Creative Engagements

Creative dating and dating invitations serve the purpose of taking seriousness out of the dating experience. Creative invitations allow people to avoid rejection through extended effort. Engagements are a whole different animal. Asking for a woman’s hand in marriage is an important relationship decision that can’t be skipped around by a cute pun or an elaborate set up. If she doesn’t want to marry her boyfriend, she isn’t going to do it. So why creative invitations?

In the Special Collections Archive, there are records of engagement stories ranging back to the 1930s. Those early engagements were often just an agreement, made without a ring or any kind of pomp and circumstance.

Around that time, movies became the primary form of entertainment in America. Suddenly, romantic engagements and sparkly rings were available for every young girl to sigh over. Young men suddenly had to compete with fairytale expectations.

As time went on, gradually the ring grew more important, and with the ritualization of the ring presentation became expected, location began to diversify. Instead of proposing on the front porch, a man would take his sweetheart up a mountain or to a nice restaurant to pop the question. Surprise became an important part of the proposal ritual, which turned to young men hiding the ring in a great deal of ridiculous places.

Near the 1980s, when many of the more obvious places to propose had been taken, and the obvious ways to hide a ring had been tried, there came a call for men to either outdo their predecessors or ignore the practice of surprising their future wife entirely. Practical men began to take their girlfriends ring shopping instead of making any attempt to guess what ring would be most well received. To the shock of few, women liked to pick out their own rings more than they desired to be surprised by a ring suspended in red jello.

Focus shifted from surprise to romance, movies featuring exceedingly romantic relations once again shifting what women expected and desired to experience. Elaborate schemes of carriages and rappelling to the dulcet tones of elderly Swiss horn-players accompanied the presentation of a pre-picked out ring. While the most romantic stories were actually the ones where young men took the time to really get to know their future spouses and do something that would be personally, if quietly, meaningful, there has been a major trend in bigger and better proposals.
Creative engagement stories can fall into several categories. Big Gestures are the proposals most influenced by the cult of romance. Little Gestures are the more actual romantic stories about couples who really know each other and love each other dearly. Failed Attempts at Romance often result when normal people attempt a big gesture and fail because of nerves or circumstances beyond their control. Holiday Themed proposals are popular because people feel naturally more romantic around holidays.

Invitations Involving Animals are surprisingly popular, for no discernible reason beyond human’s love for creatures. There is also a sub-variation of invitations that include plush animal toys, which were not included. Jokes and Pranks are somewhat inappropriate proposals that one must be cautious before using because not every woman is willing to let her fairy tale become a comedy.

**Big Gestures**

**Unique Dates and Engagements (FA 01 109)**

A couple went to the cinema; the young lady was suspicious when she saw her whole family attending the same movie, since they hadn’t come to such an agreement beforehand. Before the show started, a short film by her young man played, asking her to marry him.

One couple dined on a pedestrian bridge above a freeway while a plane flew by trailing a proposal on a banner attached to the tail.

One guy put the ring on the roof of the capitol building. He and his girlfriend climbed to the top and found the ring.

He took her on a hot air balloon ride, slipping the ring on her finger as they listened to “Up Up and Away”

One man took his girlfriend to a rock concert, and during the show the band asked her to marry him.

One couple went rappelling down a mountain. They were serenaded by an elderly Swiss gentleman with a 15 foot alp-horn as the young man proposed to his girlfriend.

An adventurous young man set up a table in the middle of a nearby lake and hung lanterns in the surrounding trees. He and his sweetheart had a six course meal with the ring served as dessert.
One man took his girlfriend on a business trip with him because she had never flown. As they took off, the stewardess brought the ring in on a pillow.

**The Engagement Ring: How and Why It Is Given (FA 01 215)**

A worker at the Sundance Summer Theatre stopped the play in the middle to ask his girlfriend to marry him.

Another dramatic guy got a group of musicians to play at the balcony window of his lady love. When practically the whole population of the building came out to watch, he sang a song he’d wrote for her, finally asking her to marry him at the end.

