

“MOLLY AND MUSE”
A TV Series Proposal
by
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CONCEPT

Molly and Muse is an animated 11-minute social-emotional series aimed at children aged 4-7. It focuses on problem solving, and more specifically the importance of perseverance, creativity, and seeing every problem as an opportunity.

OVERVIEW

On Molly's 10th birthday, her Great Uncle Sal gives a music box. He says he's had it for years, but it's time for its "next great adventure." Huh? Great Uncle Sal has always been eccentric, but this was taking things to another level. But when Molly examines it later that night, out bursts **Muse** in a whirlwind of color and sound. Muse doesn't wait for introductions; she's already spinning ideas into the air, rearranging Molly's toys into contraptions and scribbling wild blueprints across the walls. Molly soon finds out that Muse is the **spirit of creativity**. Now it all makes sense!

Wait, no it doesn't. Great Uncle Sal is a world famous artist. She's a 4th grader who loves science and engineering - what use can a 'spirit of creativity' be to her?

Well you've gotta give the old man some credit, he knew what he was doing. Molly and Muse are now best friends with the world at their feet, and when they work together there's nothing they can't accomplish.

Molly and Muse are different in a lot of ways, but they have one big thing in common: they love helping people. That's why they started Molly and Muse, Solviteers! Now the whole town of Dove's Landing knows: when you've got a problem, there's only one duo to call.

So let's meet the dream team...

MAIN CHARACTERS

Molly

Molly is 10 years old, and she's going to grow up to be the world's greatest engineer. Or architect. She's not sure yet. But whatever it is, it will involve building things. Molly *loves* to build

things, and she has a real knack for it. When she was 3 years old, she took her dad's lawnmower apart and put it back together. She's not allowed to do that anymore.

Molly has few distinct mannerisms that set her apart from your standard 10 year old engineer. She likes to stand on her head when she's deep in thought - she says it helps her concentrate. She'll also emphasize a point by repeating the last three words. Last. Three. Words.

Molly's Treehouse

If you're ever wondering where Molly is, this is the first place to look. Molly's treehouse (which she built herself, of course) is her sanctuary; it's her woodshop, her lab where she tinkers and invents things, and her clubhouse where she hangs out and plays games with her friends. But most importantly, it's the new headquarters for Molly and Muse, Solviteers.

Molly puts a lot of responsibility on her own shoulders, and has trouble asking for help. She may be highly gifted for her age, but she's still 10, and it's not uncommon for her to get in trouble or take on more than she can handle. Thankfully, she has Muse at her side. Muse doesn't keep her out of trouble - far from it - but she does always remind Molly that it's okay to make mistakes and ask for help.

Muse

Muse is the Spirit of Creativity; the embodiment of artistic expression in all its forms; ten million ideas all crammed into one bouncing bubbling fun-sized package. Are they *good* ideas? Of course! Well, maybe... what is *good* anyway? They may not always be *practical*, or *physically possible*, but they're all fun! Which (by Muse's definition) makes them all good ideas.

Muse has been around since the beginning of time, and she's worked with *everyone*. Da Vinci? Of course. Frida Kahlo? Dear friend. Benjamin Franklin? You mean *Benji*?! Muse loves to name-drop, and also can't help but slightly exaggerate her role in certain historical brainstorming sessions. Sure, it may have *seemed* like an accident when she knocked that apple off of the tree and onto Isaac Newton's head, but it was all part of the plan...

Muse's historical anecdotes are funny, but they can come in handy as well. Sometimes when she and Molly are stumped, Muse will tell a story of a similar time when she and one of her (famous) friends were stuck. "This reminds me of when Leo and I couldn't get Mona Lisa to smile..." During these 'breakthrough' stories, Molly and (current day) Muse are transported back in time to watch the story unfold firsthand.

