

The Great American Cartoon Characters

Comparing and Contrasting Some of the
Greatest Cartoon Characters from the
Golden Age of Animation

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Have you ever said to a friend, “What’s Up Doc”, or had a pair of Mickey Mouse ears with your name on the back? A lot of people, at least in the United States, can say yes to those questions. The names Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Popeye, and Betty Boop are known to many Americans and in some cases even worldwide, but not everyone knows much about them beyond what they have seen on television or in the movies. These characters are only a few of the plethora of cartoon characters that exist today, but there is something special about these specific names.

The characters mentioned above are some of the most famous characters known in the animation business. If not some of the most famous today, they certainly were during the Animation Golden Age, which took place between the late 1920’s and the 1940’s. Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Popeye, and Betty Boop were the characters that brought their studios major recognition in the animation world.¹ These characters are both similar and different from each other from the way they were drawn, used for propaganda, the types of humor they provided, how they were first created and the importance they had during their time is history. Enduring cartoon characters are a major aspect of today's popular culture and they were part of a tradition that began in the Golden Age of America. These characters were affected dramatically by the culture that surrounded them at the time of their creation and in turn they shaped some of the opinions and thoughts of people who watched them.

¹ Michael Barrier, *Hollywood Cartoons: American Animation in Its Golden Age* (New York: Oxford University Press 2007) 1.

The idea of drawing pictures for entertainment has been around since man could draw. Even the cavemen were making pictures on the walls of their cave.² There is a difference though between drawing a cartoon on paper to making it an animated film. Film animation, which is what this paper will discuss, does not come about only till the 1900's. The first successful animation short films in the United States were characters from "Little Nemo in Slumberland" drawn by Winsor McCay of New York. McCay was an exception for the most part because most cartoonists did not have the talent to make animated films. Making an animated film took exceptional talent and lots of time.³ It was not till the late 1920's that film animation became more popular and some of the famous cartoon characters that are known today began to be drawn for the silver screen.

Film animation was a big thing and people began to really take notice of this new type of movie, but it was still missing something. The pictures on the screen were very inviting to children and adults, but there was no sound in them. In fact, there was no sound in any movie, but the Warner Brothers Studio would soon change that. *The Jazz Singer* was the first movie to every have sound and it was an instant success.⁴ After this movie all the studios wanted in on the action of sound, especially the Disney Studio, and they had just the character to introduce this wonderful new way of making movies.

² Leonard Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic* (New York: Plume 1980), 2.

³ Barrier, 10.

⁴ *The Jazz Singer* made in 1927 by Warner Brothers Studio was the first film to have actors and actress talking.

The success of *The Jazz Singer* inspired Walt Disney and he decided to release his up and coming new character, Mickey Mouse, into a talkie animation film. The film was called *Steamboat Willie* and Walt Disney thought that it would be a good idea to have a practice run first before he put the mouse on the big screen. So he had a private test screening with people from the Disney Studio to see how it would go. According to Leonard Maltin, “Audience reaction to the completed *Steamboat Willie* duplicated the excitement of that private test screening months earlier. The idea that make-believe cartoon characters could talk, sing, play instruments, and move to a musical beat was considered nothing short of magical”.⁵ Disney had created something that would be remembered forever.

Who was this famous mouse that made history and was he truly that famous? Well, yes, Mickey Mouse is one of the most famous animation characters to this day. Frank Nugent puts it best when he says, “Mickey Mouse is the goshdarndest single act of creation in the history of our civilization. He probably is more widely known than any President, King, artist, actor, poet, composer or tycoon who ever lived”.⁶ Mickey Mouse would have never been possible if it was not for one man, Walt Disney.

Walt Disney was born in Chicago on December 5th 1901.⁷ He started drawing cartoons when he was nineteen years old for the Kansas City Slide

⁵ Maltin, 34.