**Anxiously Engaged In A Good Cause: How To Get Married Four Different Ways (FA 01 1661)**

In Tonga, a boy must ask a girl’s family for permission to marry her, and then propose publically. He and his family will bring food to her home, and an uncle will explain the situation. If the proposal is met with acceptance, the boy and girl will exchange tao’valas (kind of like shawls made from woven tree bark)

Austrian men will climb up mountains to pick Edelweiss, because it’s a magic flower that never wilts. Tradition states that many a man will be unsuccessful at picking the Edelweiss, and fall to his death with a single flower clutched in his hand. A successful picker proves his aptitude, and the amount of love he has for his fiancé.

**Marry Me! Oh, Marry Me!: Mormon Engagement Proposals (FA 01 2263)**

One chap set up a ladder outside his girlfriend’s window. He showed up in a stretch limousine with a dozen red roses. Then he climbed up to her window, got down on one knee and asked her to become his wife.

**Actively Engaged: Mormon Engagement Stories (FA 01 2387)**

One young man built a dock and put a table on it with fancy linens and china so he could take his girlfriend to dinner on the lake and propose to her there.
Another guy put together a radio spot so he could have it ask his girlfriend to marry him while they were on a date. At first, she didn’t realize it was for her, but after her full name was announced, she caught on pretty quickly.

**Little Gestures**

**Unique Dates And Engagements (FA 01 109)**

The couple went to an art museum together, and near a painting of a man kneeling before a woman, the young man had put a caption asking for his lady’s hand in marriage. When she read the caption, he pulled out a ring and life imitated art.

**The Engagement Ring: How And Why It Is Given (FA 01 215)**

One fellow put a diamond ring in the hollow of a tree, so when he went on a walk with his pretty young thing, they could find it together.

A young man tied a ring to a tree at temple square, pretended it was a blossom and picked it off for his girlfriend while they strolled through the grounds.

A man slipped the ring on his future wife’s finger while they were praying together, so when she opened her eyes she saw it.

During a music festival, one young man leaned to his girlfriend and said “Wasn’t that a pretty eternal song? Wouldn’t you like to listen to them forever?” and gave her a ring.

For the girlfriend who loved music and dancing, one young man bought a beautifully intricate music box and fitted the ring inside it, so when it opened, she’d be serenaded as well as proposed to.

A traditional young man gave his darling a dozen roses with a ribbon attaching the ring to their stems.

At a luau, a youth tied an engagement ring to a lei and presented it to his girlfriend.

**Marriage Proposals—Engagements (FA 01 739)**
One guy put a ring and a proposal into a fortune cookie and slipped it to the waitress at a Chinese restaurant to bring at the end of dinner.

The horse drawn carriages in Salt Lake are an idyllic date for any young couple, but are especially significant to one young couple who got engaged as they were riding around temple square.

Another nice place where a couple chose for a romantic getaway was a mountain pass where they got engaged while having a picnic during a skiing trip

**Peculiar Practices in Mormon Courtships and Engagements (FA 01 801)**

After praying for a long time about whether marriage to his girlfriend was a correct path, one young man wasn’t getting a clear answer. Finally, he took control of the situation and said “Heavenly Father, If you want to stop me, you’d better do something now, because I’m going to propose to her” On his way over, the bell tower was playing the wedding march.

**Engagement Stories (FA 01 977)**

One guy told his girlfriend that he had a note in a bottle and he wanted to toss it out to sea. However, once they got to the water, he gave the note to her instead. It was a proposal.

A couple who liked to color together got engaged via a message in a coloring book.

**Engagement Stories: His & Hers (FA 01 1249)**

One couple couldn’t afford a ring, so the young man got his flower of maidenhood a bag of her favorite flavor of lifesavers.

**Engagement Story Comparisons (FA 01 1290)**

A couple happened to be in Portugal together on a study abroad. They explored the ancient cities together, finding small cathedrals and other quiet, beautiful places. One afternoon, they rented a boat and rowed out to some beautiful shade trees. Under the trees, they got engaged.

**Mormon Engagement Stories (FA 01 1498)**

As a non to his pioneer ancestors who often practiced a similar ritual, one young man bent a horseshoe nail around like a ring and gave it to his fiancé until they could afford a diamond ring.
One young man prepared a dating scrapbook along with a recording of him reading the story. After she had sat through the recording, he popped out from where he’d been hiding to propose.

