What were movies like before CGI?

01 With a classmate, write a list of special effects used in your favorite films.

02 Read "The Age of Algorithms." Check (✔) if the sentences are true.

1. Some people only go to the movies to see the special effects. ◯

2. One of the first movies to use CGI was *Terminator 2*. ◯

3. The actors in *Casper* found it challenging to work with a CGI character. ◯

4. Audiences liked the VFX in *Civil War*. ◯

5. It is believed that combining technology and physical effects makes the films more realistic. ◯

The Age of Algorithms

Movie-making has dramatically evolved since the first films. Now, cinematographers **employ** technology to **enhance** their works to the point that some moviegoers watch movies just for the special effects themselves.

Directors in the 1990s were some of the first to incorporate computer-generated imagery (CGI). Consider the killer robot T-1000 from *Terminator 2* (1991), which turned into liquid metal. If 3D effects such as multiple morphing hadn't been used, the character wouldn't have had such realistic human movements. Audiences no longer had to visualize what a robot would look like because the work had been done for them.

The children's movie *Casper* (1995) was the first to utilize an entirely CGI protagonist who interacted with human **counterparts** in a film. Although it is standard practice nowadays, the human actors had to **grasp** how to interact with a co-star who would be added later. This development impacted what filmmakers could do with their characters and reshaped how actors trained.

The movie *Civil War* (2024), used video effects (VFX) to modify real environments, turning them into war zones without physically manipulating them. After filming, the creative team added bullet holes and fires where there hadn't been any. They also removed pedestrians and vehicles from shots to create an **eerie**, abandoned quality. This is a **persuasive** example of how filmmakers combine reality with fiction to make anything possible. However, combining practical effects and CGI gives films a realism that is impossible with CGI alone.

03 Read the text again. Write a sample sentence using the words in the box.

> employ   enhance   counterparts   grasp
> eerie   persuasive

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

04 With a classmate, discuss the questions below.

› In which movies or scenes does the CGI look realistic?
› In which ones does it look unrealistic?
› How does the (lack of) realism impact your experience?

05 Circle the option that completes the sentences.

1. If George Lucas **used** / **had used** / **would have used** CGI in the first *Star Wars*, he would have impressed audiences even more.

2. It **would be** / **were** / **would have been** impossible to make *Terminator 2* if CGI hadn't existed.

3. I **would learn**/ **learned** / **was learning** how to use animation software if I had the time.

4. If Walt Disney **had created** / **hadn't created** /**didn't create** a studio, we wouldn't have Mickey Mouse now.

5. If you hadn't told me that scene used CGI, I **wouldn't** / **didn't** / **don't** have a clue.

6. The director wouldn't use CGI if the studio **doesn't force** / **forced** / **didn't force** her to.

06 Match the example sentences to their meanings.

1. I would have enjoyed the movie more if it had used more CGI.

2. I would have enjoyed the movie more if it hadn't used as much CGI.

3. If CGI hadn't been invented in the 1990s, we wouldn't use it now.

4. If CGI were invented now, it wouldn't have been used in films from the 1990s.

5. If directors used more CGI, they would save money on big acting salaries.

6. If directors used less CGI, they would save money on computer engineers' salaries.

a. The movie overused CGI.

b. The movie didn't use enough CGI.

c. CGI is used now, but not in the past.

d. CGI wasn't used before the 1990s.

e. Directors spend a lot of money on engineers' salaries.

f. Directors spend a lot of money on actors' salaries.

07 Write a movie review describing the impact of technology on the film. Use at least two examples of conditionals. Follow the example.

It would have been more realistic if the movie had contained less CGI.

08 In a small group, organize a panel of film experts in which you argue about the artistic benefits of using technology in film. Each of you should take on one of the roles on the right.

› a film director who believes that special effects enhance artistic creativity
› a producer who appreciates saving money by using special effects
› a movie reviewer who believes that technology has its place, but is overused in Hollywood
› an out-of-work actor who thinks that CGI is taking away acting jobs