

The History of early animation

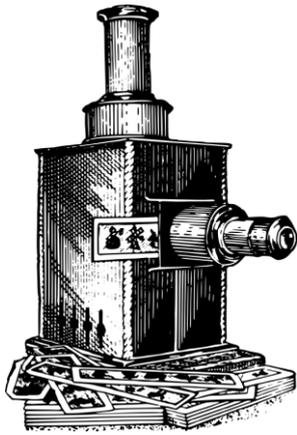
What is animation?

Animation is the technique of photographing successive drawings or positions of puppets or models to create an illusion of movement when the film is shown as a sequence.

Early animation

Using moving pictures to tell a story has been around since prehistoric times, such as a bronze-age pottery bowl from 3000AD which shows a sequence of 5 images around it showing phases of a goat leaping up to nip a tree. Animation as we know it today began much later with the invention of devices such as the Magic Lantern and the Zoetrope.

The Magic Lantern was invented in the 1650s by Christiann Huygens. It was an image projector which used pictures on sheets of glass. As some of the sheets contained moving parts it was considered the first example of projected animation.



The Thaumatrope was invented by John Ayrton Paris in 1825. It was made from a disc of card with a different picture on each side (e.g. a bird on one and a cage on the other). When the disc was spun it fooled your eyes, so the two separate images appeared to merge to become one (the bird looked like it was in the cage).

William George Horner invented the Zoetrope, originally called the Doedaleum, in 1833. It made individual pictures appear to be moving by looking through slits in a rotating cylinder.

John Barnes Linnett patented the first Flip Book (known as a kineograph which means 'moving picture') in 1868. It contained a series of pictures which changed slightly from one page to the next so that when the pages were turned quickly, the pictures appeared to move. This was the first form of animation to have a linear sequence (all the pictures in a straight line) rather than a circular sequence.

Early animated films

Film historians believe that 'Humorous Phases of Funny Faces' made in 1906 by James Stuart Blackton, was the first short silent animated cartoon.

Emile Cole, a French artist, created the first animated film using traditional animated methods. The film, made in 1908, was called *Fantasmagorie* and lasted for 1 min 20 secs. Each frame for the film was drawn on paper and then shot and put onto negative film which gave the picture a blackboard look.

In 1914, *Gertie the Dinosaur* by Winsor McCay was considered to be the first cartoon to feature an appealing character. Of the ten thousand drawings created to make the film, only about 400 are known to exist today.

'Steamboat Willie' by Walt Disney in 1928 starred Mickey Mouse and was the first popular animated film which had sound printed onto it. It lasted for just under 8 mins and ran for 2 weeks which earned Disney \$1000 – a lot of money back then! The first showing took place in Manhattan's Colony Theatre on Broadway, New York.



Walt Disney

This video shows some of the animation methods covered above:

<https://techtv.mit.edu/videos/1271-history-of-animation>