Muse's Magic

In addition to being timeless, Muse has certain limited magical abilities. Most are very superficial, such as instantly covering the house in polka-dots, and (if you *insist*) wiping it clean again. Transporting herself and Molly back in time to witness a 'historical breakthrough' also

qualifies as Muse Magic. But one of Muse's favorite tricks is her ability to communicate with nature. This is another trick Molly and Muse sometimes turn to when they're stumped. Learning how a bird can build a nest like that, or why ants always march in a line will inspire the solution to the problem they're currently facing. Muse's Magic will never explicitly solve a problem, only inspire new ideas in the duo.

Muse may not technically be human, but she's flawed just like you and me. She's easily distracted, especially when her and Molly's current mission is going poorly or they've hit a roadblock. She also gets frustrated when her 'big idea' has to be tweaked in some way - not because she's bossy or arrogant, but because she's already imagined how it will look and it's so *awesome* that changing it just because 'this would take a year to build' or 'that animal doesn't exist' seems ridiculous.

Physicality

Muse can interact with the physical world, and other people can see her. She hovers off the ground, and can moderately change her appearance - mostly in the form of 'poofing' into various costumes depending on the situation. This is used purely as a means of expression; she doesn't have to disguise herself or pretend not to be a muse.

Muse technically lives in her music box, but she doesn't spend much time there. She's usually hanging out with Molly, even when they're not on a case. She can pop in and out of her box freely; she isn't "summoned" by Molly and is not "bound" to her in any way. The music box has a different figurine on it every episode (though we may just see it in the background of Molly's bedroom.)

SECONDARY CHARACTERS

Great Uncle Sal

Great Uncle Sal is a world renowned artist whose work takes him all over the globe. He's an eccentric, larger than life individual who works in the medium of... well, everything. Oil on canvas, marble sculptures, chocolate sculptures, chocolate on canvas... his last exhibit was a series of ice sculptures in the Sahara (one night only!) He's also the last person to work with Muse. He was a bored art student when he met her, tired of painting fruit bowls every day. And now? Well, you get the idea.

Sal comes by now and again, but Muse also has the ability to transport herself and Molly to *him* (a little more of *Muse's Magic*) wherever he happens to be - usually working on some insane art piece. As is always the case with Muse's Magic, he won't actually solve their problems, but he will inspire a solution. And at any rate, it's nice to catch up!

Molly's Dad

He's a single father, a hard-working electrician, and an overall nice guy. He also repeats his last three words for emphasis - that's how Molly picked it up. Once in a while they'll accidentally do it in unison. He trusts Molly, and knows she's responsible, but also frequently reminds Molly that he's there if she needs him. Sometimes a girl needs her dad.

Rami

Rami is Molly's neighbor, and also Molly and Muse's most loyal customer. It's not his fault! Bad luck just seems to follow him wherever he goes. Rami is two years older than Molly; he likes skateboarding and playing guitar, but he's also incredibly shy. Muse has a bit of a crush on him.

Mr. Baker

Owner of Baker's Bakery - the best in town! Although he's a terrific baker (and a fine Baker as well) he's not a very good businessman; he has trouble getting customers through the door. What he really needs is something to grab everyone's attention and draw them to the store. But he can't do it alone. I wonder if there's anyone he can call on for help?

Mr. Craft

Owner of the craft shop 'Craft's Art Supplies.' And he won't change it to 'Craft's Crafts', no matter how long the people of Dove's Landing beg (and they've been at it for *decades*.) He can be a bit of a grouch, but he's a lovable grouch. And he's got a soft spot for Molly and Muse. A running joke - he's always confused by the weird combination of things they buy. Popsicle sticks, water balloons and a novelty treasure chest? Oy, don't even tell me...

Mayor Wilson

Mayor Wilson is a good-natured man who loves Stackville and all its residents. So much so that he gets a bit carried away, and tends to make huge promises he can't keep - usually in the form of a massive parade or carnival on extremely short notice.

EPISODE STRUCTURE/SAMPLE BEAT OUTLINE

Opening Scene

Molly and Muse are doing something fun. Often this will involve Molly showing Muse a new gadget she invented, or else the two of them are reading/watching about Great Uncle Sal's crazy new exhibit.

