

# The magic of walt disney

People



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Walt Disney is considered an icon of American popculture and has made many contributions to the American entertainment industry. A self-made-man from the Midwest, he became an inspiration to all American children and adults. Hailing from the heart of America, he was very patriotic and contributed a great deal to our country in times of need.

What was most likable about Walt Disney was that he was relatable; he came to embody the American values of courage, determination, wholesomeness, innocence, imagination, and self-confidence. Although Walt Disney was influenced by the setting in which he grew up, he shaped the American pop culture and everyday life of virtually the entire twentieth century, and he supported our country in times of need; his legacy continues today. Walt Disney was born on December 5, 1901, in Chicago, Illinois, but his family moved soon after his birth.

Although Walt Disney shaped most of twentieth-century pop culture, he himself was influenced by his small midwestern hometown: Marceline, Missouri. Walt Disney only lived there for a few years as a child, but it still had a major impact on his life and career. It was a traditional, Midwestern town that made Disney just an average guy, relatable to any other typical American. This ordinary town lacked magical and fantastical features, which could have contributed to his craving for magic and fantasy later in life. He grew up around animals on a farm; so many of his early animations consisted of animals and rural themes.

He used a lot of “ outhouse” and farm humor in his cartoons such as outhouse gags, goosing gags, bedpans, Johnny-pots, thinly disguised farts,

and cow udders. Even though Disney grew up in a traditional American small-town, his childhood occurred during the onset of the decline of small-town America. Disney loved small-town America so much that he wanted to preserve and live by its values, such as self-determination and hard work, because they were fleeting so fast. Disney brought these values to everything he did in life and tried to encourage them in others.

Walt Disney's first claim to fame was the animated character, Mickey Mouse. Disney created Mickey Mouse in 1928, and from the very moment, Mickey hit the public eye he appealed to all Americans. Mickey's story of "rags to riches" touched the hearts of many Americans and gave them the inspiration to follow their dreams. He was memorable and loveable in that he was the stereotypical hero, coming out victorious in many difficult situations. His courage, strength, will, ingenuity, and faith in himself allowed ordinary Americans to relate to him and brought hope to them in troubling times.

Mickey played many different roles, so many different people could relate to him. Mickey was known all over the world, - Michael Maus in Germany, Michel Souris in France, Miki Kuchi in Japan, Mikkell Mus in Denmark, and Miguel Ratoncito in Spain- and eventually became one of the most well-known symbols in the entire world. Mickey Mouse helped bring the world a little closer together and brought joy and courage to people in times of need. The Great Depression was one of the bleakest periods in American history, but it became a bit more enjoyable with a little help from Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse Club.

The original purpose of this children's club was to attract more young moviegoers with discounted ticket prices, and its first theater-based club meeting was on January 11, 1930, at the Fox Dome Theater in Ocean Park, California. It gave kids something fun to do during the depression. " By 1932, there were already over a million boys and girls belonging to the Mickey Mouse clubs all over America. " Local businesses benefitted from the club too: bakeries, ice cream shops, drug stores, and banks all donated prizes for the kids. The free goodies won the kids' hearts, and the local businesses gained a loyal customer base.

The Mickey Mouse Club made kids feel like they were a part of something; at the start of every meeting the club members would recite an oath, and each club member received an ID card with the oath printed on it upon joining the club. Like the Boy Scouts, the Mickey Mouse Club taught kids how to be good and useful citizens, truthful, honorable, to follow their dreams, respect their elders, and take care of the aged, helpless, and smaller children. The Mickey Mouse club instilled values in the children of the depression, which were then carried through the rest of the century and helped make good citizens out of generations of children.

Walt Disney's empire grew from a small " studio" over a garage to a world-famous corporation. Walt Disney Studios was built in 1939 in Burbank California, specifically for the animation process. As Disney Studios became more popular, they began selling products featuring Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, and other familiar Disney cartoon characters. All of America was covered with Mickey Mouse wallpaper, dishware, cookie jars, ashtrays, salt

and pepper shakers, watches, clothes, wallets, pocketbooks, lunch boxes, and other household items.

Mickey Mouse infiltrated every home and became a part of everyday life. Disney merchandise helped stimulate America's economy during the Great Depression; people may have been short on cash, but they always had enough for Disney merchandise. Disney sold approximately twenty million dollars worth of merchandise from mid-1933 to mid-1934. Disney even saved several companies from going bankrupt during the depression. Ingersoll-Waterbury got the license to sell Mickey Mouse watches, and Lionel Corporation got the license to sell Mickey and Minnie themed electric train toys.

These companies were saved from bankruptcy because people could not resist buying anything Mickey Mouse-themed. In the 1950s the Mousecap was the primary symbol of Mickey Mouse pop culture. Children were proud to wear them and say that they were official members of the club. That decade Mickey “ appeared on five thousand different items, which had contributed a quarter of a billion dollars to the gross national product. Mickey Mouse became an authoritative figure in the merchandise world. Whatever companies Mickey Mouse endorsed, such as

GeneralFood, Standard Oil, National Biscuit Company, and National Dairy Products, consumers would always buy their products. Numerous companies fought to get Mickey Mouse as their spokesperson. Liquor, cigarette, and pharmaceutical companies vied for Mickey's support, but Disney would not sponsor anything that went against Mickey's wholesome image. Mickey

Mouse had a huge influence on the merchandise industry of the twentieth century, and in doing so Disney Studios extended its power to the economic and everyday part of American life.

