



Parent Guide

Plesku to the Rescue

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About This Story

Many great stories are built on the same secret: someone wants something, they try to get it, and they fail over and over again. Each time, things just get worse and worse.

Writers call this the Rule of Three. It is one of the oldest patterns in storytelling and is the secret sauce to nearly all of my stories. Once you see it, you can't unsee it. The three bears come home to eaten porridge, broken chairs, and, finally, an intruding little Goldilocks. In "The Three Billy Goats Gruff," the troll must face first the littlest goat, then the medium goat, and then the biggest goat.

This structure works whether there are going to escalating problems, a series of obstacles, or several characters to contrast. The trick is to make each boss bigger than the last. That growing tension and stakes takes you along for the ride.

Plesku knows this feeling well. He wants nothing more than to serve aboard Captain Hedgy's starship and prove his worth. But the kitchen nearly melts him. The engine room fills with lightning. And then the asteroid field punches a hole right through the hull. Three problems, each one worse than the last — until the very thing that made Plesku a disaster in every other room turns out to be exactly what saves everyone.

That's the Rule of Three at work. Fail, fail, succeed in the most spectacular way imaginable.



Before You Create: Discussion Questions

These questions don't have right answers. They're meant to help you grow wisdom and virtue in your children.

1. Plesku fails three times before he saves the day. What other stories do you know where the characters have to overcome more than one problem in order to succeed?
2. Which character was the most courageous? Which character was the most patient? Do you see any other virtues that the characters are practicing?
3. Should the captain have given Plesku a second chance after he melted into the soup? Why or why not?
4. The very things that made Plesku a disaster — melting in heat, crackling with electricity — are also the things that make him a hero. What other characters had a trait that looked like it was a problem and turned out to be helpful?
5. Should Plesku have tried to fix the hole in the ship? Why or why not?



Create Your Own Adventure

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

Step 1: Choose Your Space-Themed Setting

Plesku's story takes place aboard a starship, but space is a vast and wonderfully strange setting with room for all kinds of stories. Help your child imagine their corner of the universe:

Space is full of wonders. Where would you like to take your characters today? A space station? An alien planet? A galaxy far, far away?

Space is perfect for the Rule of Three because it is so full of problems. Gravity, air, temperature, distance — things that are easy on Earth become obstacles in orbit.

Step 2: Pick your Hero

Every story needs someone we want to follow. Ask your child:

Who is your hero? What do they look like? What makes them different from everyone else in the story?

Remember that difference — you're going to use it to make your character a real hero!

Step 3: Choose a Goal

Everybody wants something. It doesn't have to be big like saving the universe, but it does give your character something to work towards. Without this motivation, the story will feel stuck in quicksand, like it has no direction and is wandering aimlessly among the stars. Ask your child:

What does your hero want more than anything? Why does it matter to them?

Remember, what makes a goal work is that the hero cares about it deeply. If the character really wants it, so will the audience.



Step 4: Build Your Mountain

Here is the heart of the Rule of Three. You are going to choose three problems that your hero is going to have to face. The trick is, each problem needs to be bigger than the last. Even worse, they are going to fail twice before they succeed. The bigger you make your problems, the taller your mountain will be for your hero to climb, and the more your audience will be on the edge of their seats wondering how they could possibly succeed. Ask your child:

What are the three things that stop your hero from reaching their goal? Each one should be worse than the one before.

In Plesku's story, the obstacles build like this:

1. **The Kitchen Disaster:** Plesku tries to help cook and melts into the soup. Dinner is ruined.
2. **The Lightning Storm:** Plesku crackles with electricity and knocks out all the lights.
3. **The Asteroid Field:** The Plesku's distraction leads to the ship wandering into the asteroid field. The ship is pelted with giant boulders and gets a hole. The crew are all homeless, the ship is losing air, and everything looks hopeless (the Pit of Despair from last week). That is when Plesku rises to the occasion and saves the day.

Notice that each failure happens in different circumstances, gets more serious, and teaches Plesku (and the audience) something new about who he is. Help your child build three obstacles with that same rising shape to make a mountain for your hero to climb.

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