A Grammar for Avatar: The Last Airbender

Episode → [Opening Sequence] [Title of Episode] [Small Scene]+[Battle][Closure Scene] [Closing Credits]

Small Scene → [Establish Context] [Ground to Flying Scene]
Small Scene → [Establish Context] [Flying Scene]
Small Scene → [Establish Context][Heroic Scene Content]
Small Scene → [Establish Context][Battle]
Small Scene → [Establish Context][Fire Nation Scene Content]
Closure Scene → [Establish Context][Traveling]
Closure Scene → [Establish Context][Mourning]
Closure Scene → [Establish Context][Group is Together]
Heroic Scene Content → [Traveling]
Heroic Scene Content → [Reveal Backstory]
Heroic Scene Content → [Sokka Spends Time with a Friend]
Heroic Scene Content → [Aang has a crush on Katara]
Heroic Scene Content → [Aang Fights for What he believes in]
Heroic Scene Content → [Group Lectures]
Fire Nation Scene Content→ [Traveling]
Fire Nation Scene Content →[Reveal Backstory]
Fire Nation Scene Content→[War Council]
Fire Nation Scene Content→[Iro’s Wisdom]
Fire Nation Scene Content→[Zhao’s Antagonism]
Establish Context → [Examine Architecture] [Display characters]
Establish Context → [Display characters]
Establish Context → [Visual Humour Spurt] [Display characters]
Establish Context → [Examine Architecture] [Visual Humour Spurt] [Display Characters]
Establish Context → [Examine Architecture] [Display Characters] [Humour Spurt]
Battle→ [Exchange of Blows]+ [Resolution]
Humour Spurt → [Visual Humour Spurt]
Humour Spurt → [Dialogue Humour Spurt]
Ground to Flying Scene → [Yip-Yip] [Heroic Scene Content] [Descent]
Flying Scene→ [Heroic Scene Content] [Descent]
Descent → [Aang Flies to Ground]
Descent → [Appa Lands]

Descriptions of Terminals

Opening Sequence: The opening sequence begins every episode with a brief overview of the history of the world, and a quick introduction to the principal characters. It never changes, and is useful to help establish a context since any given episode of the show assumes a certain amount
of prior knowledge gained from previous episodes. Although the opening sequence is no substitute for knowing the Episodes that came before, it helps mitigate confusion considerably.

**Title of Episode:** After The Opening Sequence, there is a brief moment where black text appears on a white background explaining the title of the episode, as well as what number it is. Seasons of the series are divided into books, and each episode of the season is a chapter of the book. Some example titles are Book 1, Chapter 17: The Northern Air Temple, and Book 1, Chapter 18: The Waterbending Master.

**Traveling:** Sometimes a scene will consist of no dialogue, but merely is served as a means to show that distance is being covered. This distance can be covered on foot or in the air.

**Mourning:** Sometimes at the end of an episode something very bad has happened, such as Prince Zuko has managed to capture the Avatar Aang, and the rest of the group mourns his loss as they try to figure out what to do.

**Group Comes Together:** Although in the course of an episode their paths may separate, Aang, Katara, and Sokka almost always come back together at the end. Sometimes they end the episode all asleep next to each other, while other times they stand strong together as they look towards the horizon for their next adventure.

**Reveal Backstory:** Something that often times happens in the show is that information will be revealed that pertains to the characters’ back-stories. Examples include Zuko speaking about his sister and how everyone loves her so much since everything comes so naturally to her, as well as Aang revealing information about what life was like one hundred years ago living with the Air Benders, or Aang learning information about his past lives from Avatar Rokku.

**War Council:** The Fire Nation will often times hold meetings discussing about their plans for world domination. These meetings could include a collection of generals and admirals, or it could be a simple conversation between the Fire Lord and his daughter.

**Sokka Spends Time with a Friend:** It seems as if Sokka would consistently splinter off from the group and spend time with a friend—at first making the friend, and then hanging out with them throughout the episode. This includes the Inventor at the Northern Air Temple—whom he worked together with to come up with inventions to defeat the fire nation—as well as the beautiful Princess Yue. It would also include some not-so friendly moments as well, such as the time when Sokka, when preparing for war, interacts with Hugh, Yue’s betrothed, and ends up getting in a scuffle with him.