⁶ Frank Nugent, “That Million-Dollar Mouse” *New York Times Magazine*, 21 September 1947, pp. 22, 60. Reprinted in Kathy M. Jackson, *Walt Disney Conversations* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi) 27.

⁷ Michael Barrier, *The Animated Man: A Life of Walt Disney* (Berkeley, CA: University of California) 10.

Company.⁸ Disney first thought of Mickey Mouse on a train ride from New York to Los Angeles in 1927.⁹ Mickey is a character that is pure at heart and fun to watch. Many people do not realize that the original name for Mickey was going to be Mortimer Mouse, but was soon changed when Walt Disney's wife suggested Mickey instead.¹⁰ People wonder why you would pick a mouse as a cartoon, but Disney thought that a mouse would be perfect. Disney describes his love for mice, "I used to find them in my waste basket in the mornings. I kept several in a cage on my drawing board and enjoyed watching their antics".¹¹ Disney sure knew what he was doing when he chose a mouse named Mickey.

Now just what kind of mouse is Mickey? Well, Walt Disney gave his exact description of Mickey in an interview with Frank Nugent, "The Mouse's private life isn't especially colorful. He's never been the type that would go in for swimming pools and night clubs; more the simple country boy at heart. Lives on a quiet residential street, has occasional dates with his girl friend, Minnie, doesn't drink or smoke, likes the movies and band concerts, things like that".¹² He was a wholesome mouse with great morals.

It was no accident that Mickey was a happy go lucky mouse with good morals and limited problems. Mickey was created in the 1920's and it was during this time that people had pretty good lives. Not many people had a lot of

⁸ Walt Disney and Kathy M. Jackson, *Walt Disney Conversations* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi 2006) xxii.

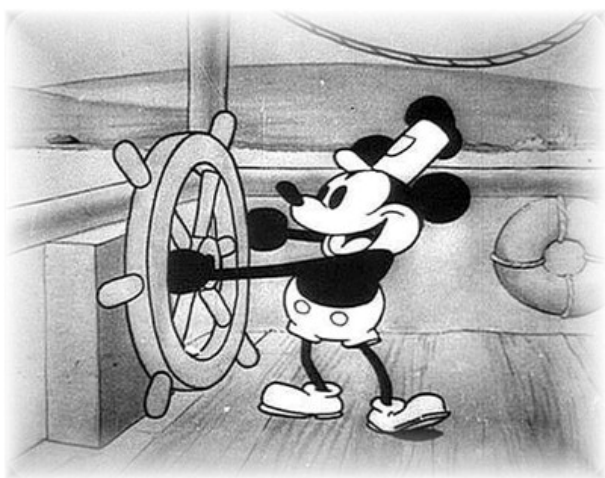
⁹ Barrier, 56.

¹⁰ Nugent, 29.

¹¹ Barrier, 56.

¹² Nugent, 28.

problems in the 1920's, life was good and prosperous so it was not surprising that Disney would create a character that represented what people were feeling at the current time. People were just trying to find some normalcy after fighting a World War and Mickey gave them just that. When adults and children went to the movies to watch Mickey they could relate to him. Mickey was just living the dream of happiness and that is what people in the 1920's were doing, they just enjoyed life and did not worry about tomorrow.



Not only was Mickey created to represent the feelings of people during his time he also went on to develop several different looks. The Mickey Mouse that was presented in *Steamboat Willie* went through many changes throughout the years. Shortly after the release of *Steamboat Willie*, Mickey had developed one of his trademarks known today, his big white gloves. Of course one of the biggest changes that came to Mickey was color was introduced in 1934 in the short film, *The Band Concert*.¹⁴ Figure fifteen is of Mickey all in

¹³ *Steamboat Willie*, 1928. Walt Disney Productions. As Produced on The Encyclopedia of Disney Animated Shorts. <http://www.disneyshorts.org/years/1928/graphics/steamboatwillie/steamboatwillie1thumb.jpg>

¹⁴ Jackson, xxiii.

color in *The Band Concert*. Figure sixteen is an image of Mickey Mouse that is most popular to today's standards. Mickey has changed a lot compared to the *Steamboat Willie's* Mickey. His facial features have changed. He now has more lifelike eyes and has acquired eyebrows. Also his face instead of the white now has become a softer peach. He also has red shorts and yellow shoes which came about when he had changed to color in 1935.

