English Learning for Curious Minds

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Transcript & Key Vocabulary

Episode #138
Disney Part III: The Magic
5th Mar, 2021

[00:00:00] Hello, hello hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:00:11] The show where you can listen to fascinating stories, and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:22] I'm Alastair Budge and today is part three, the final part, of our three-part our mini-series on Disney.

[00:00:30] In Part One we learned about the history of Disney, how it all got started, and how it turned into the **juggernaut**[1] that it is today.

[00:00:38] In Part Two, which you can find on the website, leonardoenglish.com, we learned about the business of Disney, how it all works commercially, and some of the weird and wonderful ways in which Disney makes money.

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[1] huge company

[00:00:52] And in this episode, Part Three, we are going to talk about the magic of Disney, some of the reasons that Disney films, and Disney characters have become some of the most loved by people all over the world.

[00:01:07] Without these magical characters, Disney would be nothing, they are the **glue**[2] that holds everything together.

[00:01:14] So, **buckle up**[3], enjoy the episode, I think it's going to be a fun one.

[00:01:19] Before we get right into that though, let me quickly remind you that you can follow along to this episode with the subtitles, the transcript and its key vocabulary, so you don't miss a word and build up your vocabulary as you go, over on the website, which is leonardoenglish.com.

[00:01:36] The website is also home to all of our bonus episodes, like Part II of this mini series, plus guides on how to improve your English in a more interesting, more effective, way.

[00:01:47] So if you haven't checked that out yet, the place to go to is leonardoenglish.com.

[00:01:54] OK then, Disney, and specifically, the magic of Disney, why it all works so well.

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[2] a substance used for sticking things together

[3] get ready

[00:02:02] Now, perhaps the most **fervent**[4], the most passionate of Disney fans might

say that there is no way to explain the magic of Disney.

[00:02:11] Magic can't be taught, nobody can explain why something is magical, it just

is.

[00:02:18] But, there are lots of **aspects**[5] of the Disney magic that can be quite nicely

explained, and the fact that the original Disney, Walt Disney, died in 1966, and since

then his company has done a pretty good job at creating magic without him, I think it's

fair to say that there is a **tried and tested**[6] **formula**[7] for creating the Disney magic.

[00:02:41] Or perhaps I should say that there are **formulas**[8], multiple **formulas**,

because as you have now learned, there is much more than one style of Disney film.

[00:02:52] So in this episode we are going to **reveal**[9] what some of the key themes are of

Disney films, and some of the reasons why they work so well.

[00:03:03] There are 5 **core**[10] themes that we're going to cover.

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[4] very passionate

[5] features

[6] known to work

[7] standard way of creating something

[8] standard ways of creating something

[9] talk about things details that are not known

[10] main

[00:03:07] Firstly, the stories of Disney, how the stories are actually **structured**[11].

[00:03:13] Secondly, and on a related point, the characters in the movie.

[00:03:18] Thirdly, the **morals**[12] and theme of the movie.

[00:03:22] Fourth, the humour, the jokes, what makes us laugh.

[00:03:26] And finally, of course, the music.

[00:03:29] So, the first theme is the story, the actual **narrative**[13] of the movie.

[00:03:35] Every movie is a little different, but they almost always use a **formula** that has been **nicknamed**[14] The Hero's Journey.

[00:03:44] And it goes something like this.

[00:03:47] It starts by setting out the scene, the normal situation. Then, the problem with the situation is presented - note, it's here that the bad character is normally introduced.

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[11] designed

[12] lesson that can be learnt

[13] story

[14] commonly called

[00:03:59] Then, our hero is presented with a choice, does he or she go on this journey, do they take up the challenge? **Inevitably[15]**, after **weighing up[16]** the options, after **deliberating[17]**, they **depart[18]**.

[00:04:15] They come across challenges on their journey, and meet people who can help them.

[00:04:20] Then, there is one disaster, and it looks like all hope is gone.

[00:04:26] But magically, something happens, an opportunity presents itself, often the hero is **reunited[19]** with a **long-lost[20]** friend, our hero gets up again, and continues on their **quest[21]**.

