

All About

Walt Disney



Who Was Walt Disney?



Although people often think of films and theme parks when they hear the word 'Disney' the word is actually a surname.

Talk About It

Walt was born in Chicago, USA, on 5th December 1901. He had three older brothers: Herbert, Raymond and Roy. The boys' sister, Ruth, was born two years after Walt.

Walt's Family

When Walt was four, his family moved to Marceline, Missouri, to farm land. Main Street, the high street of the town, would go on to play an important role in Walt's later success.

The land was near a train line and Walt became fascinated by the steam trains which took people all over the country. This fascination would also be a big part of Walt's later life.

The Disney farm was not a success and, when Walt was 11, the family moved again in order for their father, Elias, to try to find work. The Disneys moved to the larger city of Kansas City in Missouri.



Delivering Papers



To help support their family financially, Walt and his brother Roy had to do a newspaper round. The boys would wake at 4:30 a.m., delivering hundreds of newspapers before school. Walt continued his paper round for six years.

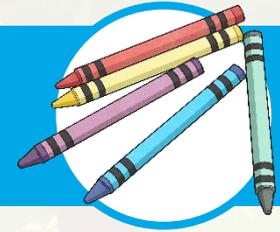
The Missouri winters were harsh; the brothers often walked through blizzards on their round. Walt's schoolwork suffered as he spent much of each school day exhausted and sometimes even fell asleep.



Talk About It

Do you think it was right for Walt and Roy to work so hard as children to help their family financially? Why or why not?

Walt's Early Life



Walt developed a love of drawing early in his life. As a young child, he would copy cartoons from newspapers. He went to drawing classes and completed a course on how to draw cartoons when he was a teenager.

Of all his siblings, Walt was closest to his brother Roy. When Roy enlisted in the US Navy during the First World War, Walt was determined to join the fight. Walt was too young to join the navy or army but altered the date on his birth certificate and joined the Red Cross as an ambulance driver. Walt reached France just after peace had been declared.



Life as an Illustrator



Unfortunately, the company didn't make enough money to continue. This wouldn't be the last setback Walt would face.

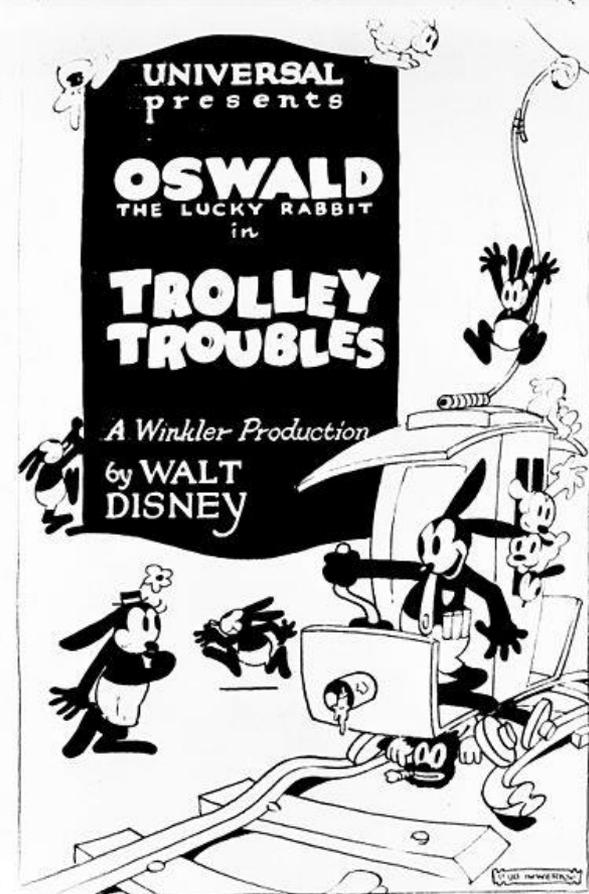
Returning from France, Walt got a job at an art studio, drawing illustrations for adverts. While he was there, Walt made friends with another illustrator called Ub Iwerks, who would play a big part in his later success.

In 1920, Walt lost his job. He decided to start his own company. Moving pictures (later known as movies) were becoming popular and Walt experimented with the new art form. He made a 12-minute black and white film called 'Alice's Wonderland'. The film was a mixture of real-life and animation.

Move to Hollywood

In 1923, Walt moved to Hollywood, where his brother Roy lived. There, Walt went on to produce several more Alice films for the company Universal Studios. Walt's friend Ub later joined the brothers in Hollywood.

