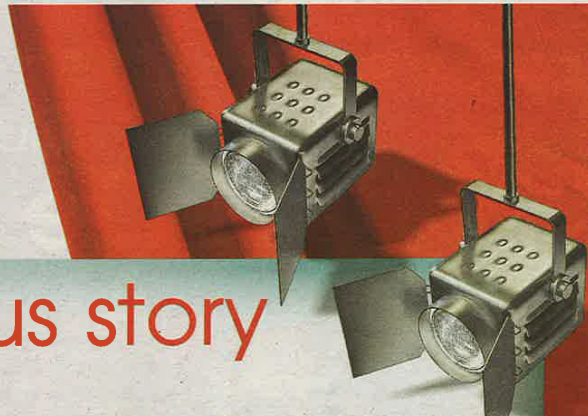


Writing a play... Adaptation from a famous story



RECENTLY we've discussed some basic methods of writing a script from scratch, using our own original ideas to create the play. But though this is one way to produce a script, it is not the only way. Another method is adaptation; taking a pre-existing story in a different medium and rewriting or adjusting it to fit the stage.

LIKE writing an original story from scratch, we must all ask ourselves the same question: "Where do we begin?" In today's study, we will, of course, choose a famous story. But why?

Simply put, most audience will already be familiar with it. This saves space in explaining the basic plot and character motivations. We can use this "space" to **tweak** the story and thus refresh it for our audience.

Still, this leaves us with a large collection of famous stories from which to choose. Again, where to begin? Well, a **novice** would likely take the easy way.

Fairy Tales and Fables

So, fairy tales and fables are the best choice. The plots are usually straightforward, with a clear beginning, middle, and ending. It becomes an advantage when we decide on the theme and then break down the scenes. The characters in such stories have distinct objectives and personalities. Often short tales, they have lots of wiggle room for expansion and the addition of new elements. They are flexible. Usually no temporal or spatial settings are specified. Again, this allows room for your creativity to alter and add elements (characters, dialogue, events, and actions) into the script.

Besides all these considerations, we should choose a famous story, one with which we are familiar and one that we like.

Once we've selected a story, let's get to work! To begin with, we must read, or re-read, the original version to get a true feeling for the story's theme or moral lesson. Then, we can read other versions of the story to get more inspiration/ideas for our script.

After grasping the theme and moral lesson in the story's original form, we identify the main characters in the story. Main characters are the **protagonists**, **antagonists**, and other characters that are essential to move the story

forward. We should identify the goals, motives and personalities of each of these characters as well as the relationships between them.

Next, we move on to identify the key events in the story. At the same time, we should take notes about what is happening. Write down why and how things happen in each key event as well as describing the principal characters involved. This will provide the framework for our story to convey the original message. When this is finished, we can pour on our creativity by adding new events and characters to give a distinct voice/style to the original story.

The Three Little Pigs

Example time! Let's try to adapt a famous fairy tale: *The Three Little Pigs*. First, we identify the theme/moral lesson of the tale: Hard work pays off. Then, the main characters: the protagonists (the three brother pigs), and the antagonist (the Big Bad Wolf).

Then the goals and motives of the characters: all three pigs want to build a house and have their own home, respectively. The Big Bad Wolf wants to eat all the pigs as his goal; to satisfy his hunger is his motive. The personalities of the characters: the first pig is the laziest; the second pig somewhere between lazy and **perseverant**; and the third pig is the most hard-working. The wolf is cruel and cunning. The relationships between the three brother pigs appear good, but each has a sense of independence. The relationship between the pigs and the wolf is obviously that of prey and **predator**.

The key events are as follows:

The exposition and inciting moment – Mother pig sends the three brother pigs out into the world to seek their fortune and secure their future.

Rising actions – the first and second pig's



homes are destroyed and they are eaten; the wolf tries to destroy the third pig's house, but to no avail.

Climax – The wolf finds a way into piggie No. 3's house through the chimney, but a big pot of boiling water is waiting for him at the bottom.

Resolution – The third pig cooks the wolf in the pot and eats him.

Now, with all these elements in place, we can start adding our own ideas to the story. Next step . . . synopsis. But too bad, our time is up for now. We will have to wait until the next article.

Exercises

1. Select a fable or a fairy tale you like and complete the same exercise as above.
2. Using the outline you have acquired, add new scenes to the tale and a twist to it.

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GLOSSARY

1. tweak (v. 輕微修改)
2. novice (n. 初學者)
3. protagonist (n. 主要人物)
4. antagonist (n. 對立者)
5. perseverant (adj. 鍥而不捨的)
6. predator (n. 掠奪者)