

Theater Essentials Online

Acting – Lesson 3

Understanding Your Character's Objectives, Actions, and Obstacles with Nick Zadina

DEFINITIONS

Objective: One sentence stating what your character wants in a scene.

- I want to ace this test.
- I want to become friends with this person in my class.
- I want to make the basketball team.

Action: What your character does to achieve their objective.

- I READ each question twice to ace the test.
- I TRY TO SIT next to this person at lunch so I can be friend them.
- I TALK to the coach so I can be ready for the basketball tryouts.

Obstacle: Something that gets in the way of a character achieving an objective.

- I didn't study and am bad at English.
- The person's best friend is a bully.
- My best friend and I are up for the last spot on the team.

Super-Objective: A broader, larger objective which may be present for the entire play or through a character's life.

- I want to go to Harvard.
- I want to find somewhere to belong.
- I want to prove to my parents that I can do anything I set my mind to.





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Action: Snow concern for Alex so he drinks the water

The following is a example of what it may look like as you mark down objectives, actions, and obstacles in your script. This example is done as if you are playing the character Riley.

A Scene about a Glass of Water

ALEX is sitting at a table at a coffee shop, reading. RILEY joins ALEX.

RILEY: Hey Alex. (Places a cup of water on the table between the two of them.)

ALEX: Oh hey Riley, what's up?

RILEY: Nothing.

ALEX nods and goes back to their book. RILEY watches for a beat, then nudges the glass of water toward ALEX.

ALEX: What are you doing?

RILEY: Oh, I just thought you might want something to drink.

ALEX: Oh, thanks but I'm good. Obstacle: Alex is ignoring me

RILEY: Really? You look like you're thirsty.

ALEX: What?

RILEY: Yeah, you look a little pale and your eyes are just... you look dehydrated.

ALEX: I do?

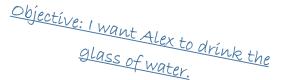
RILEY: Oh yeah!

ALEX: Well, I feel fine. (Beat)

RILEY: You like Mio?

ALEX: Do I like what?

Action: Make the water more appealing for Alex



Action: Nudge the glass closer so Alex notices it

Action: Place the glass of

water next to Alex







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RILEY: Mio! It's like, sweetener stuff for your water. Comes in all kinds of flavors. Gives your water a little kick of deli-ciousness. What's your favorite flavor?

ALEX: For what? Water?

RILEY: For anything! What flavor do you like?

ALEX: Cherry?

RILEY: Well, wouldn't ya know it. (RILEY pulls out a bottle of Black Cherry Mio.) Got some black cherry Mio right here. Lemme give ya a squirt. (RILEY squirts some MIO into the water.) Give that a try you'll love it.

ALEX: Riley! What's your deal!?! I'm not thirsty!

Obstacle: Alex isn't thirsty

RILEY: (Exploding, angry) ALEX DRINK THE STUPID WATER! I NEED YOU TO DRINK THE WATER.

ALEX: Why?!?

 Action: Intimidate Alex RILEY: Because if you don't I'm gonna punch you right in the face.

ALEX: No you won't.

Obstacle: Alex called my bluff

RILEY: You're right, I won't, BUT STILL! (Pleading) PLEASE DRINK THE WATER!

ALEX: Alright alright! Take it easy...

ALEX drinks the water.

Action: Beg Alex

ALEX: Happy?

RILEY: Yes. Very. Have a good day. (Exits)

End of Scene

SUPER OBJECTIVE: To protect my friend Alex who was poisoned by a hitman. The water was really an antidote. I dídn't want to tell Alex that though because I dídn't want them to be scared.

