

All Aboard The Ballyhoo!

by Toby Arguello

Overview

I love pirates. Not the chlamydia-ridden lowlifes driven to the point of violent madness not having seen land, women, or a healthy set of gums for four months (actually I love those too in a way, but this is a kids show). But the *Treasure Island* pirates, draped in bright calico and singing shanties as they sail the high seas for fame, treasure, and the thrill of some good swashbucklin'. *Swashbucklin'*. What a word.

I also love mythology. I think everyone does, and while we have a huge heap of Greco-Roman, Egyptian, and even a little Norse and Chinese mythologies in art, there's little to no Caribbean or Polynesian mythology in media, especially kid's media (except for *Moana*, which was a hit so I'm definitely onto something here.)

So I want to combine these loves. A series of goofy piratey adventures on an as-of-yet-unnamed world based on the Caribbean during the Golden Age of Piracy. Enter the *Ballyhoo*, the lamest pirate ship to sail the seven seas. Two kids, Prince and Portia, are looking for answers after their treasure-hunting parents mysteriously vanish, leaving behind two pendants that glow when there's treasure nearby. Through their weird coot of a distant relative Cookie, they're able to secure spots on the crew of the *Ballyhoo*, searching to unravel the mystery their parents left behind while helping the crew out on the often disastrous hijinks they ensue.

Audience

I'm looking for the kids who watched *Gravity Falls*, *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, *Regular Show*, and *Adventure Time*, so let's call it around ages 8-14, but still able to give the parents something to laugh at. Pirate stuff is historically mostly male, both in fiction and in actual practice, so I'd be hoping to make this more gender neutral but based on pirate appeal alone the audience is probably going to be leaning more to boys at least at the start.

Setting

There's going to be a name for this place, I promise. It's not the Caribbean but it is, like how the world in *Avatar* isn't Asia but it is. It's a tropical archipelago with varied environments, from rainforest, to industrial cities, volcanoes, desert, pirate havens, ancient ruins, whatever we need. There's also a faraway continent that's basically Europe, working title Imperia. Their navy is a presence around some islands and cities and serve as antagonists and obstacles when need be.

It's also slightly fantastical. There's no elves or dwarves running around, but lots of weird mythical creatures running around that are hybrids of my creation and Caribbean mythology—primarily Voudou/Voodoo/Vudu—like little vampiric creatures scuttling about in dark forests, and of course lots of sea monsters! There will be recurring cities, favorite ports and islands, but the *Ballyhoo* is a ship and ships move around.

Characters

Prince (12ish): One of our two main protagonists. Prince is hot-headed, brazen, and brave beyond logic. Impatient and fidgety, Prince would much rather strike with the element of surprise instead of waiting around to develop a plan. He's athletic, a good climber and swimmer, highly competitive with big appetite, and laughs loudest at his own jokes. He's slightly crude, at a regular level for a normal pirate but above average for a crew member of the *Ballyhoo*. Once he figures out what he thinks is right, he sticks to it right to the end. Has a Hagrid-like soft spot for animals, no matter how obviously dangerous and terrifying they are.

Portia (12ish): Our other main protagonist, and twin sister to Prince. Just as passionate as her brother, but shows more self-restraint with slightly more moral in her motives, thinking about rightful owners rather than dollar signs when finding some lost treasure. She's the brains but she's not lacking in brawn, and will go full "momma-bear" mode whenever Prince or anyone else she cares about is threatened. Self-elected leader, the type to call herself the older sibling even though it was only by about five minutes. She's a tinkerer and handy with tools, often repairing anything that inevitably goes wrong with the *Ballyhoo* and giving her some experimental improvements or inventions that usually end up doing more harm than good. Hates mice. *Hates* them.

Cookie (80s, possibly a million years old): Cookie rides that vague line between “family friend” and “I think he might be our grandpa’s cousin, what would that make him? Wait, does our grandpa even have a cousin?” In any case, he’s the only one left to take care of the kids following the disappearance of their parents, and he’s happy to help. Cookie is captain of the *Ballyhoo* through process of elimination, like how the Secretary of Agriculture becomes President. The other crewmates look up to him as they fondly remember his long tenure of the most coveted role on the ship: cook. He’s good at it too and still does it, devoting more time and care to cooking than actually captaining the ship. He drops the occasional word of wit or wisdom every now and then, but mostly is very much an ol’ coot.

