

Walt disney: a cultural transformation

People



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them. ” Walt Disney believed in this passionately. This is one of the many reasons Walt Disney accomplished so many things in his lifetime. With hard work and a great imagination you can truly do anything just as Walt Disney did. Even today Walt Disney’s company is extremely successful. All of the different things that Walt Disney and his company have done have contributed to the world’s popular culture. Walt Disney was born on December 5th, 1901. His parents were Elias and Flora Disney.

Walt had a good childhood although it is said that his father had a bad temper that at times he could not control. Walt started to become interested in acting and drawing at a young age. At school, instead of focusing on his work, he would draw endlessly. Among his classmates he was known as Walt Disney, the artist. In 1917 Walt attended the Chicago Art Institute where he gained more experience. He dropped out of school in an attempt to join the army but was too young. Instead of the army, Walt joined the Red Cross where he drove an ambulance for a year.

In 1919, Walt moved back to Chicago and started drawing for a living. After a couple fail attempts he and his brother were able to open Disney Brothers Studios. In 1927, Walt had created Oswald the lucky rabbit. Oswald turned out to be a huge success but Walt was betrayed. Universal pictures bought out Walt’s staff and he lost all rights to the character. Walt was desperate to create another successful character like Oswald. In 1928, Walt and his small circle of associates came up with a mouse character. The new character was named Mickey Mouse.

At the time they didn't know how much this little mouse would impact America. Mickey Mouse hit stardom when Steamboat Willie, the first animated short with sound and movement, was released. That's when Walt Disney Productions was formed. During the time in which Mickey Mouse was introduced America was in the depths of a depression. The economy was hit badly on Black Tuesday October 29th 1929 when the stock market crashed. Then, tragedy struck again when a long drought destroyed crops and farms. So many people lost everything they had. Mickey Mouse was someone to pick them up in those hard times; a source of wishful thinking. In this time unemployment reached historic levels and the whole country looked for prosperity ahead. Throughout the 1930s the Disney cartoons were a business stimulus. Mickey Mouse merchandising exploded and there were a hundred products not only across the country but around the world. Mickey Mouse products were the only thing getting some companies through the Depression. By 1934 Mickey Mouse merchandise was earning around \$600,000 a year. Political historians would likely say that the 1930s were the age of Franklin Roosevelt but cultural historians consider it the age of Mickey Mouse.

Walt Disney is famous for saying, " I only hope that we don't lose sight of one thing - that it was all started by a mouse. " Mickey Mouse is now one of the most recognized faces of all time and an icon of American culture. There is no doubt that Mickey Mouse and his ears are the face of The Disney Studios but Mickey isn't the only iconic character that the company has created. Hundreds of characters have been born from Disney Studios, although some are more popular than others, they all have contributed to Disney Studios.

Around the same time Mickey Mouse was introduced his “ friends”, as they have been come to be called, were created.

Mickey’s friends included Minnie Mouse, Donald Duck, Goofy, and Pluto. These characters represented friendship and often taught moral lessons like Disney often did. SnowWhite and Cinderella started the princess phenomenon. These movies lead to other Disney Princesses including The Sleeping Beauty, The Little Mermaid, Beauty and the Beast, Aladdin, Pocahontas and Rapunzel. Girls around the world look up to these female heroes. The one thing that all these Disney characters have in common is that they will forever be embedded in pop culture.

In 1937, Walt Disney made history when Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs was released. The film was the first full length animated film of its time. Critics had little faith in the productive of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs but were proven wrong when the film earned over 8 million on its first release. The film was such a success that Walt built a studio specifically for the making of animated films. The film became a foundation for future feature length animated films. During the 1940s and 1950s the studio made many animated films including Fantasia, Bambi, Cinderella, Alice n Wonderland, and Peter Pan. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs was an artistic and technological breakthrough in the entertainment world. Animated films lead to the production of live-action features and television programs. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs showed that animated films could be just as entertaining as other motion pictures. Walt Disney was known for transforming imagination into reality which was especially true

when he made Disneyland, the first ever theme park. Disneyland changed the amusement park industry forever when it opened on July 18th 1955.

Disneyland was the first start in making theme parks popular. Walt Disney once said, “ Disneyland will never be completed. It will continue to grow as long as there is imagination left in the world. ” Although Disneyland was successful, it wasn’t the perfection Walt was looking for. Disneyland in California didn’t meet his vision because of the sleazy restaurants and hotels that were around the park. Fifteen years later Walt decided to build a new theme park in Orlando, Florida that would be a magical experience all around. Walt tried to keep the operation low key by setting up dummy corporations to buy the land.

It was a reporter from the Orlando Sentinel newspaper who broke the news that it was Disney who bought the land. Walt never did get to see Disney World completed because of his death on December 15th 1966 of a cardiac arrest. Walt’s brother stayed on the project and Disney World opened to the public on October 1, 1971. Central Florida now has more theme parks than any other place in the world with Walt Disney World resort being the largest recreational resort ever built. The happiest place on earth didn’t just stay in the United States.

Besides Disneyland in California and Walt Disney World in Florida there are three other Disney resorts in Tokyo, Paris, and Hong Kong. Many people wonder how such a successful enterprise was created. At first, the Walt Disney Studio wasn’t profitable but it was staying afloat. Even when in debt Walt Disney looked to do more. He made smart moves to fundraisemoneyto

start new projects including Disneyland. As early as the 1930s Disney enterprises became global with branch offices in Chicago, Toronto, London, Paris, Copenhagen, Milan, Barcelona, Lisbon, and Sydney.

After the death of Walt and his brother, Roy, the company struggled. In 1980s and 1990s the stock grew rapidly which made Disney the largest entertainment empire in the world. Before Walt Disney died he managed to build the first multinational media corporation. Disney now has five business segments including media networks, parks and resorts, studio entertainment, consumer products and interactive media. The Walt Disney Company is now a \$60 million dollar company and is the complete entertainment experience.

Walt Disney is known for saying “ if your dream it, you can do it. ” He and his company are an example of just that. Although Walt Disney died his legacy lives on. The Walt Disney Company continues to create blockbuster films, parks, and television. Disney has made a few hundred movies and more than fifty of them being animated films. There is now a Disney channel on all five continents in several languages. The Walt Disney Company has become part of the world’s culture especially in the United States.

He has created some of the most iconic characters of all time including the timeless Mickey Mouse. Disney characters have touched the hearts of people around the world. When the first full length animated movie was made it changed the course of film making forever. Disneyland and Disney World were the start of theme parks as we know them today. The achievements of Walt Disney are impressive and they have laid out the foundation for the

whole entertainment industry. Even to this day, Walt Disney will forever be known as the king of animation.