In Molly's treehouse, Molly shows Muse the new voice-activated mini sound chip she made. 'Mozart... Chopin... Beethoven...' The sound chip plays music for the first two, but on 'Beethoven' it lets out an irritating, wheezy blare of trumpet. Muse says she knew Beethoven, he's not as good as she remembered.

The Problem

Someone needs their help! That someone will usually come to the treehouse (known headquarters of Molly and Muse, Solviteers) but sometimes the duo will come across them clearly struggling. The 'client' (though Molly and Muse don't actually charge) will always be someone they know in the neighborhood. They explain the problem. Molly and Muse are on the case!

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Mayor Wilson comes by and asks for help. He says a few months ago he promised his son Jake an elephant for his birthday. 'I know I shouldn't have, but you should've seen how happy he was!' He says he knows he has a problem with over-the-top promises, but if anyone can get an elephant to his son's party (which is 4:30 this afternoon) it's the Solviteers.

The 1st Attempt/Easy Fix

Ah, the siren's song of the 'quick fix.' The oh-so-obvious solution that never works, and will sometimes make the problem worse. It's never tried out of laziness, more that Molly and Muse are excited to knock it out of the park in record time. Still, nothing is ever that easy - if it was, we wouldn't need Molly and Muse!

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Molly and Muse call the zoo and see if they can borrow an elephant - just for the day. Yeah... no.

The 2nd Attempt

Molly and Muse are still reeling from their first attempt, when they stumble across another idea. A much better idea - an idea worthy of the Molly and Muse name. They start putting it into action, when inevitably...

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Molly stands on her head. Muse launches into a stream of consciousness about everything elephant-related, trying to knock something loose. 'And of course when I knew Houdini he made an elephant *disappear* but he never actually made a *new* one...' That's it! Molly says they can make an elephant out of paper mache. They call the mayor to see if that's okay - he says his son doesn't need a real live elephant, he just wants it to be HUGE and AWESOME. Molly and Muse can do 'huge and awesome.' They start making the giant paper mache elephant when...

The Curveball/Roadblock

Something happens that throws a wrench into things. It could be anything - but whatever it is, Molly and Muse are stumped.

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It starts to rain. Molly gets a call from the mayor - the party is going to be inside. They won't be able to get the elephant through the door. Not that it matters anyway, the rain is making the whole thing come apart. What can they do now?

The Breakthrough

This usually will involve some of Muse's Magic - a historical anecdote, a visit to Uncle Sal, or a communicating with nature moment. And soon enough - to borrow a phrase Muse herself once coined - 'Eureka!' This third idea may be something new, or it may be an imaginative modification of the 2nd to overcome the roadblock.

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Muse teleports herself and Molly to Great Uncle Sal to see if he has any ideas. They find him in Italy along with a full orchestra. Sal tells them about the new project he's working on - a shadow puppet opera. Unfortunately he's no elephant expert (and a quick poll reveals no one in his orchestra is either.) But he knows Molly and Muse will think of something. Muse looks at Sal's little cardboard cutouts and asks how a whole theater of people will be able to see those little puppets. Sal says the puppets are small, but the shadows they cast will be much bigger. He shows them; Molly launches into a highly technical explanation of light refraction... then stops. She's got it. Muse does too. They bid Sal farewell, and zap home.

Musical Montage

Molly and Muse put their plans into action while singing a motivating song (about the problem and their plan.) They've just about saved the day, when we reach...

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Molly and Muse are back in the treehouse, Molly has rigged up a little handheld projector, and Muse has designed some (full color) elephants on projector sheets to try out. They sing as they try different options and Molly tries to calibrate the projector. We get a montage of some funny, bizarrely proportioned elephants, until finally they get it just right!

The Hiccup and Cherry

A final little wrinkle arises and is almost immediately resolved by a fun solution. The solution usually involves something from the opening scene - often it's Molly's gadget that does the trick. But the hiccup might be solved by pure luck, or Great Uncle Sal showing up in a hot air balloon. In these cases especially, the hiccup is unrelated to the original mission (which is always solved by Molly and Muse's ingenuity.)

