



WALT DISNEY (1901-1966)

PRE-READING TASKS

- 1.- If you go to Disneyland, what can you see there?
- 2.- Who is Mickey Mouse's girlfriend?
- 3.- How many little friends did Snow White have?
- 4.- What animal is Dumbo?

WALT DISNEY (1901-1966)

Walt Disney was the creator of many of the best loved cartoon characters which continue to delight children and adults around the world today. Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, and Donald Duck were all a product of his fertile imagination. These little cartoon creatures became the basis of a multi-million dollar company which continues to produce cartoon films and has interests in many other business areas.

Walt Disney's full name was Walter Elias Disney. He was the fourth son of Elias Disney and Flora Call. Elias had many jobs during his life and Flora was a school teacher. Walt was born in Chicago on December 5, 1901. His family moved to Marceline, Missouri and then to Kansas City when he was a child. At school, Walt was good at drawing and painting with crayons and water-colours. He took special courses in cartooning, art and design. He wanted to become a newspaper cartoonist. In 1917, his family moved back to Chicago where Walt took photographs and made drawings for the school newspaper. His progress, however, was interrupted by America's entry into the First World War. He participated in the war as a lorry driver for the Red Cross in France and Germany between 1917 and 1918.

Walt returned to Kansas City after the war. He found occasional work in commercial art studios. He met a young artist called Ub Iwerks in one of these jobs. Disney and Iwerks decided to set up their own company and started to make short animated advertising films. These were shown at local cinemas to advertise products. They also started working on a series of seven-minute cartoons called Alice in Cartoonland. They had to close down the company when a New York film distributor cheated them.

After the failure of his company, Walt decided to move to Los Angeles, the centre of the film industry. There he started working on the Alice cartoons again. He persuaded Iwerks to come and help him do the drawings. Soon they were earning money when a film company began to distribute some of their animated films. Disney and Iwerks invented Mickey Mouse in 1927. Mickey was a cheerful, energetic and playful mouse with human characteristics. They had planned to make two short films to introduce the character when they saw a movie called

The Jazz Singer, the first film with sound. Disney quickly realised the potential of sound in animated films. Disney and Iwerks decided not to finish the Mickey films they had planned. They immediately started work on a new Mickey Mouse film called Steamboat Willie. The film was released in 1928, and was very successful right from the start.

Disney's company did well in the 1930's despite the economic depression. The incredible popularity of Mickey Mouse and his girlfriend, Minnie, led to the creation of other cartoon characters like Donald Duck, Pluto and Goofy. Colour was introduced in the film Flowers and Trees in 1932. Advances in animation made the creation of full-length feature films possible. The first full-length cartoon, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, was released in 1937. It was followed by other classics like Pinocchio, Fantasia and Dumbo, the story of an elephant that could fly. In the 1940's, the Disney Studio experimented with new techniques that mixed normal film-making with animation. It also began to produce nature documentaries. By the end of the 1940's, the small animation studio that Disney had started was a big business earning money from its films as well as towels, watches, shirts and toys based on its popular cartoon characters.

The company continued growing in the 1950's and 1960's. Disney understood the importance of television and began to produce films for it. Disney also designed and built a huge amusement park near Los Angeles based around his cartoons. Disneyland opened in 1955. Soon tourists from all over the world would go there to have a good time and see their favourite cartoon characters. A second amusement park was planned for Orlando, Florida. Before it was completed, Walt Disney died on December 15, 1966. It finally opened to the public in 1971. Other Disney amusement parks were later opened in Japan and France.

The Disney Studio continues to make films which both children and adults enjoy seeing. It has recently produced several very popular full-length cartoons like The Lion King, Pocahontas and The Hunchback of Notre Dame.

TRUE OR FALSE

Decide whether the following statements are *True* or *False* according to the text:

- a. Walt Disney was good at drawing and painting.
- b. He was a lorry driver during the First World War.
- c. Disney only made animated cartoons.
- d. No more films were produced by the Disney Studios after his death.
- e. Walt Disney died after the second Disney amusement park was finished.



WALT DISNEY (1901-1966)

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Fill in the blanks in the following paragraph. Use the words in the box below:

before in in in by on

Disneyland is an amusement park. It is one of the most famous (a) the world. The park opened (b) 1955. It was planned and designed (c) Walt Disney. He planned to open another amusement park (d) Orlando, Florida. Disney died (e) December 15, 1966, five years (f) it was opened to the public.

CIRCLE THE CORRECT WORDS

Circle the correct words to complete the following sentences:

- a. – People go to have fun in
- i) a hospital ii) an amusement park iii) a fire station iv) a circle
- b. – A film made by photographing drawings is
- i) a cartoonist ii) a cartoon iii) a carton iv) a card
- c. – A person, animal or plant that is much smaller than normal is
- i) a drawer ii) a witch iii) a dwarf iv) a fly
- d. – A large vehicle that carries goods is
- i) a lorry ii) a car iii) a bike iv) a caravan

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- a. – What was the title of the first Mickey Mouse cartoon?
- b. – When was it released?
- c. – What is Mickey Mouse like?
- d. – What did Walt Disney do during the First World War?
- e. – Who is Minnie Mouse?
- f. – Disney was good at drawing. What are you good at?

DISCUSSION

(In pairs) Discussion. Which is your favourite Disney cartoon character? Why do you like it? Find out which one your partner likes and why he/she likes it:

"I like Mickey." ... "I prefer Simba the Lion." ... "Why?" ... "Because he's...."

ANSWER KEY

1.—

a) T, b) T, c) F, d) F, e) F

2.—

a) in, b) in, c) by, d) in, e) on, f) before

3.—

a.— an amusement park

b.— a cartoon

c.— a dwarf

d.— a lorry

4.—

a.— The first Mickey Mouse film was *Steamboat Willie*.

b.— It was released in 1928.

c.— Mickey Mouse was cheerful, energetic and playful. He had human characteristics.

d.— He drove lorries for the Red Cross in France and Germany.

e.— Minnie is Mickey's girlfriend.

f.— I'm good at *verb-ing*. (If they use a verb, students should use the gerund after this structure).

5.— Discussion in pairs (or small groups). Students should be using language of likes and dislikes. "I like/don't like/love/hate..." They should also be giving reasons why they like/dislike a certain character. "Because..."