[00:04:39] There is some kind of battle, the hero **emerges[22] victorious[23]**, and everyone is happy.

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[15] certain to happen

[16] carefully considering

[17] thinking over the matter

[18] go their way

[19] see each other once more

[20] have been out of contact for a long time

[21] a long search for something that is not easy to find

[22] turns out to be

[23] successful

[00:04:47] Now, this might sound simplistic, but you can put this **formula** onto almost everything that Disney does.

[00:04:55] Whether it's Aladdin trying to win over the princess, Ariel trying to become a human, or Pinocchio trying to become a real boy, there is always this hero's journey that is the **backbone**[24] of the film.

[00:05:10] And it works incredibly well.

[00:05:12] After you finish watching a Disney movie, you aren't left thinking, "well, that didn't make sense", or "I wonder what happened to him or her", there is a **logical**[25] conclusion that you sort of expect but is **pleasantly**[26] surprising, and you leave feeling that everything is as it should be.

[00:05:31] So, from a storytelling **perspective**[27], the stories themselves, even though they might not be original, are full of just the right amount of drama to make everyone feel good. You leave thinking that the ending is correct, the hero has **achieved**[28] his or her goal, and there aren't any unanswered questions.

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[24] main part

[25] well thought out

[26] enjoyably

[27] point of view

[28] been able to get a desired result

[00:05:52] There's a principle that is **attributed**[29] to Chekhov, the Russian **playwright**[30], that if there is a gun introduced in a story, something needs to happen to that gun. Good storytelling means anything that is introduced to the **narrative** is either used or explained, and Disney certainly doesn't fail **in this regard**[31].

[00:06:16] Our second ingredient in the magic of Disney is the characters.

[00:06:21] Now, as any storyteller knows, a story is nothing without its characters, and Disney does a fantastic job at creating characters with just the right amount of **complexity**[32].

[00:06:35] Not too complicated so that a child can't understand why the character is doing something, and not so simple that they are completely boring and **predictable**[33].

[00:06:47] Despite the fact that a large proportion of the characters in Disney movies aren't human, and don't live in human worlds, they are humans in their character, which makes them far easier to relate to.

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[29] said that someone is responsible for

[30] someone who writes stories to be acted out

[31] in a specific area

[32] the state of having lots of different parts and being difficult to understand

[33] easily guessed

[00:07:01] To give a real example, Ariel, the **mermaid**[34] in the Little **Mermaid** is not the **quintessential**[35] princess. Instead, she is independent, **headstrong**[36], not afraid to push **barriers**[37].

[00:07:16] In Toy Story, you have the characters Buzz Lightyear, the spaceman and Woody, the cowboy. They are both **complex**[38] characters, they have human characteristics, they are **proud**[39], they are **jealous**[40], they get sad, they have hopes and dreams.

[00:07:33] And it's not just the main good characters, the bad characters, the **villains**[41] are also unique, they are their own characters with their own hopes and dreams.

[00:07:44] Disney also makes sure that you can normally understand why the villains are evil, what their **motivations**[42] are.

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[34] a female character in fiction that has a fish's body instead of legs

[35] the most typical

[36] very determined

[37] limits that have been set

[38] complicated

[39] see themselves to be of a higher class

[40] want attention or love to be shown to them only

[41] bad people

[42] reasons for doing things

[00:07:52] Walt Disney believed from early on that young children could **cope**[43] with evil characters, they could manage the **baddies**[44] in the movies, as long as at the end of the movie good **triumphed**[45] over evil, that it was clear that evil wasn't the route to success.

[00:08:12] But it's also important in Disney films that you can understand why an evil character is evil.

[00:08:19] If a character was doing something evil and you couldn't understand why, well that was scary. But if you know why the character is behaving in a particular way, even if what they are doing is evil, a child can manage it if they understand it.

[00:08:37] Again, to give you some examples, in The Little **Mermaid**, Ursula, the sea witch, has been thrown out of Atlantica by her **rival**[46], King Triton.

[00:08:47] In Peter Pan, Captain Hook wants revenge on Peter Pan for **feeding**[47] his hand to a crocodile.

[00:08:54] In Cinderella and Snow White, the **villains** are **jealous** of the main character.

