

Check your ECCE Reading Skills – Part 1 - Activity 1

Key and Item Analysis

This passage is about comic books.

Inspired by Egyptian hieroglyphics, the first comic books were written towards the end of the 19th century. They were a series of line-drawn pictures, without any color or detail, illustrating simple but clever stories. Words were eventually added so that plots could be more interesting. It was cartoonist Richard Fenton Outcault who introduced the balloon in comics in 1896. In the balloon, he wrote his characters' thoughts and dialogues, which was to become the standard practice for virtually all comic book writers.

Comics were humorous when they first appeared. Some of the early comic book characters, such as Popeye and Krazy Kat are still widely read to this very day. These early comic books are now considered art forms because, like art, they have a timeless appeal that is cross-cultural. Popeye for instance is currently available in over sixty languages and has been an identifiable figure among children the world over for generations.

In the late 1920s, comic book writers started to create adventure stories which were not written exclusively for children, but for adults as well. In other words, comic books had fully evolved into a form of family entertainment by 1932. It was at this time that Superman and Batman, the two most popular comic book figures ever, were developed in the US, and Herge's Tintin appeared in Europe. Comic books also started becoming more detailed, with creators using intricate graphics, a wide spectrum of colors and even more complex story-lines. All contemporary characters, from the enigmatic Spawn to the intellectual Calvin & Hobbes, have their roots in this initial thirty-year period of comic book development.

Item Difficulty: More challenging

1. According to the passage, comics originally...

- A. influenced Egyptian hieroglyphics.
- B. were very basic drawings.
- C. had a combination of words and pictures.
- D. were too simple to be of interest.

Answer: B

Explanations: The correct answer is B. The second sentence in paragraph 1 states that the first comics were very simple drawings as the pictures were mostly lines without any detail: "They were a series of line-drawn pictures, without any color or detail...."

Item Difficulty: Moderate

2. Outcault was the first to...

- A. add lines and details.
- B. use colors and more shapes.
- C. indicate who was speaking.
- D. use words to develop a story.

Answer: C

Explanations: The correct answer is C as Outcault was the first person to use balloons in comics so that he could show who was speaking in his stories: "... Richard Fenton Outcault who introduced the balloon in comics in 1896. In the balloon, he wrote his characters' thoughts and dialogues... ."

Item Difficulty: Moderate

3. Why does the author mention Popeye?

- A. He is a work of art.
- B. He is humorous.
- C. He was originally created for adults.
- D. He continues to be popular.

Answer: D

Explanations: The correct answer is D as the text states that Popeye is still being read by many people today: "...Popeye and Krazy Kat are still widely read to this very day."

Item Difficulty: Moderate

4. When was Tintin developed?

- A. In the late 1920s.
- B. Around the same time as Batman and Superman.
- C. Around the same time as Popeye.
- D. At the end of the 19th century.

Answer: B

Explanations: The correct answer is B. In the third sentence of paragraph three, the text states that Tintin appeared in Europe at the same time that Batman and Superman appeared in the US: "It was at this time that Superman and Batman, the two most popular comic book figures ever, were developed in the US, and Herge's Tintin appeared in Europe."

Item Difficulty: Less challenging

5. What is true about comic books today?

- A. They are written only for children.
- B. They owe a lot to comic books from the past.
- C. They have simple story-lines.
- D. They are available in only a handful of languages.

Answer: B

Explanations: The correct answer is B. The last sentence of the text states that all modern comic book characters are greatly influenced by the first thirty years of comic book development: "All contemporary characters ... have their roots in this initial thirty-year period of comic book development."