



# “The Unlucky Man” Teacher Guide



SEASON 4 EPISODE 2

## The Unlucky Man

by Mia, age 10, Massachusetts

### Overview

In “The Unlucky Man” by a kid from Massachusetts named Mia, a really unlucky person finds a map that sends him on a quest to become less unlucky...but it’s not so easy. On the way, there is a cave full of bats, snakes that bite him, and birds that peck at his head! We thought this was a perfect example of how obstacles to a character’s goal can make a story more exciting. In this activity, students will listen to the story, and identify what kinds of obstacles the Unlucky Man faces. Then, they can use the Obstacle Course worksheet to plan their own adventure story.

### Age Group

Best for 4th and 5th grade readers and writers!

[storypiratescreatorclub.com](http://storypiratescreatorclub.com)

## Common Core Standards

For simplicity, here are relevant 4th grade standards; similar 5th grade standards apply.

1. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3.a](#) Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
2. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.9.a](#) Apply grade 4 Reading standards to literature (e.g., “Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text [e.g., a character’s thoughts, words, or actions].”).
3. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.2](#) Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
4. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.1](#) Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify relevant aspects of an adventure story: Use the word obstacle to identify something that blocks a character from getting what they want. Call that want a goal.
- Identify a character’s goal and obstacles to that goal after listening to an adventure story
- Identify three kinds of obstacles: *physical*, *mental*, and *emotional*
- Apply the framework of goal and obstacle to create their own adventure story plan

## Materials

1. Story Pirates Podcast: Season 4 Episode 2 (story at 17:34-25:10 approximately)
2. Obstacle Course Sheet
3. Writer’s Notebook or other place to write down ideas

## Activity Steps

### 1. Intro:

Introduce the lesson to your students with a short discussion.

- **Introduce the genre of adventure:** Ask your students if they know what an adventure story is, and ask them for examples:
  - *Some movie examples: Moana, Dora and the Lost City of Gold, Onward*
  - *Some book examples: Quest for the Crystal Crown (Story Pirates!), The Mysterious Benedict Society, The Tale of Despereaux*

- **Define an adventure story:** a story where a character wants something and then goes on an adventure or quest to get it. It is usually very exciting!
- **Introduction the idea of a goal:** Ask students what kinds of things the characters were trying to get or find in the examples they gave:
  - *Examples from above: The Heart of Te Fiti (Moana), The Lost City (Dora), and an artifact to help save their dad (Onward)*
  - *The Crystal Crown (Quest for the Crystal Crown), to find Mr. Benedict (Mysterious Benedict Society), to save Princess Pea (Tale of Despereaux)*
- **Introduce the idea of obstacles:** Was it easy for the character to get what they wanted in the stories you mentioned? No! That would make for a pretty short story. Adventure stories are much more exciting when there are obstacles blocking the character from getting what they want! Today we are going to discuss all kinds of obstacles characters face in adventure stories, and then use those ideas to create our own.

## 2. Play the Story:

“The Unlucky Man” Story Pirates Podcast: Season 4 Episode 2. Listen to the whole thing, or jump to 15:32 for the intro to this story, which runs to 23:10.

- **Introduce the story to students:** Let’s listen to a story from the Story Pirates Podcast called “The Unlucky Man,” by a kid from Massachusetts named Mia. As you listen, see if you can identify what the character’s goal is, and any obstacles they face along the way.

## 3. Check for Understanding:

After listening, you might ask your students some questions.

- Who was the main character?
  - *Dave, the Unlucky Man!*
- What was the main character’s goal?
  - *He wanted to be less unlucky/more lucky. He found a map and wanted to get to where the map told him to go.*
- What made getting the goal difficult?
  - *There was a cave of bats, snake bites, birds that pecked his head, he had to go up a mountain, he had to pick between two potions, he had to believe in himself!*

## 4. MiniLesson: Obstacles to a Goal: Physical, Mental, Emotional

- **Goal and Obstacles:** In an adventure story, the main character has a goal: it is the thing they want, and they go on an adventure to find it. But it isn’t easy to get! There are lots of things that block their way. These are called obstacles.

- **Kinds of Obstacles:** Introduce the idea of different kinds of obstacles: Now that we have heard a funny adventure story, we are going to learn more about the kinds of obstacles we can put in our stories to make them exciting!
  - *Physical:* These obstacles are things that are physically blocking the character's way. Examples from the story we heard are the snakes, the birds, and the bats! Even the mountain that Dave had to climb was a physical obstacle.
  - *Mental:* These are obstacles like puzzles or other things the character has to "figure out" to get to their goal. In the story, Dave didn't have to solve any puzzles, but he did have to "figure out" which potion to pick at the end. A mental obstacle could be something like a puzzle, or could be something like a problem that needs to be solved such as how to make a fire or how to solve a riddle from a mysterious gatekeeper!
  - *Emotional:* These are obstacles inside a character like being afraid, being sad, or being discouraged. In the story, Dave got pretty scared when the birds were pecking his head, but he kept going! Characters can best emotional obstacles through pumping themselves up to be brave and conquer fear, or being mindful and remembering their goal when they feel discouraged!
- Feel free to make connections for physical, mental, and emotional obstacles to other adventure stories your class might know, or to history or other real-life situations.

## 5. Group Practice: "We Do"

- Once you've gone over the types of obstacles, you can move on to filling out the Obstacle Course as a group and plan your own brand-new adventure story!
- **Character:** Ask students to create a character from their imaginations. It can be a person, an animal, or something totally imaginary. Give them a name and say what they are in the first box.
- **Goal:** Next, ask students what the character wants: this is their goal. Also add why they want to achieve that goal.
- **Start:** Decide where the character starts, and whether they have anything or anyone with them to help.
- **Obstacles:** Now, fill in each box of the Obstacle Course to plan the story:
  - *Physical:* something blocking the character's way
  - *Mental:* a puzzle or something to "figure out"
  - *Emotional:* a challenging emotion they need to overcome
- **Goal achieved!:** Describe where they end up and what they might do next!

## 6. Independent Practice: "You Do"

- Students will follow the same steps as above to complete their own Obstacle Course
- Students can then follow the prompts at the bottom of the sheet to turn that plan into a fully written story in their notebooks or writing folder.

---

## **7. Sharing:**

Students can share their obstacle courses with the class, or even go through the whole writing process for their adventure story and have a publishing party!

## **Reading Extension Activity:**

This activity may be a good fit for analysis of reading books in the adventure or fantasy genre. Have a discussion with students about what kinds of physical, mental, or emotional obstacles they have seen in books they've read.

## **SEL Corner:**

Discussion of overcoming obstacles can be a valuable tool for students, and can connect to the values of perseverance or grit. As they see powerful heroes overcoming strong emotions like fear, sadness, or anger, it can be a powerful model for them to examine the obstacles in their own lives. Have a discussion with students about how they see people around them working to overcome obstacles, and invite students to journal about what obstacles they have overcome in their own lives. This can readily connect to a Personal Narrative unit as well.