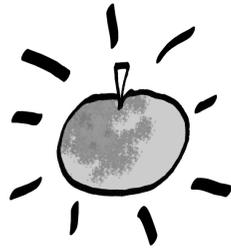


In every story, a “hero” has to WANT SOMETHING. To be rich and famous; to escape the cupboard under the stairs; to have an adventure; etc. You decide!
For this example let’s say our hero (we’ll call her Martha)



... wants an apple.



Here’s a story:

Once upon a time there was a girl called Martha. One morning she woke up and thought to herself – What I really want for breakfast today is an apple!

She walked into the kitchen.

“Mum,” said Martha. “Can I have an apple, please?”

“Yes, of course you can darling,” said Mum, handing Martha an apple.

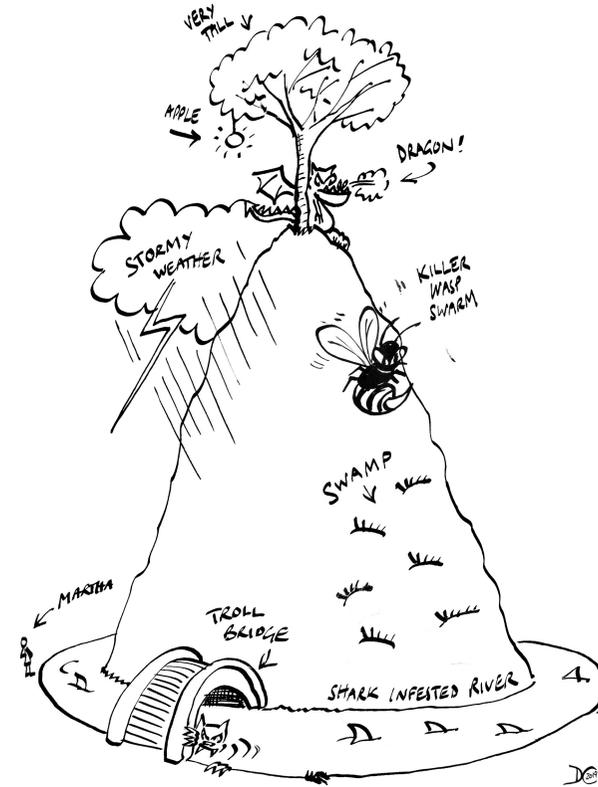
The end.

Mmm. Not a great story. It’s not very exciting because Martha gets what she wants WAY too easily. Remember – stories get GOOD when things go BAD for the hero. So let’s see if we can make things a little bit more difficult for Martha.

What if we take the thing that Martha wants – the apple – and we put it at the top of a tree? Now Martha has to climb the tree to get it. And while we’re about it, let’s be really mean and make Martha scared of heights and rubbish at climbing trees. Now, let’s put that tree at the top of a really tall steep hill, so Martha has to climb all the way up the hill before she can even try climbing the tree, which is terrifying because she is rubbish at climbing trees and will be terrified the moment she gets a foot off the ground!

That’s a better story already – it has tension, because we’re wondering if Martha is going to be able to overcome her fear and climb the tree? If she does, will she fall? But **how can we make it even more difficult** for Martha and more exciting for us?

What about if something is guarding the apple? What would be the worst thing to find at the bottom of that tree? What if Martha is scared of dogs? We could put a ferocious dog at the bottom of that tree. Or maybe she’s scared of wasps, or dragons, or snakes? What else could we bring into the story to make it more difficult for Martha?



Maybe the **weather** could be against her. What if we made it foggy? Or conjured up a thunderstorm? Snow, ice, or searing heat. What if Martha has to cross a swamp, or a shark-infested river? What if she loses a shoe, or gets lost and has no map? Depending on where

your story is set, and what your hero wants, **make a list of all the things that could go wrong and make it more difficult for your hero to get what she wants.**

One of the best, and most important, obstacles is another person. **So someone else wants the apple too** – let's call him Jake.

Now, Jake is trying to get to the apple as well, and he will be trying to stop Martha from getting there first. Now not only has Martha got to climb the hill, swim the river, defeat the ferocious dog, but it's a race against Jake. They might have a fight!

Another thing to think about is **why do Martha and Jake both want this apple so much?** Because they both like apples? A better question to ask, is: What will happen if they don't get it? Then we find out **what is at stake in the story.** In other words, what will happen if Martha fails to get the apple? It should be something bad. Maybe she's really hungry and it's the only food for miles. Maybe it's a magic apple? It's up to you, but the reader needs to understand that the consequence of your hero failing will be BAD!



To recap, to make a story really exciting you need the following:

1. A HERO who WANTS something.
2. The SOMETHING must be as difficult as possible to get.
3. There will be SOMEBODY trying to stop the HERO from getting this SOMETHING.
4. If the HERO doesn't get the SOMETHING. BAD STUFF will happen!

Then you write down what happens as your HERO goes out and tries to get the SOMETHING. That's a story – the kind of story that should have your readers frantically turning the pages to find out what happens next!

So what are you waiting for? GET WRITING! HAVE FUN and good luck!

For more stories, writing and drawing tips, please visit www.davecousins.net

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GOOD

WHEN THINGS GO

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