Captain Jockbeard (30s): Name might be tweaked to be slightly more subtle, but Jockbeard is captain of the *Broseidon*, the much more successful arch-rival of the *Ballyhoo*. Think of it like the rich kid’s camp across the river. Whenever Prince and Portia think they’ve finally got hold of an important artifact or secret treasure, Jockbeard is there one step ahead of him laughing with his crew of Chads. He’s a recurring antagonist, and loves it. He’s a well-known pirate and privateer, stealing ships for kings and queens in Imperia, but is still petty enough to thwart the plans of a little-league ship like the *Ballyhoo*, usually letting them do all the work and sweep in at the last second. Think Commander Zhao in *Avatar*. Has a man-bun and a jawline that could cut through a stick of salami.

Note about character’s appearances: In terms of style, we can go for the more well-known extravagant image of pirates shown in *Treasure Island* and *Pirates of the Caribbean*, with some

real-world examples of Calico Jack Rackham and Blackbeard as models since they dressed the coolest. Also, while it's not actually the Caribbean, it is heavily based on it so I don't want it to be a bunch of white dudes running around on boats. A lot of real-life pirate crews around the Golden Age were multiracial, so this even has a historical justification to it.

Format

The episodes would be one half hour long, three acts, with an A and B and maybe the occasional C. Episodes would likely follow Prince, Portia, and Cookie specifically in an A, the rest of the crew in a B, or maybe two vignettes on other crew members and their interactions with the main trio. We could also follow what's going on with the *Broseidon* and her crew, when it's not necessary we be surprised by their actions. In terms of music, I'd like there to be shanties among the crew members because I think they're cool and a very real part of any crew, pirate or not. It's not going to be a recurring thing or part of the show, more like background music. No one's going to break out in song like they do in, say, *Adventure Time*, but maybe a crew member can audition his/her own shanty as part of a comedic bit. It's slightly serialized, there's a series arc that moves forward but not as urgently as *Avatar*, but I like the episode structure in that show so I'll take it. Actually I like everything about that show so I'm basically just going to steal it and see if anyone notices.

Story Ideas

- In the middle of the open ocean, Prince and Portia's pendants start glowing. Nowhere near land, everyone is confused until they see a polka-dotted whale, big even by whale standards, breach near them, and takes a bite out of the *Ballyhoo's* hull. Prince and Portia's pendant stops glowing as they drift away from the whale. Portia determines that whatever made their pendants glow is inside the whale, so they chase after it, much to the displeasure of Cookie who was the only survivor of a ship destroyed by this legendary whale before (I might name the whale Mick, if the parody wasn't obvious enough). Chasing after Mick, they run into the *Broseidon*, who wants the whale because whale-blubber scented candles are a really big thing in the Colonies right now, which infuriates Prince that they would kill the whale for something so stupid. They chase the whale into a half-submerged cave system, and against Cookie's wishes get on a rowboat to investigate it by themselves. There they find a small group of heavily bearded old-men living in the caves. They are the former crew of the ship destroyed by Mick, but were rescued by the whale. They find that the whale is actually super nice but survives on a diet of wood. They devise a plan to trap to lure the *Broseidon* into a bay to get eaten by Mick, but Cookie has a change of heart and sails in to apologize to Prince and Portia and capture the whale. Hilarity ensues.
- While free-diving for pearls in a reef, Prince comes across a message in a bottle that details someone trapped in a world of wonder, and promising riches to anyone who comes to rescue them. They find a series of more and more bottles, each more vivid and enticing than the last, but as they follow directions to the fabled place of wonder, it turns out to be a marketing

scheme for some guy's lame museum and gift shop. When they leave without buying anything, the owner of the gift shop sends his animal servants to capture Prince and Portia, and leads him to a dungeon filled by misguided tourists who all forced to write messages in bottles to help promote the store. Only Cookie and the crew of the *Ballyhoo* can save them.

Hilarity ensues.

- Cookie returns triumphantly with a map to the lost City of the Monkey God that he won in a card game (Go Fish). While Prince is super excited, Portia is skeptical, especially after discovering that the map is written on the back of a menu. They follow the map anyway to a seemingly random patch of rainforest, but after solving sort of code or puzzle with the help of the menu, they open a trap door into the fabled lost city, populated by sentient monkeys. Their pendants start glowing and hilarity ensues. (This ones more of a work in progress)
- Probably one in Atlantis, hilarity ensues.

Yo Ho Ho and a Bottle of Rum!