

Celebrating National Cartoonists Day

Newspapers and Cartoons: Together More Than 100 Years

Hamster Alley! by Polly Keener



Cartoonists Day was first launched on May 5, 1999. It was set on that date to commemorate the first publication of “Hogan’s Alley,” a cartoon with modern cartoon strip characteristics, including captions and a continuing character; “the Yellow Kid,” which first appeared in the New York Sunday World newspaper on May 5, 1895. Drawn and written by Richard Outcault, it started the tradition of newspaper comic strips in America.

Cartoons, “America’s most popular art form,” have been used not only to entertain readers, but to illustrate difficult concepts or teach almost any subject.

Hundreds of years ago, a “cartoon” was a sketch for a later work of art; there were “cartoons” that were not funny, and there were funny drawings that were not called cartoons.

Today’s cartoonists are both writers and artists and, preferably, funny. Creating each cartoon is like being the director of a small play; the cartoonist writes the script and

dialogue, casts the characters, picks the settings and costumes. A very popular cartoon can reach millions of readers via publication in a newspaper or syndication to many papers. Some are translated into dozens of languages around the world each day.

There are many types of cartoons including cartoon strips, single panel cartoons, editorial/political cartoons, sports cartoons, advertising cartoons, “spot” cartoons in the classified section, and cartoons illustrating articles. Some regular features are continuing adventure or melodrama stories; others have “gag-a-day” themes. Some cartoonists feature the Cartoonists Day logo in their May 5 cartoons or give programs at schools and libraries on or near that day.

When a child is just learning to read, comics can be a great way to foster love and enjoyment of reading - share one today. For more information go to National Cartoonists Day website at www.nationalcartoonistsday.com.

Newspaper Activities:

Try your hand at writing or drawing a cartoon. Pick two cartoons from the paper. Erase the captions in one and erase the characters in the other. Make photocopies to use. Write or draw your own creative captions or characters on the blank cartoons.

Cut up some popular comic strips, provide each student with one complete strip, and ask students to put the comics back in the correct order.

Additional Resources:

For lessons about political cartoons from the Library of Congress go to <https://tinyurl.com/LOCcartoon> or from the Assoc. of American Editorial Cartoonists go to <https://nieonline.com/aaec/cftc.cfm>

This feature is just one part of this newspaper’s Newspaper in Education (NIE) program. A note of thanks to the National Cartoonist Society for the content of this educational feature.