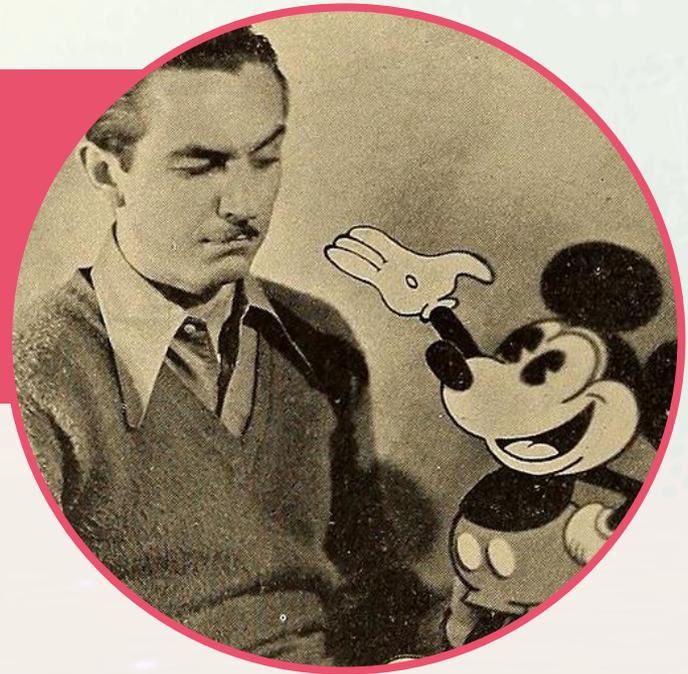
In 1928, Walt decided to leave Universal Studios. He was shocked to discover that Universal Studios owned the rights to Oswald, which meant he could no longer use the character in any films. Walt had been dealt yet another blow.



Meet Mickey

Following the success of Oswald, Walt and his team decided to create another animal character that they could use in their own films. They experimented with cartoon dogs, cats, horses and cows but none of them felt right.

Eventually, Walt decided on a mouse. He named him Mortimer. Lillian liked the idea of a mouse but felt the name wasn't right. She suggested the name 'Mickey' and Mickey Mouse was born.



Films

Mickey appeared in many short films and Walt continued to create new characters. He also experimented with putting sound on his films – something that was a new innovation in film-making. Walt's films won several Academy Awards (known as Oscars).

Following increasing success, Walt set himself the challenge of creating a full-colour, full-length film with sound. In 1937, 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarves' was released. This was soon followed by 'Pinocchio' and 'Fantasia', both released in 1940.



Did You Know...?

Walt won an Oscar for 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarves'. He was given one full-sized Oscar and seven little ones!

Walt Disney Pictures

Walt's success continued to grow and his company became known as 'Walt Disney Pictures'. The company released many films:

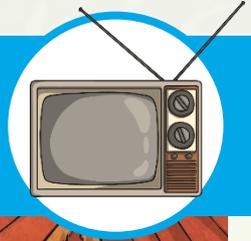
- Dumbo (1941)
- Cinderella (1950)
- Peter Pan (1953)
- Sleeping Beauty (1959)
- 101 Dalmatians (1961)
- Mary Poppins (1964)



Talk About It

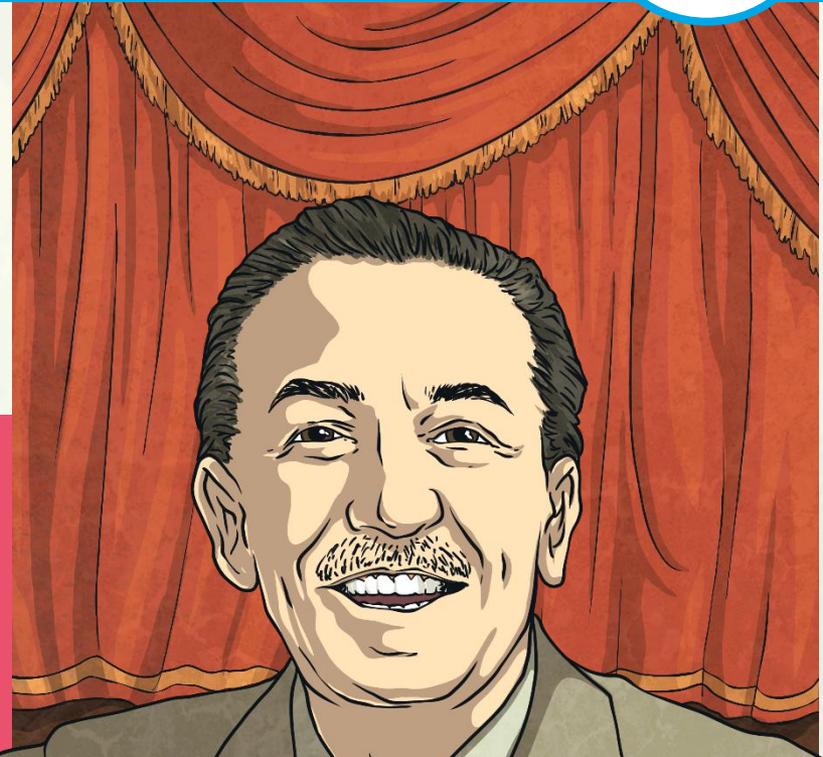
Have you seen any of these films? Some of them have been remade in recent years.