Even though Mickey changed in his physical form several times before the 1940's one thing did remain the same, his voice. Mickey had the same person do his voice all the way up until 1947. Just who was the famous voice of Mickey Mouse? It was Walt Disney himself. So even though Disney did not draw Mickey he contributed to a very important part of his existence, his high pitched mouse-like voice.



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Mickey Mouse of course was the leading character for the Disney Studio, but he was not the only popular one. Donald Duck came about in an interesting way. Instead the character being sketched first, the voice came first,

¹⁵ *The Band Concert*, 1935. Walt Disney Productions. As Reproduced AM New York. <http://www.latimes.com/media/photo/2008-08/41737859.jpg>

¹⁶ Mickey Mouse, Walt Disney Productions. As Reproduced Disney Talks <http://www.disneytalks.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/03/mickey-mouse.png>.

and the studio drew a character based around that famous voice. Walt Disney was the one to discover the voice, “Donald came about four or five years after Mickey Mouse, and I heard the voice on the radio. It was, well, almost an amateur program, and this boy was imitating animals and things, and birds, and he had this little gag that ended his act with, about the little duck...So, we ended up with Donald”.¹⁷ The voice that had attracted Disney was Clarence (Ducky) Nash.¹⁸

Donald Duck had his first premiere in the short film, *The Wise Little Hen*.¹⁹ He only had a minor role in this short film, but was later showcased in *Orphans’ Benefit*.²⁰ Donald Duck was a lot different than the soft spoken, sweet Mickey Mouse. Donald Duck was aggressive and lost his temper a lot. He was a nice change of pace in the Disney short films and that was why the audience took to him so well, “Donald’s aggressive character was an immediate sensation with audiences, which until then had seen only happy-go-lucky, mild-mannered characters in starring roles”.²¹ Not only did the audience enjoy Donald Duck, but the animators enjoyed him too. Frank Nugent talks about Donald and animators’ attitudes toward him, “he can be diabolic even to the point of looting his nephews’ piggy bank. Some of the heretics at Disney’s will confide that they have more fun working with the duck than with the

¹⁷ Walt Disney, interviewed by Tony Thomas, 1959. As Reprinted in Kathy M. Jackson, *Walt Disney Conversations* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi 2006) 64-65.

¹⁸ Don Peri, *Working With Walt: Interviews with Disney Artists* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi 2008) 49.

¹⁹ *The Wise Little Hen*, 1934. Walt Disney Productions.

²⁰ Maltin, 49.

²¹ Maltin, 49-50.

mouse...”.²² Figure twenty-three is a picture of Donald Duck in his first showcase, *Orphan’s Benefit*.

There was a very good reason that Donald Duck had the attitude that he had. Donald was created in the 1930’s. During this time the United States was going through the Great Depression. This was a time when people were upset with the world. All around people were losing their jobs and some people did not even have enough food to eat. To put it plain and simple people were angry. It would make perfect sense to create a character that was demonstrating what people were feeling at the time. People liked going to the movies and they liked seeing Donald act the very way that they felt daily. He did what sometimes they thought they could not do like scream, yell, and throw things. Donald was angry a lot and had no problem yelling when things did not go his way. Donald’s frustration was the type of frustration that people were feeling in the 1930’s.



²² Frank Nugent, 1947. As Reprinted in Kathy M. Jackson, *Walt Disney Conversations* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi 2006) 31.

