

The Plot Chickens

Henrietta loved to read. Soon she had read every book on the farm a dozen times, so she went to town to find more. When she spotted people carrying books out of the library, she went inside to wait in line.

When it was Henrietta's turn, the librarian said. "We have nothing for chickens here. Try the feed store."

Frustrated, Henrietta clucked at the top of her lungs.

"BUK, BUK, BUK!"

"Well, why didn't you say so?"



The librarian handed her three books.

Henrietta was in reading eggstasy. Every day she read to her aunts, then returned the books to the library for more.

One day Henrietta said. "Reading books is so much fun. Writing books must be eggshilarating." She searched the shelves until she found a book about writing. The librarian was impressed.



When she got home, Henrietta read,

RULE ONE: You need a main character.

"That's me, Aunt Golda. I'm the main hen here", Aunt Golda said.

"The character should be interesting", Henrietta read.

"That's me," Morissa said.

"No, me!"

Aunt Golda won because she was the oldest.

Henrietta found a typewriter and began to peck out a story.

Once upon a time there was a hen named Aunt Golda.

RULE TWO: You need to hatch a plot.

"A plot of land?"

“No, plot is what happens in the story. It starts with **RULE THREE: Give your main character a problem**,” Henrietta explained.

“I don’t want any problems.”

“Me, neither.”

“No way!”

“Then I’ll make up a character,” Henrietta decided.

Once upon a time there was a hen named Maxine.

RULE FOUR: Develop your plot by asking “What if?”.

“What if Maxine goes into the woods alone?”

“Her mother should tell her that’s dangerous.”

Maxine went walking alone in the woods, even though her mother told her it was dangerous.

“Something bad will happen.”

“A wolf might be following her.”

Suddenly Maxine saw a wolf following her down the path.

“Then the wolf catches Maxine. THE END. Good story.”

“Maxine can’t be caught! She must save herself,” Henrietta said.

“What if she shoots the wolf with a cyberspace ray gun?”

“The wolf is toast! THE END. Good story.”

“That’s silly. Hens don’t have guns. **RULE FIVE: Write what you know.**”

“What if she hides? We hide from hawks every day.”

Maxine hid under a bush.

“Then the wolf gets bored and leaves. THE END. Good story.”

“He can’t leave yet. **RULE SIX: Build suspense.**”

“Build a fence?”

“Suspense, to make the reader worry,” Henrietta explained.

The wolf sniffed. “I smell a delicious young hen nearby.” He started creeping toward Maxine’s hiding place.

“Then he eats her. THE END. Good story.”

“Not yet! **RULE SEVEN: Make your story come alive by using all five senses.**”

Maxine *heard* the wolf growl. As he came closer, she *saw* his sharp teeth and
smelled his wolfy body odor.

When he was nearer still, she *felt* the heat of his icky breath.

When he stuck his head through the leaves, Maxine *tasted* the bile rising from her
gizzard.

“Then Maxine dies of fright. THE END. Good story.”

“That is not THE END! Endings are the hardest part,” said Henrietta.

“Maxine’s mother swoops in to save her in the nick of time.”

“No! **RULE EIGHT: The main character must solve her or his own problem.**”

Maxine gathered her courage. Then she plunged her sharp beak into the tip of the
wolf’s tender nose. The wolf howled in pain and ran off, never to be seen again.

THE END.

“Good story.”

“It’s not a good story. It’s a great story. Now I’ll revise it until it’s perfect, then send
it to a publisher.

Dear publisher,

*I am sending you the PERILS OF MAXINE — a book about a
chicken. I am well qualified to write this story because I am a
chicken. I know how a chicken thinks and feels, and what a
chicken likes to read.*

Eggsitedly yours,

Henrietta

Many, many, many months later, the publisher sent a rejection letter.

Dear Ms. Henrietta:

We do not publish books written by chickens. Even if we did, we
wouldn’t want this one. We didn’t like it.

Don’t quit your day job. Have a nice life.

Hunter Fox, Editor

The aunts were devastated, but Henrietta vowed not to brood over her rejection. "I'll make my own books," she announced.



When her books were finished, Henrietta gave one to the librarian. "Your book should be reviewed:" the librarian said. "Send it to *The Corn Book*." So Henrietta mailed it off.

When *The Corn Book* review came out, it said:

Henrietta — *The Perils of Maxine*
One Dozen Pages — Cider Press

Henrietta lays an egg with her first book. We hope this is her last book. *The Perils of Maxine* shows why chickens shouldn't EVER write. It is odoriferous.

Noah Lyke

"Odoriferous means it stinks. End of story."

"I'm going to keep writing," Henrietta said, but her feelings were hurt. And a little voice inside her kept saying... *Chickens shouldn't EVER write.*

Henrietta's heart wasn't into writing anymore. She even stopped going to the library. But her aunts missed hearing Henrietta read, so they bugged her until she went to get some books.

Henrietta was embarrassed. Had the librarian seen that awful review?