**Will You Marry Me? Engagement Traditions of the Mormons (FA 01 1920)**

One male took his female companion to the “This Is The Place” memorial to propose, since he’d been looking for “the right place to propose.”

**“Will You Marry Me?”–Engagement Proposal Stories (FA 01 2098)**

One couple went shooting, and the ring was hidden in a secret compartment of a handmade pistol that the young man had made.

**Ten Sacred, Secret Stories of Two Sweethearts: Exposing Mom and Dad’s Courtship, Proposal and Engagement (FA 01 2142)**

A young man took his girlfriend to an elevator and pushed the emergency button when they were halfway up. He said he’d “always wanted [her] to hear the bells when [he] proposed,”

**Engagement Stories: Roommate Versions Compared with the Couples’ Versions in Deciphering the Individual’s Values (FA 01 2379)**

One young man asked his girlfriend to marry him, and then led her down a petal strewn path leading to a picnic and a fire.

A romantic sort of gent drove twelve hours to Arizona so he could surprise his fiancé-to-be with the ring she had thought she’d receive the next time she went to visit him.

**Actively Engaged: Mormon Engagement Stories (FA 01 2387)**

One boy had had a crush on his future spouse since he was fourteen. At that age, he told his mother that when he married the girl of his dreams, he’d make her heart shaped pancakes every day of their marriage. His mom told the young girl’s mom, who told her daughter, so years later when he proposed with heart shaped pancakes, she knew what was coming.
Failed Attempts at Romance

The Engagement Ring: How and Why It Is Given (FA 01 215)

One guy put the ring in a rolled up poster. When his girlfriend opened it, it fell to the floor. His inquiry was still successful, but the romance was a bit dead.

When his dear one fell asleep while they were talking, one guy took the opportunity to put the ring on her finger. When she woke up, he waited for her to notice. It took an embarrassingly long time.

One guy proposed in the middle of ward talent night by interrupting his girlfriend’s skit.

A cannery worker put an engagement ring into a can of peaches and brought them to a ward picnic. He asked his dear one if she might like some peaches, and scooped the ring onto her plate. It is unclear if she cleaned the ring before putting it on her finger.

Putting the ring in a glass of water just makes embarrassment for everyone. Don’t do it.

One man put the ring inside a flower and left it on her desk, intending for his young lady to find it when she smelled the flower. She never found it, and eventually threw the rotting flowers out. The young man was forced to dumpster dive to save his investment.

A less discrete couple were kissing on the ‘diamond deck’ of a restaurant. Before he took her there, the young man had place the ring in his mouth so that he could give it to her while they were kissing.

Engagement Stories (FA 01 977)

While all stories that involve putting an engagement ring in some kind of food are naturally un-romantic, the worst case scenarios are those where the young lady doesn’t succeed at finding the ring. In one such story, the young man had placed the ring in the bottom of his future wife’s milk shake which she then refused to finish. She threw the excess out the car window in a remarkable display of apathy towards anti-litter laws. The couple had to stop the car and go search for the ring along the side of the road.

Mormon Engagement Stories (FA 01 1498)

One man put the ring in his pocket too soon, and when he went through a metal detector at a museum the couple had decided to visit, it went off and he had to pull the ring out in front of
her. The moment could have been salvaged if he’d proposed right then, but instead he chose to put the ring back in his pocket and wait until later.

The Elements of Engagement Stories (FA 01 1880)

One young man was so nervous about the proposal that he put the ring on the wrong hand. His fiancée made him take it off and put it on the correct hand.

Will You Marry Me? Engagement Traditions of the Mormons (FA 01 1920)

One guy wanted to propose just before midnight on New Year’s Eve, so he could say she took a year to get back to him. He fell asleep as midnight approached though, so he ended up asking her at 12:15 instead.

Marry Me! Oh, Marry Me!: Mormon Engagement Proposals (FA 01 2263)

In an act of supreme class, one clever gent taped an engagement ring to a package of life savers and relied on pun “thanks for ‘saving’ my ‘life’” to get the message across.

A romantic fellow kidnapped his girlfriend and took her to dinner on a highway median. As cars passed, clogging the atmosphere with noise and pollution, he proposed.

