



Parent Guide

Rocky & Willow vs. The Mouse King

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About This Story

Every great story needs a great pair. Sherlock Holmes has Watson. C-3PO has R2-D2. Tom Sawyer has Huckleberry Finn. Writers call this the “odd couple” — two characters who are almost opposites, thrown together by circumstance, who discover that their differences are exactly what make them powerful.

Rocky and Willow are a great odd couple. Willow is cool, clever, and self-contained. She has a plan for everything and feelings for almost nothing — or so she’d like you to think. Rocky is warm, energetic, and gloriously un-strategic. He charges into every situation headfirst and somehow makes it work through sheer enthusiasm. On their own, each of them has a weakness the other fills in perfectly. Together, they are unstoppable.

The odd couple is one of the oldest and most satisfying patterns in storytelling because it’s true to life. The people who challenge us, who seem so different from us, often turn out to be exactly the friends we need. Their strengths complement our weaknesses. We help them where they falter. That’s what makes us the perfect pair — and the differences can also make for great storytelling.



Before You Create: Five Questions to Talk About

These questions don't have right answers. They're meant to get your child thinking about what made Rocky and Willow's story work — so they can borrow those same ideas for their own.

1. Willow escapes the Mouse King's jail and reaches safety — and then she goes back for Rocky. She didn't have to. What do you think made her turn around?
 2. Rocky charges into a crawlspace full of hundreds of mice without stopping to think whether it's a good idea. Is that brave or just reckless? Can something be both at the same time?
 3. The Mouse King's army is huge. Rocky and Willow are just two animals. How did they win without fighting every single mouse?
 4. Rocky always saved Willow sunny spots and left food in his bowl for her, even when she said they weren't friends. What does it say about Rocky? What does it say about Willow?
 5. Rocky and Willow aren't protecting just themselves — they're protecting their home and their humans, who don't even know there's a danger. Why do you think protecting something matters, even when the person you're protecting can't see it?
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Create Your Own Adventure

Now it's your child's turn to make their own odd couple adventure. We'll use Rocky and Willow's story as a guide, since staring at the blank page is hard! Work through the steps below together to help your child choose their own heroes, their own villain, and their own home to protect. The questions will help them fill in the page fast, getting those storytelling juices flowing in no time.

Step 1: Build Your Odd Couple

The first job is to create two characters who belong together precisely because they're so different. Ask your child:

Who are your two characters? They can be animals, people, creatures, objects — anything! What makes them opposites?



To help them think it through, remind them of Rocky and Willow:

- **Rocky:** big, loud, brave, not very sneaky, loves everyone
- **Willow:** small, quiet, clever, very sneaky, pretends not to care

Some pairs to spark ideas: a tiny mouse and a giant bear. A careful tortoise and a reckless rabbit. A princess who never breaks the rules and a knight who never follows them. A ghost who is afraid of everything and a human child who is afraid of nothing. The sillier the contrast, the better!

Step 2: Give Them a Home Worth Fighting For

Rocky and Willow weren't just protecting themselves — they were protecting their home and their humans. That stake makes the story matter. Ask your child:

| *What does your odd couple call home? Who or what are they protecting? Why does it matter to them?*

The home doesn't have to be a house. It could be a hollow tree, a bakery, a spaceship, a pond, a castle, a cozy library. What makes it special is that the characters love it and are willing to fight for it.

Step 3: Invent the Enemy

Every adventure needs a threat — something (or someone) that wants what your characters have. The Mouse King works because he has a whole army and a big plan, but he also has one very exploitable weakness: his pride. Ask your child:

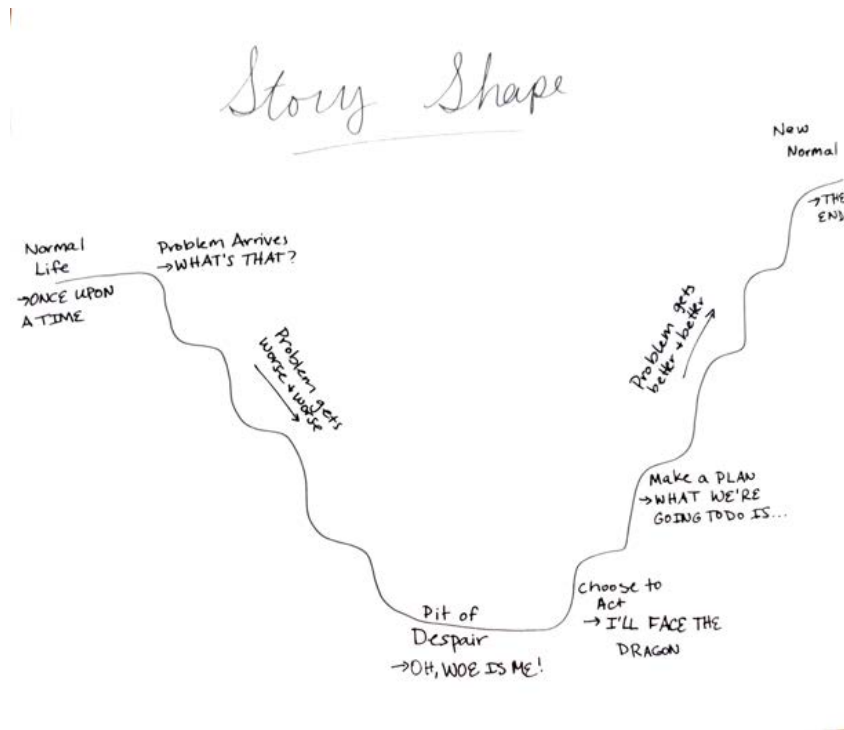
| *Who is the villain of your story? What do they want? What is their big weakness?*

The enemy doesn't have to be a person. It could be a storm, a machine that's gone wrong, a spell, or a force of nature. But if it is a character, it's much more fun if they have a personality — maybe they're pompous like the Mouse King, or cowardly, or obsessed with one particular thing.



Step 4: Follow the Shape of the Story

Here is the basic shape of Rocky and Willow's adventure. Your child doesn't have to follow it exactly — but it's a great backbone for an adventure story to lean on:



- **Normal Life:** Show your characters in their normal life. Let us see how different they are and maybe how much they irritate each other.
- **Problem Arrives:** Something intrudes. The enemy shows up, or the threat is discovered. This is where the adventure begins.
- **Problem Gets Worse and Worse:** The two characters face the problem with an initial plan, which fails and things get worse. This can happen several times.
- **The Pit of Despair:** Things look really bad. I mean, really bad. There is no hope.
- **Choose to Act:** This is where the characters have to decide what they're made of. Someone has to choose to be brave.
- **Make a Plan:** They use their different strengths together to come up with something clever. Each one does what only they can do.
- **Problem Gets Better and Better:** They put their plan into action, and it is finally successful. In the end, the enemy is defeated.
- **New Normal:** See what life is like now that the characters have faced the challenge and gotten stronger.



Step 5: Tell It!

Now it's time to actually tell the story. Remind your child that there's no wrong way to do this:

- Write it down as a story, a comic strip, or a screenplay.
- Act it out with stuffed animals, action figures, or costumes.
- Tell it out loud to your parents or your baby brother or your dog (bonus points if it is a Goldendoodle)
- Play it as pretend all alone in your secret hideout