**Aang Fights for What he believes in:** Aang is often times confronted with difficulties and challenges, but he must always work to overcome his fears and fight for what he believes in to save the world. This could include his refusal to allow a Fire Nation soldier to receive the weapons that were constructed for his country by the Inventor at the Northern Air Temple, to his feeling that the ‘mechanical air benders’ who relied on technology needed to be shown what a true Air Bender is like, as well as his confrontation with the face stealing spirit Koh, who had
precious information to impart to the Avatar, but who would steal his very face if he showed the slightest emotion.

**Aang has a crush on Katara:** Aang has a big crush on Katara, and at several points he tries to spend time with her without too awkwardly trying to reveal his feelings, including trying to make small talk, receiving a kiss, or giving flowers.

**Group Lectures:** Aang often finds himself in a position where knowledgeable people will explain things to his entire group, as well as to other people as well. Such examples include him learning stories of the Northern Air Tribe denizens for the story teller, the Northern Water tribe taking the time to hold a great feast in honor of Aang’s arrival, as well as the master Water Bending teacher Master Pakku’s lessons to his pupils, Aang, and Katara.

**Iro’s Wisdom:** Iro will often implant within Prince Zuko words of wisdom. Often times Zuko ignores his advice, but it is often sound. Some advice comes in the form of soundbytes, such as “A man needs his rest” while others are making plans for future events, while others still include Iro revealing to Zuko just how much he means to him and how he thinks of his nephew Zuko as his own son.

**Zhao’s Antagonism:** Admiral Zhao will often times be deriding General Zhao and Prince Zuko, sometimes interacting with them directly while other times laughing at them to himself, while other times he will be laughing at the heroes, perceiving them to be weak. This antagonism is verbal, though he will often engage in “battle” as well. Would also include the time when he hired the pirates (met in a previous episode) to try to dispatch Zuko.

**Visual Humour Spurt:** A little dose of humour that does not involve any dialogue. For example, Appa—a very large animal—jumping into water and disturbing a bunch of small animals, to help further explore the setting and who is there. Although is can help set the tone for the scene, sometimes humor is interjected into “serious” scenes as well.

**Dialogue Humour Spurt:** A short exchange of comedic dialogue. As varied as a story-teller taunting Sokka to donate some money and Sokka having to reveal how poor he is, to a wise monk in the spirit world tricking Aang into thinking that a random glowing light will provide him with the answers he seeks.

**Yip Yip:** To Make Appa fly, one of the riders needs to say “Yip Yip”, and then Appa will fly into the air, taking any passengers along with him.

**Exchange of Blows:** The world of Avatar is a dangerous place, and it seems as if everyone who lives in it knows how to defend themselves. Whenever one person attacks another, it is guaranteed to spark a battle, or at the very least, a counterattack. Fights can take the form of Water Bending or Fire Bending (which is essentially water or fire magic), as well as physical attacks (catapults launching fire balls, clanging of swords, etc.)

**Resolution:** All battles come to an end. Includes such examples as the Northern Air Temple successfully forcing the Fire Nation to retreat, Prince Zuko defeating Katara and stealing Aang,
and the Spirit of the Ocean, being controlled by Aang while in his avatar state, grabbing Admiral Zhao and pulling him into the ocean.

_Aang Flies to Ground:_ Aang has a glider which he can use to essentially fly anywhere he wants. However, more often than not, Aang seems to use this to descend when he is already at a great height, usually when he is atop Appa.

_Appa Lands:_ At the end of a flight, Appa always returns to Earth. Sometimes he crashes if he is tired or being attacked, or sometimes he lands on his own accord because they have arrived at their destination.

_Closing Credits:_ The end credits of the show. They are essentially never changing, though there are some slight differentiations depending on which characters were in the episodes—only the voice actors for the characters who appeared in the episode receive recognition in the credits.

_Examine Architecture:_ The heroes visit many exotic locals in the course of a single episode; often each scene takes place in an entirely distinct location, easily identifiable by its gorgeously drawn setting. Examining the architecture of the scene establishes a location instantly. Some locations that they visited were the Northern Water Tribe, which had smaller areas consisting of the sluice gateways and the meeting chamber, and Fire Nation ships, which consisted of the bridge, the inner passages, and the admiral’s quarters.