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Mayor Wilson's son Jake LOVES the elephant. He can make it take up the whole wall. He can move it to make it walk. It's perfect, except... well he wishes it made elephant sounds. Jake demonstrates by making the noises himself (this kid *really* loves elephants) which sparks

another idea in Molly. She takes the projector, turns around and fiddles with it for a moment, then hands it back to him. The elephant *does* make sounds, all you need to do is call out his name: 'Beethoven!' That wheezy trumpet blare fills the room, and Jake is over the moon.

The Wrap Up

With the day officially saved, Molly and Muse enjoy the spoils of victory. Usually it's just the eternal gratitude of the customer; if there *is* a more tangible reward involved it will have something to do with the mission (e.g. free Donuts because you saved my bakery) and it's never offered as an incentive beforehand.

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Jake's elephant is a huge hit at his party. Mayor Wilson pulls Molly and Muse aside and thanks them profusely. He says he'll try to stop making elaborate promises, then goes on to promise he'll organize a full parade in their honor, with a *marching band* and *fireworks* and a *DOZEN elephants*...

SPRINGBOARDS

The Noise Complaint

You'll never guess who just moved to Dove's Landing. Drumroll please... Blerin Bleckensderfer! Yes, *that* Blerin Bleckensderfer - the famous yodeler! Everyone is thrilled to have a celebrity in their midst - everyone that is, besides Mr. Craft. Because Blerin is Mr. Craft's new neighbor, and while living next to a yodeler may look good on paper (okay, not that good) it's been driving Mr. Craft crazy. Because Blerin Bleckensderfer yodels in his sleep. He's an old fashioned sleep-yodeler, and it keeps Mr. Craft up all night. Can anyone help? You've gotta be kidding.

The Big Shoe

Rami is beyond excited. He just signed up for THE BIG SHOE! He's not 100% clear on what that means, but presumably the school has an enormous shoe that it lends out. He'll probably be able to fit both feet in at once. Awesome, right? Well- not quite. The school doesn't have a 'Big Shoe', but they do have a 'Big Show.' It was a typo. Rami realizes that around the same time they send him his lines. But Rami has terrible stage fright - he can't perform! He just knows he'll freeze up, or forget his lines. Looks like Molly and Muse, Solviteers have got their next mission. Can they help Rami get over his stage fright before the big show?

Baking with Baker

Mr. Baker has been given his own baking TV show, and the reviews are in! Boooo-ring. Viewership is low - so low that he'll be pulled off the air if he doesn't turn it around soon. But what can he do? He's not a natural showman like the other celebrity chefs on TV. Molly and Muse agree to help. Can they find a way to turn Mr. Baker's snoozefest into a hit show before it's too late?

The Legend of Stackin' Sammy

Molly and Muse have to put on their detective caps (they have real ones, of course) because something's afoot. The whole town Dove's Landing is in peril because every night, a mysterious someone has been going around town and... stacking things. Imagine waking up one morning and finding your lawn chairs, trash bins and garden gnome stacked in a neat little pyramid in your front yard! Other towns may not think this is a big deal, but Dove's Landing has a local legend - the legend of *Stackin' Sammy*, a ghost who goes around stacking things. Molly and Muse's mission? Solve this mystery, and catch the culprit. It can't really be a ghost... right?

MOTIVATIONS

As someone who has always been fascinated by solving problems and puzzles, I've noticed how we often reduce problems to being either analytical/technical or creative. In my experience, the best solutions involve a combination of the two. I'm excited to introduce problem solving as a multi-faceted endeavor, and show how every success is achieved by trying, failing, and trying again.

I think that while problem-solving and lateral thinking have always been important skills, there is a greater imperative to introduce them today than in the past. This coming generation is the first for whom the existence of powerful AI will have always been the norm. It is therefore vitally important to reinforce and celebrate a history of human ingenuity. Through revisiting great thinkers of the past, and watching Molly and Muse's creative approach to problem-solving today, we can show kids (and remind ourselves) that fresh, outside-the-box ideas - the kind that the imitative nature of LLM's prevents them from ever achieving - will always be the driving forces of human advancement.