²³ *Orphans’ Benefit*, 1934. As Reproduced The Encyclopedia of Disney Animated Shorts.
<http://www.disneyshorts.org/years/1934/graphics/orphansbenefit/orphansbenefit4.html>

The Disney Studios was clearly the studio that was at the fore front of the short animation industry because they were the first once to do new ideas like sound. Walt Disney was a man that asked a lot of his animators, but because he was so demanding his, studio and his animators were some of the best in the industry. In an interview with Les Clark, one of Disney's original animators who worked for Walt Disney for forty-eight years, had this to say about Walt Disney and his studio, "It was Walt whose innovations and whose desire and actually whose demand for more and more improvement developed the cartoon industry. It's all credit to Walt Disney, no one else, because all the other studios took from him what he had proven".²⁴ Even Chuck Jones, an animator for Warner Brothers had this to say, "Of course we stole from Disney then. Everybody stole from Disney then".²⁵ Warner Brothers famous Bugs Bunny was even an offspring of Max Hare from Disney's *Tortoise and the Hare*.²⁶ Everyone wanted to do what Disney Studios were doing. Disney had created an amazing industry and the other studios were trying to copy what Walt Disney had created. That being said the next two characters, many believed were just that, copies of some of Disney's work.

The Warner Brothers Studio was also a very successful animation studio. Warner Brothers wanted to do something different though than the Disney Studios. They wanted to make people laugh and laugh hard. "The films were

²⁴ Les Clark, interview by Don Peri, Santa Barbara, California, 13 August 1978. As Reprinted in Don Peri, *Working With Walt: Interviews with Disney Artists* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi 2008) 122.

²⁵ Peri, xix.

²⁶ Chuck Jones, interviewed by Greg Ford and Richard Thompson, 1972. As Reprinted in *Chuck Jones Conversations* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi 2004) 111.

bold, brash, and innovative. Most important, they were funny in a way Disney's cartoons had never been".²⁷ Unlike the Disney studio where Walt Disney pretty much ran the show, there were several important people in the Warner Brothers Studio. They were known as the magnificent seven: Mel Blanc, Tex Avery, Bob Clampett, Chuck Jones, Friz Freleng, Carl Stalling, and Bob McKimson.²⁸ These men were the ones who created some of the most famous Warner Cartoons.

Probably the most famous Warner cartoon would be Bugs Bunny. Bugs Bunny first appearance was in the 1940 short film, *A Wild Hare*.²⁹ Something that is unique about Bugs is that he was not just created by one person but by several people in the Warner Brothers Studio. Bug's opinion of how he was created is best said by a Warner publicist, "I guess you'd have to say that I am the combined product of over two hundred men and women of Warner Bros. Cartoons, Inc. in Hollywood".³⁰ Bugs Bunny had a sort of personality that was very intellectual. He was by far no dumb rabbit.³¹ Also he was the type of rabbit that liked to mind his own business. Bugs Bunny was always the type that was provoked. Normally in his films he would be minding his own

²⁷ Maltin, 223.

²⁸ Jerry Beck and Will Fried Wald, *Warner Bros. Animation Art: The Characters, The Creators, The Limited Editions* (New York: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, INC. 1997) 41.

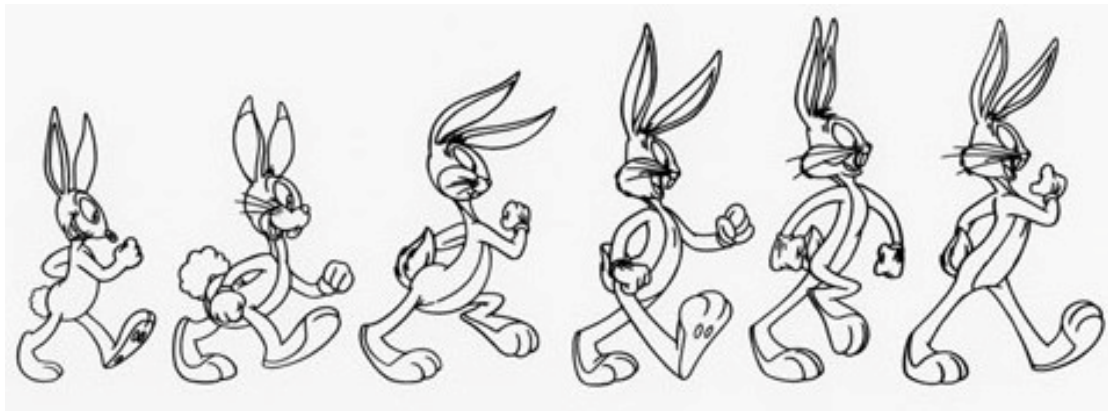
²⁹ *A Wild Hare*, 1940. Warner Brothers Studio.

