

What a Sponge!



Mini Fact:

At the end of this season, there will be 204 completed episodes of "SpongeBob SquarePants."

Are you a fan of the animated Nickelodeon show "SpongeBob SquarePants"? SpongeBob, Patrick Star and their friends have been entertaining kids and adults for 16 years! Let's find out more about Stephen Hillenburg, the creator of SpongeBob.

Loving the sea

Stephen Hillenburg is 53 years old. He was born in Lawton, Oklahoma, but he grew up in Anaheim, California.

"I was always interested in the ocean," he said, "and also in art. I had to figure out how to put the two together, but painting fish sounded boring."

Creating 'SpongeBob'

Today, Hillenburg is the executive producer of "SpongeBob SquarePants." He writes for the show, working alongside a large staff of writers and animators to put it together.

The staff will make a storyboard — a series of drawings with dialogue (the words said by the characters) that serve as an outline for the animators. Then Hillenburg and others will add jokes to "punch it up, to make it better," he said.



Artist Peter Bennett works on a background for "SpongeBob SquarePants."

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Not just a TV show

SpongeBob, Squidward and the gang appear in other media besides television. "The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie" was released in 2004, and earlier this year, "The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water" hit the theaters.

Comic books, video games, toys and even amusement park rides entertain fans.

Someone you know?

Many times, a writer will base a character on someone he or she knows. Stephen Hillenburg says none of the characters are based on people from his life — except for Mr. Krabs.

When Hillenburg was a teenager, he worked at a lobster restaurant in Maine during the summers. The owner of the restaurant reminded Hillenburg of a pirate with his strong Maine accent. He became the inspiration for Mr. Krabs.



Mr. Krabs

"I added the cheap part (to Mr. Krabs) to give him more personality," Hillenburg said.

An all-ages audience

Hillenburg said that when "The Simpsons" took off in 1989, it really opened up possibilities for animation. "SpongeBob" appeals to kids and adults, he said.

"SpongeBob is a kid living an adult life. He has a job. Kids think being a fry cook is a great job."

Art or marine biology?

Stephen Hillenburg got a degree in marine biology from Humboldt State University in California and a minor degree in art. While teaching marine biology at the Ocean Institute in Dana Point, California, he wrote and drew a comic book about the animals living in tide pools. One of his characters was Bob the Sponge.



Stephen Hillenburg

After graduating from the California Institute of the Arts, where he studied animation, Hillenburg worked on an animated Nickelodeon show called "Rocko's Modern Life." He began thinking about a cartoon world where undersea animals live. SpongeBob became his central character. His last name, SquarePants, is because of his "square personality," Hillenburg said.



All images courtesy Nickelodeon

Advice to kids

"Follow your interests," Hillenburg said. "I never saw how my interests would collide. You don't want to work on a job where you're looking at your watch."

"I never imagined that I'd end up in animation, but marine biology and art collided, and here we are!"

Resources



On the Web:

- nick.com/spongebob-squarepants

At the library:

- "Party Time!" by John Cabell

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of SpongeBob are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used more than once. See if you can find:



ANIMATION, ART, CHARACTERS, EPISODE, FUNNY, HILLENBURG, INTEREST, MARINE, MEDIA, MOVIE, OCEAN, PATRICK, SHOW, SPONGEBOB, SQUAREPANTS, SQUIDWARD, STAR, STEPHEN, STORYBOARD.

D S H O W B T S E R E T N I A
R W C M S T O R Y B O A R D N
A K M E D I A B T J Q A O M N I
W C H A R A C T E R S A O E M
D I V X R A T S D G A E V H A
I R L E P I S O D E N C I P T
U T G B Z Y N N U F T O E E I
Q A G R U B N E L L I H P T O
S P B S T N A P E R A U Q S N

Cook's Corner

Broccoli Bake

You'll need:

- 2 (10-ounce) packages frozen chopped broccoli
- 1 cup baking mix
- 1 cup reduced-fat milk
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- dash pepper
- 1 cup shredded low-fat cheese

What to do:

1. Cook broccoli according to package directions.
2. Blend together baking mix, milk, eggs, salt and pepper.
3. Stir in cooked broccoli and cheese.
4. Coat a medium-size baking dish with cooking spray. Pour mixture into dish.
5. Bake at 325 degrees for 50 to 55 minutes until set.
6. Cut into squares and serve. Serves 6 to 8.



* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

Puzzling

Unscramble the words below that remind us of animation.



- emivo _____
dybororast _____
gideuloa _____
racthacer _____

Answers: movie, storyboard, dialogue, character

Mini Jokes



Betty: Why did Humpty Dumpty have a great fall?

Bob: To make up for a lousy summer!

Biff: What did George Washington say to his men before they crossed the Delaware?

Belle: "Get in the boat!"

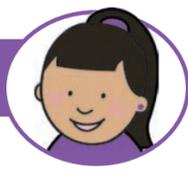
Eco Note



The energy you save by recycling just one glass bottle could light a 100-watt lightbulb for four hours!

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Thank You



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Teachers:

For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: bbs.amuniversal.com/teaching_guides.html

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