Did you read a newspaper this morning? You might have checked a basketball game score or looked for a weather report. For Benjamin Franklin, the first step in the newspaper was the comics, or funny pages. This week, in honor of Newspaper Education Week (March 7-11), The Mini Page learns more about newspaper comics.

Humor in newspapers

The first comics in newspapers weren’t comic strips. Instead, cartoonists used humor to comment on events happening in the world. Benjamin Franklin created the first cartoon that appeared in an American newspaper, the Pennsylvania Gazette.

In 1754, Benjamin Franklin drew this cartoon to urge uniting against the British.

For more information, visit kids.kiddle.co/Cartoonist

Competing for readers

In the 1890s in New York City, two newspaper publishers, William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, were competing for readers. Pulitzer had a brand-new color press that he decided to use for comic art in the New York World. Pulitzer hired artist Richard Outcault, and in May 1895 “Hogan’s Alley” appeared in the World. The comic series featured a little boy character known as the Yellow Kid.

The Yellow Kid

“Hogan’s Alley” was about a group of kids in a neighborhood, but the Yellow Kid soon became the star of the comic. His popularity helped sell more copies of the World. Hearst and Pulitzer began to fight over the cartoonist Outcault, and finally both papers were publishing their own versions of the Yellow Kid with two different artists!

Newspaper publishers realized how important comic strips were to selling more papers.

Getting comics to readers

Today, cartoonists have many places to share their ideas with others. They can create for the internet and websites, in comic books, or for television and movies through animation.

“Peanuts,” started in 1950 by Charles M. Schulz, became one of the most beloved cartoons in history and is still seen in newspapers today.


If you loved reading comics or cartoons, we have some great options for you to enjoy. Try those you loved and some of your favorites. Why? Share your opinions with classmates or family members.

Cook’s Corner

Veggie Blossom

You’ll need:
- 1 round cucumber slice
- 7 to 9 round carrot slices
- 1/2 celery stalk

What to do:
1. Wash all vegetables; peel and slice.
2. Place cucumber slice in middle of plate.
3. Position carrot slices around the cucumber to form petals.
4. Sprinkle peanut butter or cream cheese on celery stalk. Place stalk on lower part of cucumber slice to form a stem.
5. Arrange spinach leaves on either side of the celery stalk. Makes 1 “blossom.”

7 Little Words for Kids

Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each answer can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle. 1. place to store comic strips in the newspaper (8) 2. ocean west of California (7) 3. it follows you around all day (6) 4. willing to share (8) 5. part of African cat (7) 6. what you wear to bed (7) 7. a break from school (8)

Mini Jokes

Frank: What’s the difference between a newspaper and a TV? Frances: Ever tried swatting a fly with a TV?

Eco Note

A new study finds that human activities have transformed nearly a fifth of the planet’s land surface since the 1960s, roughly equivalent to the areas of Europe and Africa combined. During that period, Earth’s forest cover alone has been reduced by nearly 386,000 square miles, with farmland and grazing pastures increasing by about the same amount.

For later:
Look through your newspaper’s comics section. Which cartoons are your favorites? Why? Share your opinions with classmates or family members.

Resources

On the Web:
- kids.kiddle.co/Cartoonist

At the library:
- “Create Your Own Graphic Novel: A Guide for Kids” by David Wayne Chiu

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