How We Met: The Folklore of Mormon Engagement (FA 01 2331)

A sports fan arranged a banner at a baseball game to ask his girlfriend to marry him. She was really embarrassed, but was urged by the crowd to accept.

Holiday Themed

Unique Dates And Engagements (FA 01 109)

**Easter:** A couple exchanged Easter baskets with each other. Along with the usual candy and sundry, the young man put an Easter egg with ring inside the young woman’s Easter basket.

**Independence Day:** One story claims that a young man lit off a firework that looked like a heart, then asked his significant other to marry him under its glow.
Another story features a young man who arranged sparklers to say “Will you marry me” in the lawn, brought his lady up to the balcony and let the lights do the proposing.

**Halloween:** A young man placed the ring on top of a lit jack-o-lantern.

**Christmas:** One chap gave his dearest a gumball machine, and when she inserted a coin, she got a gumball with a ring surrounding it.

**The Engagement Ring: How And Why It Is Given (FA 01 215)**

**Christmas:** One fellow put the ring on the Christmas tree, so she found it Christmas morning.

A young woman’s grandmother had made her a quilt for Christmas. It had a pocket which her boyfriend put a ring in it so that it fell out when she unfolded the quilt.

**Easter:** He had a ring custom made, but teased his girlfriend, saying it wouldn’t be ready for a few weeks. He got an extra ring box, a cheap dollar store ring, and a blue Easter bunny. He attached the fake ring in its box to the bunny’s hands and gave it to her on April fool’s day. She really wanted to wear the fake ring, because she loved him that much, but he told her “No, that isn’t the kind of ring I want to get engaged with.” She said “Oh” disappointedly. Then he said “No, this is” and gave her the real ring.

**A Focus on Engagement (FA 01 1459)**

**Christmas:** One couple went to the mall at Christmas time. The young man asked his girlfriend what she wanted for Christmas, and she said all she wanted was him, but she already had him. He encouraged her to go ask Santa for what she really wanted. She didn’t want to, but she played along. She told Santa she wanted a ring from her boyfriend, and Santa produced a ring box. Inside was a CTR ring, but when she turned from Santa, her boyfriend was kneeling with the real ring for her.

**Mormon Engagement Stories (FA 01 1498)**

**Valentine’s Day:** A couple had handmade gifts for each other, he a jewelry box, and she a quilt. Inside her jewelry box was an engagement ring.
Involving Animals

Unique Dates And Engagements (FA 01 109)

After helping a horse through child birth, a young man proposed by presenting the colt and a ring to his darling.

Another young fellow took his girlfriend fishing. He had a friend underwater who provided her with a rainbow trout that had the proposal in its mouth when she threw her line in the water.

A young gentleman put on a suit of armor and road a white horse to the place where his girlfriend worked and delivered flowers and a ring on a satin pillow.

One guy took his soon to be fiancé to the zoo and bought her a box of crackerjacks at the concession stand. Inside, according to previous collusions with the shop-keep, was a diamond ring.

“Will You Marry Me?”–Engagement Proposal Stories (FA 01 2098)

A couple rode horses up a mountain peak to watch the sunset. At the summit, the young man proposed.

Actively Engaged: Mormon Engagement Stories (FA 01 2387)

One young man took his young lady fishing. After a while of not catching anything, he said he’d like to use his favorite lure in hopes of catching something. He asked his girlfriend to get the box with a ribbon on it out of the tackle box. Inside was a ring. He caught her.

Jokes and Pranks

Unique Dates and Engagements (FA 01 109)

One guy arranged to be pulled over and the car searched for drugs. The policeman found a dirty box in the glove compartment, and forced her to open it. Inside was a ring, and the boyfriend proposed right there.

One fellow wore the ring on his pinky all night to see how long it’d take her to notice. It took her quite a while.
A well connected lad arranged for the last question on his girlfriend’s test to be “Will you marry me? Love John”

During The Game of Life, one guy actually proposed to his girlfriend at the spot where the game requires the player to get married.

One couple built a snowman together. The young man put a carrot on for the nose, and on the end of the carrot was the ring.