Here are my three episodes. The first episode is perhaps the most traditional kind of episode (and arguably the most interesting): it involves both the core group of Aang, Sokka, and Katara doing their own adventure, while Zuko and Iro are going through their own travails at the Fire Nation. The second episode is slightly untraditional in that it only involves the main group of heroes, and it does seem rather repetitive, although it is conceivable that this episode could in fact exist. The third episode is unusual in that it only concerns the Fire Nation. My grammar permits for it, but it seems unlikely that in real life there would be an episode that would not include the exploits of Aang and his friends at all.

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**Parse of First Episode: Village of Fighters**

[Opening Sequence]
[Title of Episode]
[Small Scene]
  [Establish Context]
  [Display Characters]
  [Flying Scene]
    [Heroic Scene Content]
      [Aang has a crush on Katara]
  [Descent]
[Small Scene]
Brief Synopsis of First Episode: Village of Fighters
Aang, Sokka, Katara, and Momo begin the episode while flying through the sky on Appa the sky bison. While they are flying, Aang notices how pretty Katara looks in the sunlight and attempts to compliment her, though this comes across awkwardly. Before he can make too much of a fool of himself, they sight their final destination, and Appa begins to land. The scene jumps to a new location—through a display of the red décor and ominous lighting it is clear that the scene is on board a Fire Nation navy ship. Further evidence supplies this when General Iro and Prince Zuko are revealed in the scene. Prince Zuko is brooding about the Avatar, and General Iro provides some valuable wisdom to try to get Prince Zuko to look at the bigger picture, but Zuko is not convinced. The scene jumps back to Aang and company. They are in an Earth Kingdom town by the shore—as evidenced by the sturdy architecture and lapping of the waves on the beach—and it shows the group getting off of Appa. Sokka quickly sees a cute girl, which he then has a conversation with in an attempt to woo her. However, he is quickly rejected by being punched in the stomach.

The action jumps back to the Fire Nation—we see that we are now on the bridge of the ship, and Iro is doing an impersonation of Admiral Zhao to cheer Zuko up. However, Zhao comes in and sees this, and quickly begins to deride the two of them for being failures in the eyes of the Fire Lord, wasting all their time with silly games instead of capturing the Avatar. The scene jumps back to the quarters of Prince Zuko and Iro—Zuko is very angry at Zhao, but Iro attempts to calm Zuko down with more pearls of wisdom. This does not seem to have a very high effect, though. The action then jumps back to Aang, Katara, and Sokka, who are attending a party in celebration of the Avatar. The speaker of the party reveals that this is a tribe of warriors, and that all of them wish to test their mettle against the Avatar. Aang agrees, and it shows Aang and a vast army of villagers. They have a relatively long fight sequence, and at the end of it, the villagers are shown in an unconscious pile. The action jumps back to Zuko, who immediately initiates a fight with Zhao. The fight is very long—longer than the Avatar fight—and by the end, Zuko defeats Zhao (but does not kill him), and Zhao begins to respect Zuko just a little more. The action finally jumps back to the Avatar and friends, who have all come together in preparation of leaving this village of fighters and going to their next destination.

Parse of Second Episode: Let’s Fly Around Everywhere.

[Opening Sequence]
[Title of Episode]
[Small Scene]
  [Establish Context]
  [Display Characters]
    [Heroic Scene Content]
      [Reveal Backstory]
  [Small Scene]
    [Establish Context]
      [Examine Architecture]
      [Display Characters]
[Ground to Flying Scene]
  [Yip Yip]
  [heroic scene content]
      [travelling]
  [descent]
      [Appa flies to ground]

[Small Scene]
  [Establish Context]
  [Examine Architecture]
  [Display Characters]
[Ground to Flying Scene]
  [Yip Yip]
  [heroic scene content]
      [travelling]
  [descent]
      [Appa flies to ground]

[Small Scene]
  [Establish Context]
  [Examine Architecture]
  [Display Characters]
[Ground to Flying Scene]
  [Yip Yip]
  [heroic scene content]
      [Aang fights for what he believes in]
  [descent]
      [Appa flies to ground]

[Small Scene]
  [Establish Context]
  [Examine Architecture]
  [Display Characters]
[Heroic Scene Content]
  [Reveal Backstory]