³⁰ Joe Adamson, *Bugs Bunny: Fifty Years and Only One Grey Hare* (New York: H. Holt and Company, Inc. 1990) 35.

³¹ Chuck Jones, *Chuck Amuck: The Life and Times of an Animated Cartoonist* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux 1989) 200.

business and eating his carrot than someone would come and bug him. Only until that moment would Bugs fight back.³²

Just like Mickey Mouse, Bugs Bunny went through a lot of physical change over the years. He started out with one look, but ended up looking like a totally different rabbit when it was all said and done. Bugs Bunny first looked and sounded pretty primitive. He was totally white with long ears, cotton ball tail, a slight overbite, and a little nose nose. His voice was throaty and had a sloppy tone to it; some even compared his voice to that of Disney's Goofy. Also Bugs had a laugh that was crackly which would soon be the inspiration for Woody the Woodpecker's laugh.³³ It would only take eight years for Bugs Bunny to turn into the rabbit that is recognized by people today; that Bugs would be one that is much taller, greyer, and have a rather large overbite. Figure forty-three shows of the different stages of Bugs Bunny from the 1939 version to the modern day version.



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³² Chuck Jones, interviewed by Michael Barrier, 1971. As Reprinted in Maureen Furniss, *Chuck Jones Conversations* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi 2004) 36-35.

³³ Steve Schneider, *That's All Folks: The Art of Warner Bros. Animation* (New York: H. Holt and Company 1988) 172.

³⁴ ³⁴ Bugs Bunny, As Reproduced Alternative Film Guide. <http://www.altfg.com/Stars/others/bugs-bunny-1.jpg>.

One can not mention Bug Bunny without mentioning his counterpart, Daffy Duck. Daffy Duck like Bugs Bunny was created by the Warner Brothers Studios. Daffy Duck had his first premier in 1937 in the film, *Porky's Duck Hunt*.³⁵ Just like his name suggests, Daffy Duck was very crazy. Often in his films he would do crazy things that would get the audience laughing and begging for more. But a change would soon happen to Daffy and that is what made him unique among cartoons characters of his time. Like most characters already mentioned, Daffy would go through physical changes, but unlike the other characters, he would also go through a major personality change. The Warner Brothers Studio started to outgrow the crazy silly behavior of Daffy and by the 1940's and thought that Daffy needed to adapt to a more sophisticated style. "Daffy was still a child, but now he was a brilliant child-crazy and crazily articulate at the same time, flapping his mouth where before he had flapped his wings. Daffy was still daffy, but he had learned to harness his nuttiness, with a mental agility that matched his physical flexibility".³⁶

Even though Daffy was different than the other cartoons because of his personality change he also was very similar to one character in particular. One cannot help to think that possibly Daffy Duck was a response to Disney's Donald Duck. These similarities might not be as obvious at first, but taking a closer look at the characters the similarities present themselves. First and probably the most obvious is that they are both ducks. It is interesting though that Daffy is a black duck while Donald is a white duck; one reason why this

³⁵ Schneider, 150.