One boyfriend convinced eighty-seven students to spell out “Sheri, Will you marry me?” in the snow with their bodies.

One young woman was called by a pharmacist to pick up a prescription. Inside was a ring and a prescription for marriage.

A couple got ringside seats for a circus performance. In the middle, the clowns came out with a banner announcing the proposal and presented the ring.

**The Engagement Ring: How And Why It Is Given (FA 01 215)**

A flippant young man gave his girlfriend a ring frozen inside a block of ice. Then he handed her an ice pick and told her she could ‘pick out her own ring.’

A lad built himself a big box with “this side up” printed on the side and had his roommates deliver him to his girlfriend’s house. When she opened the box, he popped out with the ring.

One guy told his young lady that he couldn’t afford a ring, so they had a candle passing with a ‘pop-top’ ring with an actual rock in it. When they were explaining, she fiddled with it and the rock fell out. She gave it to him to fix, and he replaced the rock with a real diamond.

A couple went rowing together. When presented with the ring, the girl was also presented with a choice “say yes, or you’re overboard.” She said yes.

A more dramatic type of guy convinced his girlfriend that he couldn’t be with her because he was a secret agent, and had a group of friends and a police officer stage a car chase through Salt Lake City. They made it to the house, ran inside and locked the door. He asked her if she could put up with
“experiences like this” and she said “It would be difficult but I really love you.” After that affirmation, his friends caught up and revealed the joke. They had an engagement party right there and then.

**Engagement Stories (FA 01 569)**

To surprise his librarian girlfriend, one young man took an old book and hollowed out the pages to fit the ring inside. He asked another librarian to put numbers on the spine so it looked like a library book. Then he made sure it got put on the re-shelving cart. When she noticed it was lighter than it should be, she opened the book to discover the ring and her fiancé walked around the corner to propose.

**Engagement Stories (FA 01 977)**

One guy proposed while his girlfriend was hooked up to a plasma donation machine.

Another chap put the real ring and 15 fake rings in different colored balloons and told his girlfriend to start popping them.

**Engagement Stories: HIS & HERS (FA 01 1249)**

One couple had an inside joke from when they had worked together before the young man’s mission. He would always make little rings out of yogurt cup lids, and she would wear them. One day, he presented her with a yogurt lid ring that looked a little lumpy and weird. To put it on, she had to peel off the foil a bit to get the ring to fit, but as she peeled she discovered the real ring underneath.

**A Focus on Engagement (FA 01 1459)**

One fellow wrote a resume geared towards marriage with purpose as “Earthly Objective: Marry you” It detailed all the reasons he’d be a good husband and father. He printed it on the back of his actual resume and asked his girlfriend to proofread it and give him her opinion.

On a historical walking tour with lots of plaques labeling what happened in the spot, one young man made a plaque to commemorate the spot where he and his girlfriend would get engaged. Then he took her on the tour, reading each plaque aloud, and when they reached the special one, he proposed.

“Will You Marry Me?”—Engagement Proposal Stories (FA 01 2098)
At a fancy restaurant, one young man ordered a hand carved carrot in the shape of a diamond ring to be delivered by the waiter before he proposed. He told his girlfriend that he knew she’d “always wanted a carat ring,” and made her actually put it on. After the experience, he gave her an actual ring.

The Engagement Story: Her Side of It (FA 01 2107)

One young lady was sitting with her future sister in law when she spied a tiny carriage pulling up in front of the house and decided to go outside to check it out. A little boy popped out with a silk pillow that had a tiny shoe on it, saying “I'm looking for a princess who fits this shoe.” The shoe belonged to a little girl, so she went and got it. Then a young man exited the carriage with another pillow and a ring, saying “I'm looking for the princess who fits this ring.” The young lady announced that her finger would fit the ring, and joined him for a carriage ride through the town.

Actively Engaged: Mormon Engagement Stories (FA 01 2387)

Another guy proposed by leaving the ring in the organ room at the HFAC, which isn’t as gruesome as it sounds. He had friends watch so the ring wouldn’t get stolen, and it had a fancy calligraphy letter attached, inviting his girlfriend to marry him. While walking past, he directed her attention to the room, and they went in to get engaged.