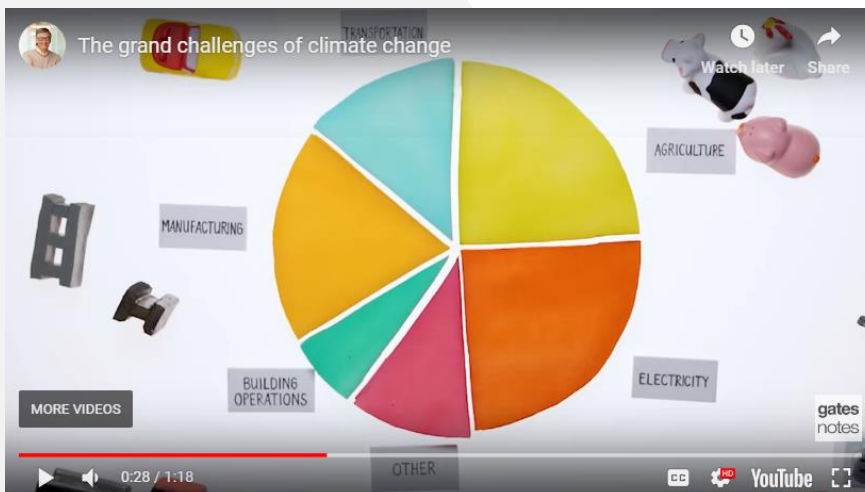
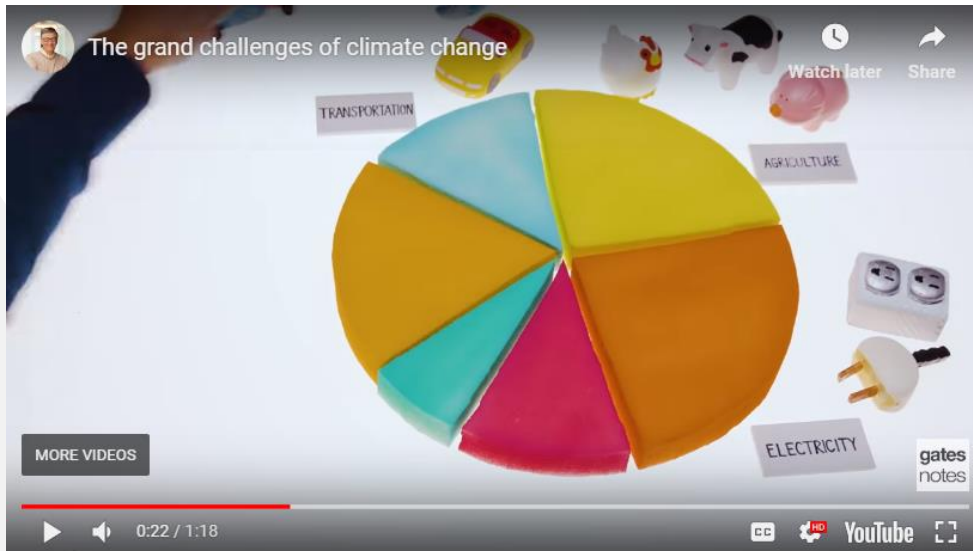
:15 Seconds

At this point there is a cutaway to Bill drawing on a toy electrical outlet while he's saying "There's a lot more to do." Viewers actually see Bill creating something, reinforcing that new technology still needs to be created. This is also a transition to the next visual which talks about electricity and creates a visual bridge to the next concept which is that the problem is bigger than taking electricity creation to zero emissions.



:22 Seconds

This is a fast motion segment showing Bill creating a physical pie chart with items that explain the causes of greenhouse gases. This sped up visual creates a moment of change, and hence interest, for the viewer. Also, seeing Bill actually create this on the fly reinforces his expertise. The camera shot is also done on an angle similar to the viewpoint Bill would have as he assembles the pieces, making it seem for a moment that we are looking over his shoulder.



:28 Seconds

The shot changes to an overhead image of the finished pie chart which creates more clarity for the viewer as Bill points out the Manufacturing emits a significant percentage of greenhouse gases, but isn't discussed often. This is a transition to a visual example.