[Small Scene]
  [Establish Context]
  [Examine Architecture]
  [Display Characters]
[Ground to Flying Scene]
  [Yip Yip]
  [heroic scene content]
      [travelling]
  [descent]
      [Aang flies to ground]

[Battle]
  [Exchange of Blows]
  [Resolution]

[Closure Scene]
Synopsis of Second Episode: Let’s Fly Around Everywhere

Aang is in a shop in the Earth Kingdom, where he finds a scroll that tells him of the history of the battle of the Air Temple that he fled from; in which the Fire Nation ultimately took the lives of everyone whom he cared for. The scroll tells him that there is a secret that the Air Benders hid, and includes a map on where to find it. A new scene begins outside the shop, with Aang, Katara, and Sakka excited to see what Aang has obtained. They board Appa, Aang says “Yip Yip”, and Appa takes off into the sky. They travel a long way in silence, and then land on the ground. Aang examines the architecture of this new place—it is in fact another map that has been etched into the stone ruins of the area—and then gets back on Appa and says Yip Yip. The group travels, they land, and Aang discovers more ruins with yet another map. Aang gets back onto Appa and says Yip Yip, and they take off. Sokka begins to complain about how this is pointless, but Aang claims that what they are doing is of the utmost importance, and how the fate of the world rests on this mission, and how it is really important to him to learn about everything that he can about his people. Eventually the group lands.

In this new place, the scenery is overflowing with spiritual power, and Avatar Rokku appears and tells Aang about how the scroll was actually a ruse meant to trick him created by the Fire Nation, and that the true location of the ancient secret is in an entirely different location. Aang then runs back to the grassy area that Appa landed on, gets on board, says “yip yip”, and quickly travel to the place that Roku specified. Aang sees fire nation soldiers on the ground, and doesn’t wait for Appa to land, but instead flies down on his glider to confront them. They have an extremely quick battle, and they are defeated, but Aang realizes that the fire nation soldiers managed to destroy the device. Aang kneels in saddened defeat—he did not arrive quickly enough. The ending credits role.

Parse of Third Episode: The Zuko Show

Opening Sequence
[Title of Episode]
[Small Scene]
[Establish Context]
[Display Characters]
[Fire Nation Scene Content]
[Zhao’s Antagonism]
[Small Scene]
[Establish Context]
[Examine Architecture]
[Display Characters]
[Fire Nation Scene Content]
[Reveal Backstory]
[Small Scene]
Synopsis of Third Episode: The Zuko Show

The scene opens with Admiral Zhao and Prince Zuko staring at each other. Admiral Zhao then begins by deriding Prince Zuko’s skills as a Fire Bender and as a Prince verbally. They then go into a flash back of the first time that Admiral Zhao and Prince Zuko ever met—Zuko is just a child and Zhao is a great general of the Fire Nation, and the two are staring at each other in a great Fire Nation palace in a similar manner as their present selves. It’s revealed that Zhao has been charged with telling Zuko that Zuko’s sister is to receive special commendation for being an exemplary fire bender, while Zuko is to be grounded in his room. The scene than shifts to Zuko’s room, still in the flashback, where he is approached by his Uncle Iro. Iro says that people appreciate his sister because she is so naturally gifted, but that natural gifts aren’t always the most important thing, and that the fact that Zuko works so hard is reason enough to be very proud.

The scene then jumps back to the same great hall as before, Zuko is there confronting his sister during her celebration, and though Zuko is very angry at his sister, she tells stories about Zuko wetting the bed in front of everyone in a comical manner, which the rest of the crowd finds hilarious, though Zuko finds humiliating. Zuko then goes on to explain however, that his sister
always wanted to be just like him when she grew up, and how if it wasn’t for him trying so hard, that she would never have felt the need to work at her Fire Bending either, and how Zuko feels that he is responsible for his sister’s success. The scene then jumps to Zuko in tears with his father, who is not listening to him. His father says that Zuko is not actually his child, that he is adopted, and that he has no right to call himself a Prince, nor any relation to either himself or his sister. Zuko, unsure of what to do, attempts to fight with his father, and though at first his father pulls his punches, he eventually unleashes his full fury, and ends the fight.

The scene then jumps back to the present day, as evidenced by how Zuko is all grown up, walking alone along a dirt road. The closing credits role.