³⁶ Schneider, 152.

might be so to a person one needs to look at the characters opposite. Mickey, Donald's opposite is a black mouse therefore it would make more sense to make Donald the opposite color. Now look at Daffy's counterpart, Bugs Bunny. Bugs Bunny in his first films was a very light, almost white, grey. That is why it would make more sense to make Daffy black, the opposite color. The reason they were black and white was because when these characters were first created they started out in black and white animation.

Secondly both Donald and Daffy have very unique voices that stick out. Even though Daffy's voice is not quite as striking as Donald's voice, it was still unique with its lisp sound. Lastly both characters have very strong personalities. Donald was always the type of duck who had a very bad temper and would often get angry, which was a contrast to Mickey's sweet personality. Daffy's personality, as already mentioned above, was a very crazy personality, which was a nice contrast to Bugs' calm personality. Figure forty-six is an image of a Daffy Duck after his major physical and personality change in the 1940's.



The next important figure in animation that deserves mentioning is that famous sailor Popeye. Popeye was a little different from the cartoon characters that have already been mentioned. Popeye started out as a comic strip and then he hit the big screen. Popeye was first drawn on January 17, 1929 as part of the Thimble Theatre comic series by Elzie Crisler Segar. He was only suppose to be a guest on the comic strip, but soon Segar realized the potential for him and included more and more in his series.³⁸ It was not long till someone else had taken notice of the spinach loving sailor. Max Fleischer, of the Fleischer Studio, knew that Popeye would make a great animated cartoon. So on July 14, 1933 Popeye made a guest appearance in one of Betty Boop's cartoons, he was an instant success and for the next nine years after that day Fleischer did a Popeye series.³⁹

Popeye was very popular and had a great influence on children. This influence did not come though by his great attitude or devotion to his love,

³⁷ Daffy Duck, 1953. Warner Brothers Studio. As Reproduced Wikipedia.
http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/b/b5/Duck_Amuck.gif

³⁸ Bud Sagendorf, *Popeye: The First Fifty Years* (New York: King Features Syndicate, Inc. and Workman Publishing Company, Inc. 1979) 20.

³⁹ Leslie Cabarga, *The Fleischer Story* (New York: Nostalgia Press 1976) 59.

Olive Oyl; it came by what he ate. When Segar first wrote comic strips about Popeye he needed a way to explain his extraordinary strength. Segar decided to use a can of spinach for Popeye's jolt of superhuman strength. Segar thought that spinach would be appropriate because in the twenties doctors were saying that spinach was full of iron and can help build vitality and strength. "Because of their love and admiration for Popeye, children who had detested spinach were now demanding it... From 1931 to 1936, the spinach industry credited Segar and Popeye with increasing the United States consumption of spinach by 33 percent".⁴⁰ Thanks to Popeye, children in the 30's started eating their spinach a lot more! Figure thirty-four is a picture of Popeye with his girlfriend Olive Oyl.

This paper would not be complete without talking about this character. This character is different from all the rest because this character was a woman. Betty Boop is one of the most famous female characters from the 1930's. One reason why she is so famous is because her films were based around her. There are many of female characters such as Minnie Mouse, Daisy Duck, or Oliver Oyl, but these female characters were always in the shadow of their male partner. Betty Boop started out like most female cartoon characters, as the girlfriend to the main character. In this case she was the girlfriend to the Fleischer character Bimbo, who happened to be a dog. In fact, Betty was originally created to be a dog, but she soon was altered and changed

⁴⁰ Sagendorf, 43.

enough that by 1932 she was considered a human.⁴¹ It was not long until Betty was getting more popularity than her partner, Bimbo.