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[43] put up with (a difficult situation)

[44] bad characters in a film or book

[45] was the winner

[46] a person who is in competition with someone else

[47] giving as food

[00:09:00] Yes, they're **nasty**[48], but you can normally understand why they are doing what they are doing.

[00:09:05] There are, of course, **exceptions**[49] - I still can't see why Cruella De Vil needs to wear the **fur**[50] of Dalmatian **puppies**[51] - but the rule does generally work.

[00:09:16] And on a final point related to the characters, it's not just the main characters or the **villains**, even the **adjacent**[52] characters, the characters who help the heroes on their journey end up being often just as popular as the main characters.

[00:09:33] Timon and Pumba in the Lion King, for example, Baloo the bear in The Jungle Book, or Thumper the rabbit in Bambi. These are all characters with their own **complex** personalities, characters that are popular in their own right.

[00:09:48] Because of their popularity, Disney can do more with these characters. They can sell **merchandise**[53], of course, but they can even do things that create entirely different films based on these characters - for example The Return of Jafar, which was about the bad guy in Aladdin.

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[48] bad / not nice

[49] instances where things are different

[50] hair on the skin of animals

[51] young dogs

[52] near to

[53] goods that are related to the movies

[00:10:08] So, Disney has great characters, characters that **stand the test of time**[54] and are as popular now as when they first were introduced to the world.

[00:10:19] Our third theme of every Disney film, which is **intrinsically**[55] linked both to the story and the characters is the **moral**[56], the life lesson that the film teaches you.

[00:10:31] Whether that's the importance of friends or family, the problems that **arise**[57] with **greed**[58], or the importance of being true to yourself, Disney films all try to teach us something.

[00:10:44] And given that it's almost always the parents that pull out their wallets and pay, either for cinema tickets, for Disney Plus, or for anything else that is being bought, a parent is going to be happier to do so if they think that their child is learning, being taught a **valuable**[59] life lesson.

[00:11:03] Our fourth ingredient, our **penultimate**[60] ingredient in the Disney special sauce, is humour.

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[54] something that stands the test of time can be enjoyed at any time

[55] at its core, at its centre

[56] good examples

[57] happen

[58] an uncontrolled desire to have more of something

[59] worth a lot of money

[60] the one before the last

[00:11:10] Now, Disney films operate on different levels of humour.

[00:11:14] Young kids might find it funny when a character falls over on a banana, slightly older kids might find it funny when there is a **misunderstanding**[61] in the film, or a **play on words**[62].

[00:11:26] And adults might see hidden funny parts in the film that kids miss **altogether** [63].

[00:11:32] For example, the characters in Disney films often have amazing, slightly **discreet**[64] facial expressions that most kids wouldn't completely understand.

[00:11:42] Disney has this special mix of humour that works on so many different levels, but the important thing is that you don't need to understand every single joke to understand the story.

[00:11:55] So a younger kid can watch a Disney movie and understand more or less everything, and they can have a lot of fun watching it, they don't feel like they've missed out on jokes.

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[61] when someone does not understand something

[62] giving words double meaning

[63] entirely

[64] difficult to see

[00:12:05] And an adult might not laugh so much at a bear **tripping up**[65] on a banana, but they might laugh at some of the more complicated jokes or facial expressions made by the adult characters in the movie.

[00:12:18] Of course, it's hard to have success as a kids film without humour, but with Disney films the humour isn't the main part, it just helps move the story forward, and **lighten**[66] often complicated scenes.

[00:12:33] Fighting scenes, for example, are often funny.

[00:12:36] There's a fight scene in Robin Hood where the Sheriff of Nottingham tries to catch and kill Robin Hood, but the entire scene is **hilarious**[67], and nobody actually gets hurt. So, humour isn't just there to make you laugh, it helps the **storyline**[68].

[00:12:56] And our final ingredient is the music.

[00:12:59] When you think of a Disney movie, one of the first things that probably comes to mind is the music, the songs in the film.

[00:13:07] The songs aren't only fun and enjoyable to listen to, much like the humour they have an important role.