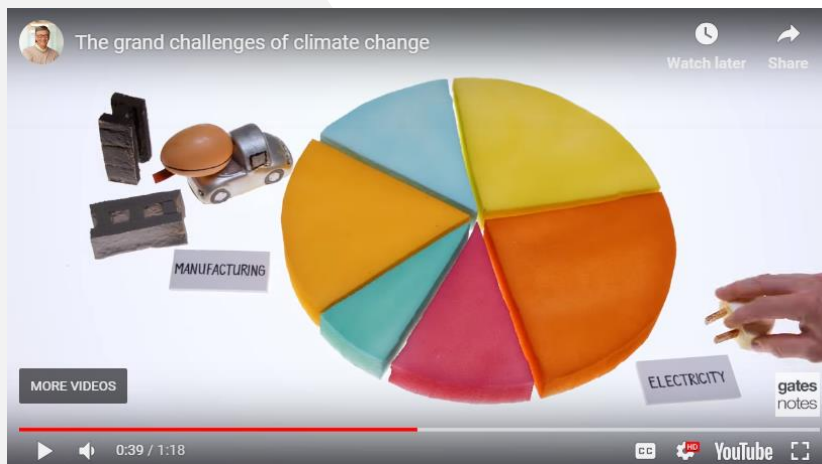
:35 Seconds

Bill says that “everything we make” creates greenhouse gases, and then there is a close-up of a squeaky hamburger dog toy as an example. This close-up is useful to draw focus, create a moment of comedy, and illustrates Bill's point. The switch to a close-up creates change to keep the viewer focused. The choice of the dog toy and its bright yellow, orange, red and green colors makes it stand out against Bill's dark blue sweater and purple background.



:39 Seconds

Here Bill deconstructs his pie chart but leaves the visuals of the MANUFACTURING segment on the table to reinforce the fact that 21% percent of greenhouse gases come from manufacturing. The deconstruction of the pie structure is also a visual indicator that this topic has been completed.



:40 Seconds

Bill slams the squeaky toy down in a wide shot for a moment of levity and to emphatically close out the pie chart segment.



:42 Seconds

The next shot is an “over the shoulder” close up of the light table as Bill adds toy building structures in fast motion to introduce the fact that construction is growing quickly.



:44 Seconds

A cut back to a mid-close-up of Bill, but now the background has changed from an open, well-lit purple to a claustrophobic image behind him of a wall of toy buildings. Some of the buildings appear to be upside down, adding to the feeling of “wrongness”.



:45 Seconds

A cut to a close-up of the now completed group of building on the light table to focus the viewer on physical items to connect these buildings with Bill's next comment that the number of buildings equivalent to the size of New York City will be built every month, doubling the number of buildings by 2060.



:48 Seconds

To illustrate the immensity of construction the use of two quick wider shots with Bill and the table visually shrinking as they are surrounded by hundreds and hundreds of buildings in the background hammers home the point that we will be overwhelmed by construction.



:57 Seconds

The next visual change serves two purposes. Bill is talking about all the materials needed to create all the buildings and video clips of a steel foundry, cement being poured and trees being processed are used in quick succession. Then a shot of a factory billowing smoke illustrates the point of the production of greenhouse gases. This cutaway gives the viewer a change from Bill at the light table and illustrates that these problems are real by using real images.



1:01 Seconds

The next shot is a close shot of Bill's hands starting to organize the light table which now has all of the toy props, including ones that haven't been used before. Bill is saying, "We'll going to have to figure out how to make all these things in a different way." Bill is both showing the number of items that are part of that equation while he is starting to create order by cleaning them up.



1:05 Seconds to End

Back to a close-up of Bill making a personal plea for people to pay attention to climate change as he calls for change and innovation to bring emissions down to zero. In this call to action Bill sets out an audacious goal, some call it a moon shot. He doesn't ask for the viewer to do something in their neighborhood, he asks them to achieve something big. By refocusing back on Bill it creates a human moment where one person is asking for another's commitment to achieve something important.



This is an excellent example of visual storytelling. From the opening where Bill sets up the problem, to the argument of its importance and the illustration of detailed arguments, to the closing call to action. it uses techniques to keep the viewer's attention and visuals to illustrate points to both the conscious and unconscious mind of the viewer.



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