Another reason Betty Boop was unique was that she was the first cartoon character to deal with sex. One reason why Betty was a symbol of sex was because she was a perfect example of the 1920's flapper who was a decade before she was created. She had short curly hair, wore a black, skin tight, very short dress, high heels, lots of makeup, and a garter that was almost always visible in her films. Because of the way she looked it was not unusual for men in her films to notice her. For example, in one of Betty's first cartoons, *Boop-Oop-A-Doop*, her boss tried to take advantage of her, but luckily she is saved by Bimbo.⁴² In another one of her films, *Is my Palm Red?*, a male palm reader turns out the lights in the room to get a peek at Betty's silhouette see-through skirt.⁴³ One might be curious how Fleischer studio got away with having a cartoon like this for children. Well the reason is because that Betty Boop, even though she looked like an easy girl, always remained pure and innocent in her films. She would turn the men away.⁴⁴ Figure thirty-five is a picture of Betty Boop, take notice some of the things mentioned above, like her dress and heavy make-up.

⁴¹ Cabarga, 32-33.

⁴² *Boop-Oop-A-Doop*, 1932. Fleisher Studios.

⁴³ Maltin, 101.

⁴⁴ Maltin, 100.



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Now that all of the characters have been talked about, there are some very noticeable things that need to be mentioned. Something that is often noticed is that cartoon characters are normally animals and not humans. Granted half of the characters discussed in this paper are human, but in the big picture the majority of famous cartoons are animals. There is a core reason for this; it is easier for people to watch animals do the impossible than it is for them to accept this for humans. This is very typical in the cartoons with Wile E. Coyote and The Road Runner who were also part of the Animation Golden Age.⁴⁷ In a typical Wile and Road Runner cartoon, Wile is trying to catch the Road Runner, he normally does this by trying to blow him up with dynamite. Almost always the plan backfires on the coyote and he instead is blown to

⁴⁵ *A Date to Skate*, 1938. As Reproduced Wikipedia. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Popeye-a-date-to-skate.jpg>.

⁴⁶ Betty Boop, 1931. As Reproduced Wikipedia. http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fc/Betty_Boop_patent_fig1.jpg.

⁴⁷ Wile E. Coyote and The Road Runner are cartoons characters produced by the Warner Bros. Studio.

smithereens.⁴⁸ This type of action is much easier and believable for children to think of a coyote getting blown up than a human bean. Chuck Jones states “It (animation) should go where live action can’t go”.⁴⁹ Another good example of this is when Bugs Bunny uses his ears as propellers and flies into the air.⁵⁰ Once again it is so more acceptable if an animal does the impossible than a person even if it is in a cartoon.

So why were characters like Popeye and Betty Boop successful? The answer to that is different for both characters. The reason that Popeye was so popular was because he had superhuman strength. The studio can get away with that because there they found an explanation for his strength spinach. In the case with Betty Boop the reason she was so popular was because of her sex appeal. She was the only animation character of that time to deal with that type of issue and people liked something different.

Something that was interesting about animation of this period the fact that they dealt with issues that children might not be that aware of. For example, few children misunderstood some of the sex behaviors that were presented in the Betty Boop films. One reason for this was because cartoons were not just for children back in the 1930’s and many of the people who wrote cartoons were not thinking of children at all when they were writing them. A good example of this is presented in an interview with Chuck Jones, “Well my films are not meant for children either. They were made for me-they weren’t

⁴⁸ Maltin, 265.

⁴⁹ Chuck Jones, interviewed by Michael Barrier, 1971. As Reprinted in Maureen Furniss, *Chuck Jones Conversations* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi 2004) 40.

⁵⁰ Maltin, 245.

made for children. If you think they're too violent to show to children, don't show them to children".⁵¹ That is why some of the behavior and humor sometimes seems a little over the top in some of these films for children. Some animators were not trying to please children they were just trying to make them funny for themselves.

Another important thing that the animation industry did was promote issues like the war. There were several short films during World War II that promoted or dealt with issue about the war. It was not uncommon to see the Nazi appear in a Warner Bros. or even in a Disney short film. Chuck Jones talked about how easy it was to use this idea of war in the cartoons, "One of the strange things about that was that during the war, and it's hard I suppose for many people today- young people- to realized there was a war in which everybody was cool to the idea of winning a war. We had great villains, which you don't have in most wars, because you had Adolf Hitler, Hirohito, and Mussolini and all those lovely people to hate".⁵² Cartoon artists really took advantage of being able to target a single person or group as the villains in their short films.

