

“I know monsters are bad and all, but this seems unfair”; Confronting Colonialism and Privilege
in *Star vs The Forces of Evil*

Disney Channel’s *Star vs The Forces of Evil* is led by the inter-dimensional princess, Star Butterfly. The show’s premise is fairly innocuous in its earnest exploration of friendship, with the wand-wielding Star being sent to Earth as an “exchange” student in order to learn restraint and discipline. While she does not necessarily learn either at first, she spends a great deal of time using her magic to delight (and sometimes endanger) her human friends. The tone of the series shifts, however, as it begins to explore Star’s role as a princess in earnest, and the ways in which it is connected to her country’s past and future. As the show progresses, Star develops from a slightly rebellious, but largely unquestioning, monarch into an activist who is combatting the lingering effects of violent colonialism in her land, Mewni. This realm, which draws on both Medieval and fantastical influences, houses both Star’s people, the “Mewmans,” and a myriad of monsters.

These monsters were the original inhabitants of Mewni, and in the episode “Mewnipendence Day,” Star excitedly involves her human friends in the traditional reenactment of the day the Mewmans defeated the monsters on Mewni and established their kingdom. Marco, a teenage boy who is Chicano, witnesses Star’s planned reenactment and recognizes the “unfairness” of an army of weapon wielding Mewmans expelling the monsters. It takes this perspective from Marco, a marginalized figure in human society, for Star to begin critically evaluating the history of the royal family. From “Mewnipendence Day” forward, Star realizes that her family’s rise to power was predicated on unfairly branding the monsters as dangerous in order to oppress them and establish dominance in Mewni.

During the later seasons of the show, Star actively uses her role in the monarchy to advocate for monsters. It is key for a narrative exploring colonialist attitudes to focalize through the privileged character of Star. Star's development from passively participating in colonialism to pioneering a movement for monster rights on Mewni offers a narrative to young viewers that challenges them to confront their own privilege. The inter-dimensional elements of the show also allow Mewni to act as a mirror of Earth, thus reflecting "real world" oppression through its critique of Mewni's monarchy and colonialism. As the later seasons of the show grapple with the legacy of Star's family, as well as the growing corruption of her government, the narrative examines the impact of colonialism and the power of activism through the evolution of Star's character from a princess, and implicit colonizer, to an advocate for social justice.