

# Narrative in Film & TV: “True & the Rainbow Kingdom – Super Duper Dance Party”

True and the Rainbow Kingdom, Season 1, Episode 1: Super Duper Dance Party, Directed by Jamie Whitney, Written by John Slama, first aired: 11 August 2017, Netflix

The Netflix blurb to the series ‘True and the Rainbow Kingdom’ says: “*When something’s wrong in the Rainbow Kingdom bighearted guardian True and her best friend, Bartleby, are there to grant wishes and save the day.*”

And for this particular episode Netflix writes: “*True and Bartleby team up to get a dejected DJ back in the groove after Grizelda shakes his confidence on the day of the Rainbow King’s dance party*”

The episode centres around the main character, True, her best friend, a cat called Bartleby; another friend Princess Grizelda; and a visiting DJ – Bingo-Bango. The main ‘trigger’ for the disruption of the equilibrium in this episode is the belittling and self-interested, jealousy and egotistical Grizelda towards primarily the DJ Bingo-Bango. The resolution is the ‘creative’ way in which True (and Bartleby) use the three wishes granted by Zee and the Wishing Tree to ‘solve’ the problem and restore equilibrium.

True and the Rainbow Kingdom is a fantasy – involving a talking cat (Bartleby), a pixie-come-fairy like (though unspecified) king, The Rainbow King; Yeti’s, personified transportation (a bus) and various other ‘fantastical elements’ – notably the ‘Wishing Tree’, it’s ‘Wishes’ and True’s primary form of transportation – a cloud called Cumulo.

It is also a children’s fantasy – so bright colours are a big part of the programme, as is comedy (usually towards slapstick – such as in the first scene of this episode).

The episode ‘Super Duper Dance Party’ conforms to the Classic Hollywood narrative structure – firstly in being told in three acts (Beginning – Scenes 1 - 3; Middle – Scenes 4-7; End – Scene 8); but more importantly featuring the equilibrium (with foreshadowing of the trigger event to come) in Scenes 1 – 3; with the trigger occurring in Scene 4; whilst the disruption takes place during scenes 5 through 6; and the first solution occurring during scene 7; and then the final restoration to equilibrium occurring during scene 8. During Scene 8, we have a short return to disruption followed by the solution moment and then the final equilibrium, which ties together the use of the convenient three wishes which server the narrative. Finally it is an episode with a ‘moral lesson’ – essentially a morality tale.

As this is animated it is on the most difficult to assess the use of lighting in a typical way as the programme uses bright colours to convey the fantasy side of the

programme; the child-like approach to life (including learning and imagination); and the upbeat nature of the primary character (True) and the ethos/feel of the show is upbeat, quirky and fun.

The 'low lighting' elements appear in the Wishing Tree itself to present an idea of peace, tranquillity, meditation and intimacy. There is a moment of 'lower lighting' when Grizelda meets Bingo-Bango again in the last scene, this portrays the Bingo-Bango's emotions of feeling hurt.

The 180 degree rule is never broken, and nor is the 30 degree camera movement broken, this is essentially a stage play filmed, but children are able to immerse themselves in the imaginative world of True and the Rainbow Kingdom without poor 'camera' movement breaking that.

The single primary point of dramatic editing is actually near the middle of the first scene, when the camera cuts harshly from True speaking to the Rainbow King via Facebubble, to Grizelda, in a mid-to-close full-body-sized shot (remember they're little children sized), who says: "All eyes?" and then cuts to a eyes-only close up: "Here's my chance." This scene doesn't actually tell us what it's her chance for, but there is a couple of script hints:

Firstly this piece of dialogue:

Grizelda: Thanks for starting the decorating, but it's time to let a professional party planner take it from here. That's ME!!! And my decorating won't be the only thing worth seeing at this party.

True: You are a really good dancer, Grizelda.

Grizelda: I know. And when we're done setting up and the party's in full swing, every creature everywhere will know it too.

This next piece of dialogue between True and the Rainbow King (via Facebubble):

Rainbow King: True, hello! How's the setup coming for my Super Duper Dance Party?

True: Great, Your Majesty! We're almost done decorating and best of all, DJ Bingo-Bango will be coming soon to spin some tunes!

Rainbow King: Tickle me pink! All eyes in the kingdom will be on him. (which is when we cut to Grizelda's 'All Eyes' and 'Here's my chance' dialogue and cut scene)

After the cut-back from Grizelda to True and the Rainbow King, when he asks True to collect Bingo-Bango from the 'transit station' – Grizelda butts in and says:

"If she wasn't so busy with all these decorations. But don't worry, Rainbow King. I'll go get Wingo-Clango."

This antagonistic, absentminded and rude referencing to Bingo-Bango by Grizelda is a recurring theme – and gets done in multiple times:

- Wingo-Clango (in Scene 1 and 4);

- Bingo-Dingo;
- Blingo-Bongo (twice to Bingo-Bongo's face);
- Jingo-Clango; 'what's his name'

These are all the times she refers to him, and Grizelda never gets his name right.

The voice/point of view of this episode is third person, and the narrative is carried by True, Grizelda and Bing-Bango – with external perspective and 'guidance' to True provided by Zee (every hero needs a mentor, in other episodes this is primarily the Rainbow King, but in this episode it is almost entirely Zee's role, as he provides the explanation and the solution (calm, meditation and the three wishes): "Let's take a moment."

The semiotics and mis-en-scene is both front-and-center and also obscure. From Grizelda's 'crown' to tell us she's a pissy/spoilt little 'princess', to Zee's white 'robes' to suggest serenity. It is more obscure with regards the primary three colour repetition (blue, yellow, red) which appears on:

- True's headband,
- True's Sash,
- the Rainbow King's head;
- Bingo-Bango;
- Zee's Robes;
- and True's Backback (where the wishes go).
- As well as the three colours (blue, red and yellow) as circles around a green circle (representative of the 'Wishing Tree').

We come to realise the colours denote each of the wishes, but to what import it is difficult to distinguish as:

- the first wish one comes out of the blue circle on True's backpack, but is a red and white coloured wish.
- the second wish comes from the yellow circle on True's backpack, but is a red, blue and white coloured wish.
- and the third wish comes from the top (and yellow) partition/circle of True's backpack, but is a white coloured wish with a big red lips and blue(?) eyes.

Unfortunately, I don't understand at this stage on the importance of these colours (except their primary status), though the chances of the third wish coming from the top of the backpack seems to suggest the apex of achievement.

As this is a children's programme, all the dialogue is designed to convey simply and clearly the emotions of the characters, from Bingo-Bongo's admission to Grizelda when they first meet (instead of subtly through facial expression and gestures) is stated: "Sweet! I'm a little nervous, but I'm ready for it!" through to True narrating (to Zee) something the audience had clearly already seen "And when we saw him, he looked really upset."

Whilst the story is progressed by the dialogue, it also highlights and spells out the emotions such as empathy (for Bingo-Bongo); suspicion and frustration (at Grizelda);

as well as the audience reaction/perspective/responses - which are represented by the 'throw away' comments of Bartleby ("It was, wasn't it? Maybe a bit too nice.") as well as the more direct approach of True ("Grizelda, when you told Bingo-Bango he couldn't play well, he believed you and felt really bad about it.") – This helps us to either identify with True, or in ignorance of the emotions and feelings of others with Grizelda.

The thematic demure of this episode is stated by True as "But when we all dance together, that's when we have the most fun." or more simply – when we play together we have more fun than playing alone; I would suggest a second morality lesson is that selfishness leads to disappointment and hurt feelings.