Warner Brothers did a lot of these types of cartoons, they made fun of both the Nazi and the Japanese. In the short film, *Daffy the Commando*, Daffy parachutes into a German foxhole. He then is chased by the Axis Colonel Pigeon and his Vaughn Bode-esque assistant. Finally the film climaxes with

⁵¹ Chuck Jones, interviewed by Joe Adamson, 1971. As Reprinted in Maureen Furniss, *Chuck Jones Conversations* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi 2004) 71.

⁵² Chuck Jones, interviewed by Mark Thompson and Brain Phelps, 1996. As Reprinted in Maureen Furniss, *Chuck Jones Conversations* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi 2004) 174.

Daffy clobbering an imitation of Hitler with a huge mallet.⁵³ This cartoon was a little mild compared to *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*. In this cartoon, Bugs lands on a South Pacific island that has a Japanese military base. He then goes on to annihilate all the Japanese in sight. In this short, Bugs treats the Japanese like they are complete idiots and calls them names like, Bowlegs, Monkey Face, and Slant Eyes. This clip was very popular during the war times, but of course is it not shown on television today.⁵⁴

Even though Warner Brothers did a lot of shorts that dealt with war they were not the only ones. Surprisingly even the conservative studio of Disney got in on some of the war action. Disney's most famous war time short was, *Der Fuehrer's Face*. Disney had an interesting approach in this cartoon. It features Donald Duck, and he is an unwilling worker who has to work on an assembly-line for the Germans. The film is interesting because it made you feel sorry for the average German and hate the leaders like Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito. The film gives the impression that the people of Germany did not like Hitler's rule. In the end of the film people realize that Donald was having a dream and he wakes up in his bed in America. He runs over to a model of the Statue of Liberty and gives it a hug and kiss and states, "Oh boy, am I glad to be a citizen of the Untied States of America".⁵⁵ This is a good example on how cartoons were not only were for children, but were also used as propaganda

⁵³ Will Friedwald and Jerry Beck, *The Warner Brothers Cartoons* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1981) 103.

⁵⁴ Will Friedwald and Jerry Beck, *The Warner Brothers Cartoons* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1981) 106-107.

⁵⁵ *Der Fuehrer's Face*, 1943, Disney Studio. As produced on YouTube.

and dealt with everyday situations that Americans were going through at the time. Figures fifty-six and fifty-seven are some pictures from these war-time films.



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The Animation Golden Years produced some of the greatest cartoon characters in history. Some of the most famous animated characters have changed over the course of time because of the culture that surrounded them or they changed the way people saw life. Characters like Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Popeye, Betty Boop, Bugs Bunny, and Daffy Duck all came from very different back grounds. Not only were they from different studios, but the way they were drawn, the message they gave, and how they influenced each other. Many of these characters were very much influenced by what was going on in there world like Mickey with the 1920's and Donald with the 1930's.

Animation is amazing and has grown so much since Mickey Mouse first did

Steamboat Willie or since the first time Popeye ate his spinach. Animation will

⁵⁶ *Der Fuehrer's Face*, 1943, Disney Studio. As Reproduced Wikipedia.
<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/c/c3/Ducknazi.jpg>.

⁵⁷ *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*, 1944, Warner Bros. Studio. As Reproduced The Reeler.
<http://blogs.indiewire.com/thereeler/archives/images/bugsgeneral.JPG>

continue to grow and only time will be able to show us how today's cartoons will affect the culture of today. It is important though that we do not forget these great characters in animation because they were the founding figures of this great world of animation. So the last questions you need to ask yourself is this, "Uhhh... What's Up Doc?"

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