

Yo-yos and Marshmallows

Brief Histories of Selected Items

History of cartoons

The term 'cartoon' originated in the Middle Ages and originally meant a preparatory drawing for a piece of art. However, the use of pictures to tell a story goes back to much earlier times. The ancient Egyptians used hieroglyphics on their buildings and monuments. Earlier still, the Paleolithic cave paintings commonly depicted animals which were hunted by these early humans.

By the 19th. century, the term cartoon referred to the humorous illustrations often satirizing political figures. These began to appear in newspapers in Europe and America. In the early 1900s these evolved into comic strips and then comic books. These in turn led to film animation. The Disney Mickey Mouse cartoons are some of the earliest examples of film animation.

History of fireworks

A form of fireworks began in China in around 200 B.C. It's thought that when bamboo, which stores a lot of air and sap in the hollow stem, was thrown into a fire, it may have unexpectedly exploded. The loud noise scared the onlookers, who believed that the same loud noise could be used to ward off evil spirits. The first pyrotechnic composition, a precursor to gunpowder, was invented in China in the 7th. century A. D.. For the next three hundred years, fireworks were used only in China.

It is probable that the loud bangs caused by exploding gunpowder were intended just to scare off enemies at first. Eventually the aim shifted to using gunpowder to inflict bodily harm on the enemy, and gunpowder took on a dual role: in weaponry, and in celebrations and ceremonies. Fireworks are still part of the celebration of Chinese New Year in modern times.

The Arabs learned about fireworks and gunpowder in 1240 A.D., but fireworks did not really become popular in Europe until the mid-17th. century. From Europe, they spread to other parts of the world. Pyrotechnics are often part of concerts and sporting events. Aerial fireworks led to the development of rocket technology.

History of knots as a measure of speed

The earliest merchant vessels used for the trade of goods were not transoceanic vessels. They were ships that plied up and down a coastline or crossed relatively small seas such as the Mediterranean. The Phoenicians were renowned for their merchant trading routes from 1150 B.C. to 300 B.C. These early sailors needed to know how fast they were traveling. Speed was measured using a 'chip-log', a wooden log attached to a rope, knotted at equal intervals, which was played out by hand. A sailor would count the number of knots that were played out, and calculate speed against another instrument such as an hourglass. This is why we say today that a ship is traveling at 15 knots, 20 knots, etc. as a measure of nautical speed.

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History of marshmallows

We get the name of this sweet treat from the mallow plant, which grew in the salty marshes of ancient Egypt. 2,000 or more years ago, the ancient Egyptians used the gooey juice of the root of the mallow plant to make a medicinal lozenge like a throat lozenge. It was also used to heal wounds, and as an immune system booster. Over time, juice from the mallow plant began to be made into candy. It had to be whipped by hand to achieve its soft consistency, and this was very labor-intensive.

In the mid-1800s, candy makers in France began using gelatin instead of mallow juice to make marshmallows, and they also developed machines to make production easier. However, the new methods removed the healing properties of the mallow plant, and the marshmallow became simply a candy.

History of pizza

Since unleavened bread was one of humankind's first homemade foods, the origins of pizza could be said to be the Stone Age. Although people ate a form of pizza before and up to the Middle ages, it would not have tasted like the pizza we eat today. That's because tomatoes were not brought to Europe from the Americas until the 16th. century. Many Europeans were afraid to use tomatoes as a topping because of a widespread belief that tomatoes were poisonous, This idea was not far off the mark: tomato leaves are, in fact, toxic.

By the late 18th. century, the people around Naples, Italy added tomato to their flat bread, and so the pizza was born. Cheese was not added until 1889. Italian immigrants brought pizza to the U.S. In the late 19th. century.

History of yo-yos

The yo-yo is believed to be the world's second oldest toy. (The doll is considered to be the oldest toy.) People have used yo-yos for over 2,500 years. We believe they were invented in southeast Asia, and we know the ancient Greeks played with yo-yos.

The name 'yo-yo' comes from the Philippines, where the yo-yo was not a toy, but a weapon with spikes around it. The name comes from a Tagalog word which means "come back". Recently, the yo-yo became the first toy to be taken into outer space.