

## Dramatic Construction Exercises

Construct obstacles for the following:

1. A pretty young stenographer in Minnesota has weak lungs and wants a heavy winter coat
2. A lawyer is running for the legislature
3. A schoolteacher wants to accept a good position in a distant town
4. Two men want to marry the same girl (the girl is the protagonist)
5. A group of miners demands a wage increase
6. A fifteen-year-old girl has learned a serious piece of scandal about someone she idolises (state her objective as well as her obstacle)
7. A fifteen-year-old boy is determined to enter the Navy
8. A young wife wants her husband to be proud of her
9. A factory-owner wants to replace an incompetent foreman
10. A doctor wants to spare a patient the knowledge that she has borne an idiot child

For the following protagonists, find a clear, dynamic objective, and a way to make these objectives appealing to an audience of

- (a) businessmen,
- (b) farmers,
- (c) university students, and
- (d) church members.

1. Shakespeare
2. A man who inherits a farm (and likes farming)
3. A pioneer in the American Midwest
4. The mother of a soldier killed in the war
5. A woman who married five old men (all living, none divorced)
6. A saint
7. A gangster
8. The daughter of a moderately rich elderly widow
9. A woman whose husband lets her know she bores him
10. A man of mediocre ability who had a great ancestor

Follow these stories through, and consider what the obligatory scene of each could be.

1. The attractive but prudish protagonist constantly reprimands two delightful old friends of her father for taking a drink. She becomes engaged to a fine, lively young man, the proprietor of a tavern.
2. Two women are close friends. One of them discovers that her husband is ruining the husband of the other and forcing him into bankruptcy.
3. One of the guests at a dinner party, a newcomer to the town, is particularly nervous. Another guest seems to recall meeting him before. Still another finds that he makes her nervous.
4. After a hard day at the office, Jack plans to lounge with the papers all evening. He does not know that his wife has asked her parents to dinner.
5. A woman in love with her husband does not know him to be a criminal.

Follow these stories through, this time using the 'Once Upon a Time...' format.

1. Start with the ending of a crime story. Regard the murdered individual as the objective, the murder as the obstacle. Find a protagonist and plan a course of action.
2. Start with a news story: a prize fighter discovered that his wife, a former chorus girl, was being unfaithful with his manager. In the divorce court he asked for custody of their son on the grounds that his wife was unfit to rear the boy. Find protagonist, objective, and course of action.
3. Starting with a character of your acquaintance, find or invent an objective that would place him in clearer harmony with his universe. Assume he recognises the need for this objective, or for a substitute he thinks he needs. Explain what might stand in his way and let these constitute the obstacles. Plan a course of action in which he gets the objective, another where he fails to get it.