



# What made the first films unique?

01 Complete the statements below based on your own experience. Compare your answers with a classmate and identify what you have in common.

The first movie I saw at a cinema was 1.\_\_\_\_\_

I went with my 2.\_\_\_\_\_ What I remember about it was 3.\_\_\_\_\_. I was really 4.\_\_\_\_\_ about the experience.

02 Before you read "Keep Mum," read the statements below. Predict if they are "T" for true or "F" for false. Then, read and check your answers.

1. The first movies were shown in arcades and movie theaters.

2. They were created in the 1800s.

3. They enthralled audiences for around 60 minutes.

4. The first films were projected in black and white.

5. Audiences preferred to watch movies with a humbler design.

03 Read the text again. Circle the best word to complete the statements.

1. Many artists like Charlie Chaplin had **enthralled** / **humble** backgrounds.

2. It wasn't until the beginning of the twentieth century that the first movie theaters **projected** / **enthralled** movies.

3. **Slapstick** / **Backdrop** comedy was perfect for silent films since it utilized silly physical stunts.

4. Audiences were **enthralled** / **humbled** by the new art form.

5. **Backdrops** / **Arcades** were used as set decorations.

6. **Projected** / **Arcades** were popular places where people used to hang out for entertainment.

## Keep Mum

Although it may be hard to believe, the movie industry as we know it had **humble** beginnings. Beginning with the first film projector in the 1890s, early movies lasted only a few minutes and were shown at traveling fairs or **arcades**, designed for individual viewing. They were in black and white and lacked sound.

As technology improved, the films became longer, and movie theaters sprang up, allowing audiences to sit down to enjoy the shows. Without dialogue, longer takes were broken up, and words, which were sometimes read aloud by professional actors, were **projected** on the screen to explain the plot. To add entertainment value, organists accompanied movies, often improvising music for the film.

At first, the camera maintained a fixed shot of the scene, but as their experience grew, directors and actors began experimenting with different angles. They also added painted **backdrops**, stop-motion, variable camera speeds, and double-exposure shots, which are still used today. Charlie Chaplin was one of the most famous actors of the time, best known for his character Little Tramp, which utilized **slapstick** comedy for comedic effect.

Audiences remained **enthralled** by the power of film, or animated photographs, as they were first known, and many did not feel the need for dialogue. However, by the 1920s, theaters saw that they could reduce costs by not paying musicians' salaries, so they switched to film with audio.

04 With a classmate, decide which elements of silent films you would enjoy. Justify your answers.

- live music accompanying the film
- reading a simple text explaining the plot
- film without color



05

**Write "PA" if the statement describes the past and "PR" if it describes the present.**

1. You might have used a different lens for filming. It would have looked better.
2. Sebastian can edit a film very quickly without any help.
3. Soledad may be an extra in a film if her mom lets her.
4. Heidi could read film subtitles by the time she was eight.
5. Charlie Chaplin might have won more Oscars if he hadn't disagreed with the politics of the time.

06

**Complete the sentences with the correct verb form in the parentheses.**

1. When I was younger, I \_\_\_\_\_ 20 minutes of film on my devices. (record)
2. I \_\_\_\_\_ in showbiz if I had been more interested in technology. (work)
3. When I am older, \_\_\_\_\_ more film festivals. (visit)
4. My parents \_\_\_\_\_ me to a wider variety of film genres if they had taken me to more art films. (expose)
5. Had I been willing to get out of my comfort zone, I \_\_\_\_\_ about silent movies a long time ago. (learn)

07

**Write a speech as if you were the director of a silent film who just won an award. Be sure to thank the people who helped out in the making of the film.**

29

08

**With a classmate, debate the following statements about silent films.**

- › Silent films might not have disappeared had sound not been introduced.
- › Directors nowadays are too dependent on technology. They can't make an enjoyable film without relying on it.
- › Films today might not be as good as they are without the cinematographic techniques developed for silent films.