Walt Disney's Disneyland



Always an innovator, Walt noticed the increasing popularity of TV throughout the 1950s. In 1950, only 9% of homes had a TV. By the end of the decade, that figure had risen to 90%.

Walt started his own weekly television show called 'Walt Disney's Disneyland'. Walt presented the show, telling stories and introducing Disney characters.



Disneyland

After the television show came Walt's most daring plan yet...

Using money made from Walt's films and his television show, Disneyland was opened in 1953. One of the rides was a steam train that toured around the edge of the park, inspired by Walt's love of trains as a child. Similarly, the entrance to the park was a street called 'Main Street', based on the street of the same name in Marceline.

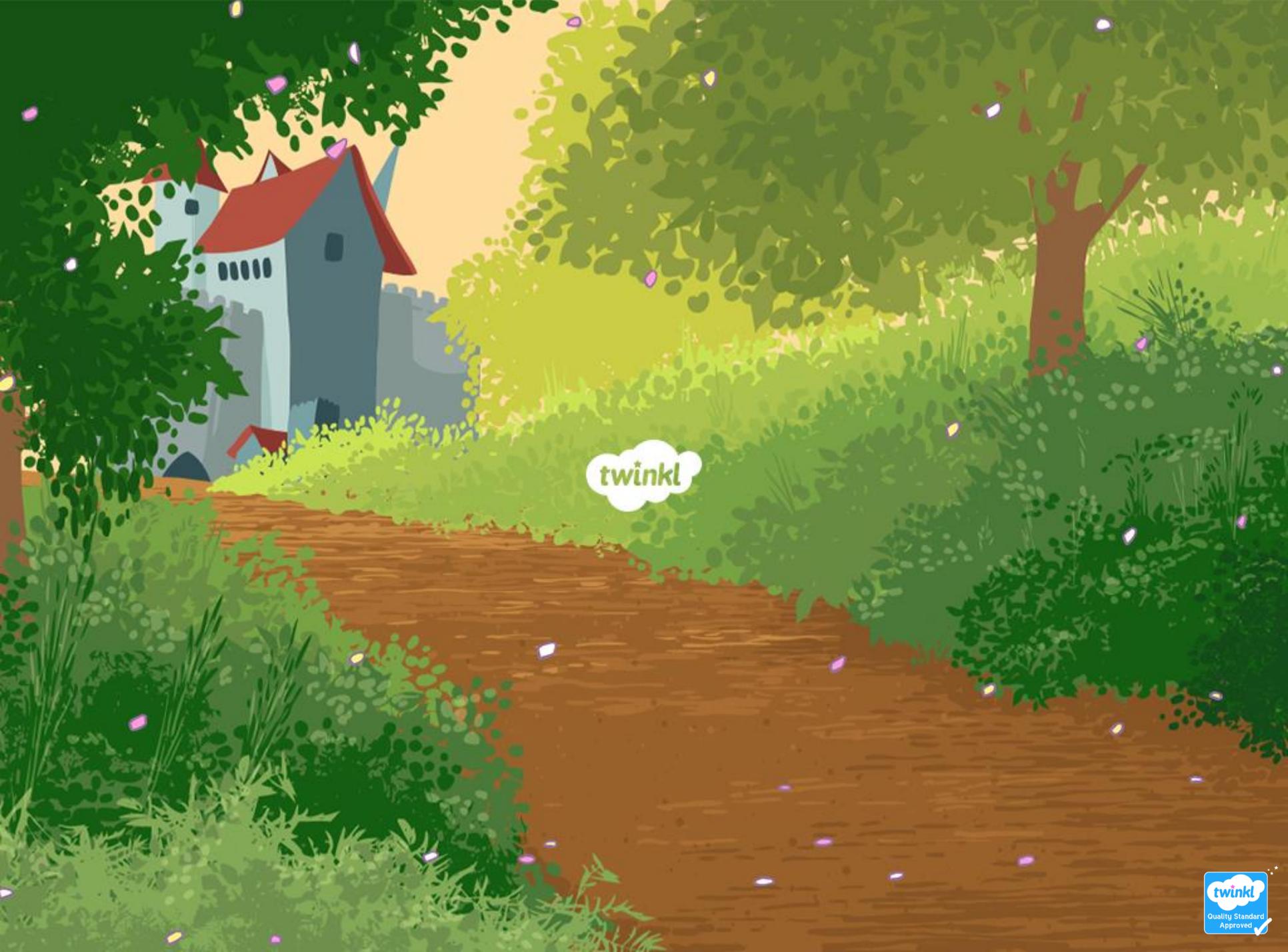


Walt Disney World



Disneyland was a success. In its first year, over three million people visited the theme park. In 1965, Walt announced plans to build another theme park in Florida. The park would be even bigger than Disneyland and would be called 'Disney World'

A statue of Walt and Mickey greets visitors to the Magic Kingdom in Walt Disney World. Before his death, Walt said, "I only hope that we never lose sight of one thing – that it was all started by a mouse."



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