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[65] losing balance and falling

[66] become less serious

[67] very funny

[68] order of events happening

[00:13:14] And that's to help explain often difficult **concepts**[69] to younger viewers, to help them understand how the characters are feeling.

[00:13:24] In Pocahontas, for example, "Colors of the Wind" is used to discuss the pretty serious message of **colonialism**[70] and **race**[71].

[00:13:33] In Toy Story's "You've Got a Friend in Me" there's the message of the importance of friendship.

[00:13:40] And in a more recent example, in Frozen's "Let it go" there is the very important message of being true to yourself, of not trying to hide your true self.

[00:13:51] So, they **serve**[72] a very important message, **gluing**[73] a lot of the **narrative** together.

[00:13:58] And even if you might not be the sort of person who spends their life listening to Disney songs, you can't **deny**[74] that they are incredibly popular.

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[69] general ideas

[70] the system of one country controlling another

[71] people of different origins

[72] deliver, provide

[73] joining

[74] argue against the fact

[00:14:07] The last song I mentioned, Let It Go, has been listened to 2.4 billion times on YouTube. The songs don't only work to support the film, they are hugely popular in their own right.

[00:14:21] So, these are five of the most important ingredients in the magic of a Disney film, and without any one of them, it's hard to imagine a Disney film being quite the same.

[00:14:33] If there were no music, if it weren't funny, if there wasn't some **overarching**[75] **moral**, if there were no big characters, or if they didn't go on this hero's journey, a Disney film would be very different.

[00:14:48] There are, of course, several other factors that we could include.

[00:14:51] The films are **stunning**[76], they are beautiful, going right back to Snow White in 1937. You can see that the artists creating the **animations**[77] are fantastically talented, and visually they are very **appealing**[78] films.

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[75] influencing every part of something

[76] very impressive

[77] films made from drawings

[78] attractive and interesting

[00:15:07] The fact that they are cartoons means that it's a lot easier to **dub**[79] them into different languages, and sell them to an international audience. With live action films, the quality of the film reduces, because anyone can see that they are **dubbed**[80].

[00:15:24] But with a cartoon, which is the majority of what Disney makes, it's a lot easier.

[00:15:30] And finally the themes in Disney, the deeply human themes are universal, they are **applicable**[81] no matter your age, your nationality, your belief systems, or even when you watch them.

[00:15:44] They are often set in **imaginary**[82] worlds, where toys are alive, animals can talk or carpets can fly.

[00:15:52] This makes them even more universal, because they aren't like a world that any of us lives in.

[00:15:57] If you watch Snow White, that was made over 80 years ago, but a kid could watch it and have just as much fun as someone watching it in 1937.

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[79] translate the audio into another language

[80] the original audio has been translated

[81] relatable, easy to understand

[82] made up, existing only in your mind

[00:16:08] They also don't include cultural references, things that someone would only understand if they had grown up in a particular place at a particular time, so you can watch one now or in 100 years and it won't be harder to understand.

[00:16:24] Love, **jealousy**[83], anger, **bravery**[84], friendship, family, fear, these are all universal themes, and there's a reason that they feature so **prominently**[85] in all of the Disney movies.

[00:16:38] And our final, final extra ingredient is **nostalgia**[86], the feeling of wanting to relive the past.

[00:16:45] Given that Disney is almost 100 years old, most people at least in the Western world will be able to remember watching, and **presumably**[87] enjoying, Disney as a kid.

[00:16:57] When they grow up, and have children of their own, the universality of Disney movies means that they can in turn **recreate**[88] that same experience that they shared with their parents with their own children.

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[83] the state of being unhappy because you want something that someone else has

[84] not being afraid

[85] frequently

[86] the feeling of pleasure when thinking about the past

[87] used when you think that something is true

[88] repeat

[00:17:10] Although the recipe for magic might be there for all of us to see, this isn't to say that anyone, with the right ingredients and **deep enough pockets**[89], with enough money, can create a **hit**[90] movie.

[00:17:22] There certainly is something else, a special **sauce**[91], some magic that is hard to **pin down**[92], that brings it all together.

[00:17:31] And whatever that is, that is surely the true magic of Disney.