During World War II Walt Disney expanded his studios to play a role in American politics. After the attack on Pearl Harbor the U. S. government-commissioned Disney Studios to create military training videos and propaganda films. Since Mickey Mouse was so popular the government thought they could make military training a little more enjoyable by employing Mickey Mouse and other Disney characters for the movies. Disney Studios became the first and only Hollywood studio the army took over when 500 US army troops were stationed there. They stored repaired equipment in the soundstage and held ammunition in the sheds.

President Franklin Roosevelt used Mickey Mouse as an international symbol of peace to improve the U. S.'s Good Neighbor Policy; Walt Disney led a Goodwill Tour in South America in 1941 where a vast amount of kids who did not even speak English were eager to meet the creator of Mickey Mouse. Disney was also commissioned by the United States Treasury Department to create a film that would encourage people to pay their taxes. Mickey Mouse appeared as an Uncle Sam type figure and was the symbol of American patriotism during World War II. Mickey was the star of many U. S. and Allied war posters and propaganda. He appeared on at least 35 home-front insignia designs created by Disney Studios, and he was the mascot for the Red Cross during the war. Disney and Mickey Mouse were such a big part of American culture and the war effort that " the password for the Allies who stormed the beach at Normandy to crush the German army was ' Mickey

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Mouse. ” Even people on the Axis Powers looked to Mickey for inspiration during the war. Walt Disney’s help in the war effort further incorporated Disney into the pop culture and everyday life of Americans.

One of Walt Disney’s greatest contributions to American pop culture was the amusement park, Disneyland, in Anaheim, California. With Disneyland, Walt Disney changed the whole idea of an amusement park. It was not simply a park; it was a whole world; a full imaginative experience. Building Disneyland allowed Walt Disney to live out his imagination, and visiting Disneyland allowed every person to live out his or her wildest dreams. Disneyland appealed to everybody. The park’s traditional turn-of-the-century American main street- Mainstreet USA- made everyone feel at home.

Disney filled the park with iconic American images along with images that he had created such as Cinderella, SnowWhite, the Three Little Pigs, and Mickey and Minnie Mouse. Disneyland exemplified how much Walt Disney had influenced the imaginations of Americans by creating a certain psychological experience in the park; it was not too loud, crowded, or chaotic like other parks, and everything was soft, harmonious, and unthreatening. The park was also appealing in its cleanliness, the efficiency of the lines, the weather, and even the sound of the park.

Disneyland manipulated people into being happy by bringing out the child in everyone, but people were fine with the fact that they were being manipulated because it was executed so well. Disneyland also provided a lesson in American heritage; it taught Americans to remember their roots and traditional post-war values before they go on to fulfill their dreams.

Disneyland was also a reflection of Walt Disney himself. Walt Disney put every single one of his living fibers into his park. He micromanaged everything and obsessed over every little detail until it was perfect.

His commitment to the quality of the park was one thing that made it so successful; he continuously improved the park, came up with new ideas, new angles, and new additions to make Disneyland more attractive. He felt like this park was another chance to create his fantasy world and make everything exactly how he wanted it. Disneyland portrayed Disney's sense of wish fulfillment, and life experiences and journey with the use of the different worlds of Disneyland. The images and different lands created in Disneyland could also be applied to the history and growth of America.

Frontierland displayed traditional turn-of-the-century images and transported the guests back in time. Fantasyland allowed Americans to live out their wildest dreams and imagination. Adventureland depicted America's desire for excitement and new experiences. Tomorrowland illustrated the promise of coming technological advances and America's desire for progress.

Disneyland was more than just an amusement park: it affected the lives of generations of people. Walt Disney had such a great effect on people because he embodied the idea of a true American.

He represented the typical self-made, family man that people could look to and think if he can make it big, then so can I. Disney was simple, clean, moral, and innocent, and these qualities were infused into his animations and transmitted to people. His old-fashion values such as hard work, perseverance, generosity, and integrity emanated from everything he did



and people were just drawn to him. These qualities and values gave people what they needed in troubling times: hope and the ability to believe in themselves.

Disney's personality made him a beloved figure in millions of middle-class households, and he affected the lives of many Americans. Walt Disney died on December 16, 1966, but his legacy continued long after he was gone. In Disney's mind, his greatest legacy would be his work with the Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles, California. Mrs. Nelbert Chouinard created the Chouinard Art Institute in 1921 with the belief that an art school was needed on the west coast of the United States. Disney had been interested in the Chouinard Institute since the 1930s and when Mrs. Chouinard fell ill could not take care of it anymore he took over the institute. Disney knew how difficult it was to get admitted to art school and become successful, so he wanted to help out aspiring artists as much as he could. He financed the school, expanded it, and eventually combined it with the Los Angeles Conservatory of Music and renamed it the California Institute of the Arts. Walt even said that CalArts would be what he is remembered for. Walt Disney's legacies continue to have an ongoing impact. Disney's brother, Roy, once said about Walt Disney, " There is no way to replace Walt Disney. He was an extraordinary man. Perhaps there will never be another like him. " He distracted people from the strife of the Great Depression, helped our country during World War II, and provided support afterward. He taught children how to be responsible citizens, while still allowing them to have fun and follow their dreams. He reinforced traditional American values into the minds of Americans. He helped connect the cultures of the world through the use of

an iconic cartoon image while making American culture the most dominant. He recreated the idea of an amusement park and encouraged wish fulfillment.

Most importantly he demonstrated how one could turn dreams into reality. Walt Disney inspired the lives of millions of children and adults all over the world, and he is considered one of the most influential people of the twentieth century.

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