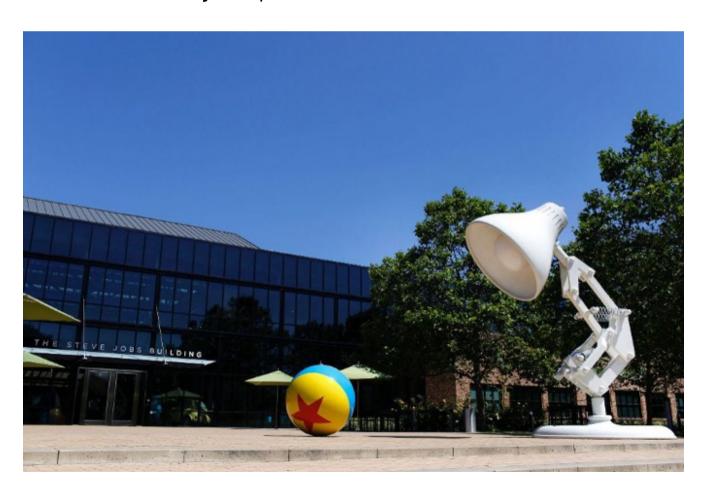# Pixar and Visual Storytelling

[Scott Myers](#)

A tiny bit of business in the movie *Up* reminds us that movies are primarily a visual medium.

I make no bones about it: *Up* is my very favorite Pixar movie. Oh, I love so many of their films — *Toy Story, Toy Story 2, Finding Nemo, Monsters, Inc., The Incredibles, Ratatouille, Wall-e, Toy Story 3, Inside Out, Coco* — there's never been a studio with the consistent storytelling chops like good folks in that animation studio located in Emeryville, California.

Perhaps it's because most of the directors are animators by trade, their movies are steeped in visual storytelling. I

was reminded of this recently when watching the famous Carl and Ellie "married life" sequence. Of course, the whole thing is a master class in visual storytelling, a full four minutes with no dialogue, just images. Every visual moment not only advances the plot, the sequence puts into motion subplots and story setups for later payoffs.
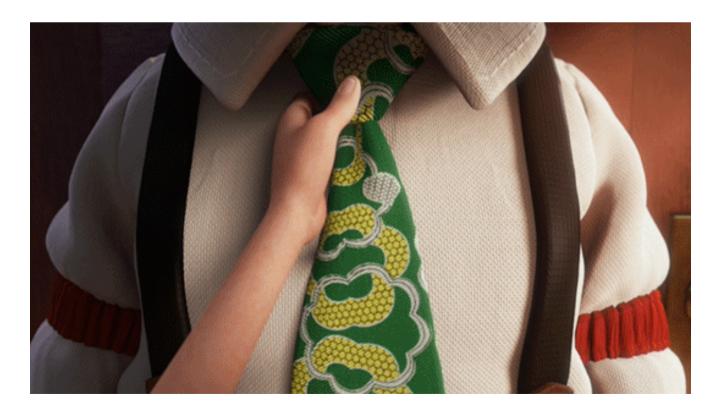
Let's focus on one specific aspect of the sequence which is the answer to a question I'm sure the filmmakers confronted: How do we get Carl and Ellie from here:
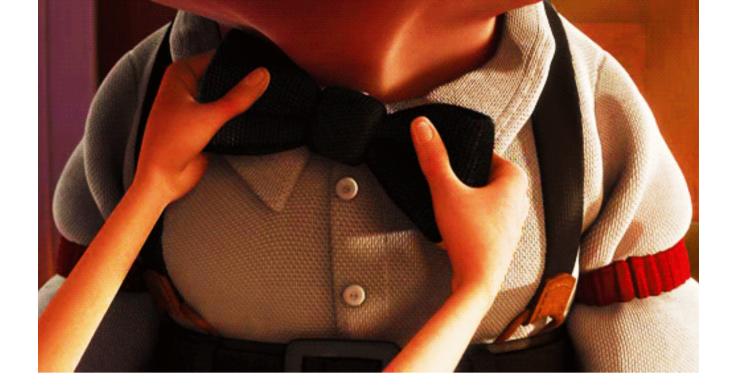

To here:

In other words, age them up in an efficient, entertaining, and *visual* fashion? What they did was take a clothing feature of Carl's and used that to span the decade: Carl's ties. They started with this:

And ended with this:

They could have used some hackneyed trope like flying pages of a calendar. Instead, they had the clever idea of employing an object of attire associated with Carl to demonstrate the passage of time.

Check out the "married life" sequence again and marvel at the visual storytelling in every single frame of this remarkable piece of cinema:

So remember, dialogue is great, but movies flourished for three decades before 'talkies' came into being in 1927 with the movie *The Jazz Singer*. Films are often referred to as *motion pictures*. Motion. Pictures. Both words are **visual**. Pixar films are a constant reminder to write visually.