[00:17:37] OK then, that is it for today's episode on The Magic of Disney, and with that comes the end of our mini-series on Disney.

[00:17:47] As a reminder, in part one we learned about the history, in part two we learned about the business, and in part three it was the magic.

[00:17:56] I hope you enjoyed it, that it was a little bit magical, and at least that you've learnt something new.

[00:18:02] As always, I would love to know what you thought of this episode, what you think of Disney, what your favourite Disney movie is and why, and anything else that you would like to share.

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[89] enough money

[90] very popular

[91] factor

[92] identify or point out

[00:18:12] For our lovely members, you can head right into our community forum, which is at community.leonardoenglish.com and get chatting away to me and to other curious minds.

[00:18:23] And as a final reminder, if you are not yet a member of Leonardo English but you are looking to improve your English in a more interesting way, to join a community of curious minds from all over the world, to unlock the transcripts, the subtitles, the key vocabulary, and the bonus episodes - like part two of this mini series - then the place to go to is leonardoenglish.com

[00:18:47] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:18:52] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

Key vocabulary

Word	Definition
Juggernaut	huge company
Glue	a substance used for sticking things together
Buckle up	get ready
Fervent	very passionate
Aspects	features
Tried and tested	known to work
Formula	standard way of creating something
Formulas	standard ways of creating something
Reveal	talk about things details that are not known
Core	main
Structured	designed
Morals	lessons that can be learnt
Narrative	story

Nicknamed	commonly called
Inevitably	certain to happen
Weighing up	carefully considering
Deliberating	thinking over the matter
Depart	go their way
Reunited	see each other once more
Long-lost	have been out of contact for a long time
Quest	a long search for something that is not easy to find
Emerges	turns out to be
Victorious	successful
Backbone	main part
Logical	well thought out
Pleasantly	enjoyably
Perspective	point of view
Achieved	been able to get a desired result

Attributed	said that someone is responsible for
Playwright	someone who writes stories to be acted out
In this regard	in a specific area
Complexity	the state of having lots of different parts and being difficult to understand
Predictable	easily guessed
Mermaid	a female character in fiction that has a fish's body instead of legs
Quintessential	the most typical
Headstrong	very determined
Barriers	limits that have been set
Complex	complicated
Proud	see themselves to be of a higher class
Jealous	want attention or love to be shown to them only
Villains	bad people
Motivations	reasons for doing things
Cope	put up with (a difficult situation)

Baddies	bad characters in a film or book
Triumphed	was the winner
Rival	a person who is in competition with someone else
Feeding	giving as food
Nasty	bad / not nice
Exceptions	instances where things are different
Fur	hair on the skin of animals
Puppies	young dogs
Adjacent	near to
Merchandise	goods that are related to the movies
Stand the test of time	something that stands the test of time can be enjoyed at any time
Intrinsically	at its core, at its centre
Moral	good examples
Arise	happen
Greed	an uncontrolled desire to have more of something

Valuable   worth a lot of money

Penultimate   the one before the last

Misunderstanding when someone does not understand something

Play on words   giving words double meaning

Altogether   entirely

Discreet   difficult to see

Tripping up   losing balance and falling

Lighten   become less serious

Hilarious   very funny

Storyline   order of events happening

Concepts   general ideas

Colonialism   the system of one country controlling another

Race   people of different origins

Serve   deliver, provide

Gluing   joining

Deny   argue against the fact

Overarching   influencing every part of something

Stunning   very impressive

Animations   films made from drawings

Appealing   attractive and interesting

Dub   translate the audio into another language

Dubbed   the original audio has been translated

Applicable   relatable, easy to understand

Imaginary   made up, existing only in your mind

Jealousy   the state of being unhappy because you want something that someone else

                            has

Bravery   not being afraid

Prominently   frequently

Nostalgia   the feeling of pleasure when thinking about the past

Presumably   used when you think that something is true

Recreate   repeat

Deep enough pockets   enough money

Hit   very popular

Sauce   factor

Pin down   identify or point out

We'd love to get your feedback on this podcast.

What did you like? What could we do better?

What did you struggle to understand?

Let us know in the forum community.leonardoenglish.com