

## How *The Flintstones* set the stage for the adult animation boom

### Level 1 • Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

Here are six of the 20 highest-earning animated films of all time. Put them in order from 1 (the highest earning) to 6 (the least highest earning).

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| 1. _____ | a. <i>Finding Nemo</i> (2003)                    |
| 2. _____ | b. <i>Zootropolis</i> ( <i>Zootopia</i> ) (2016) |
| 3. _____ | c. <i>Shrek 2</i> (2004)                         |
| 4. _____ | d. <i>Frozen 2</i> (2019)                        |
| 5. _____ | e. <i>The Lion King</i> (1994)                   |
| 6. _____ | f. <i>Toy Story 4</i> (2019)                     |

#### 2 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text. The paragraph numbers will help you.

**lifestyle**

**prehistoric**

**ancestor**

**convince**

**prime time**

1. If something is \_\_\_\_\_, it is from the period of time before history was first written down. (para 1)
2. An \_\_\_\_\_ is an earlier form from which something modern has developed. (para 1)
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is the most popular time for watching television, which is in the middle of the evening. (para 2)
4. If you \_\_\_\_\_ someone, you make them believe that something is true. (para 2)
5. Someone's \_\_\_\_\_ is the type of life they have, for example the type of activity they like doing. (para 4)

**streaming**

**addiction**

**animation**

**custody**

**boom**

6. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a time when the economy of a country is particularly successful. (para 4)
7. \_\_\_\_\_ is the process of making cartoons. (para 4)
8. \_\_\_\_\_ is the legal right to look after a child. (para 5)
9. An \_\_\_\_\_ is a strong need or wish to spend as much time as possible doing a particular activity. (para 6)
10. \_\_\_\_\_ is the transmission of programmes through the internet. (para 9)

#### 3 Find the information

Find the following information in the text as quickly as possible.

1. When did *The Flintstones* first appear on television?
2. At what time of day was *The Flintstones* first shown on TV?
3. What did *The Flintstones*' use of the phrase 'Charge it' refer to?
4. Which animated series is described as the nuclear family of the 1980s?
5. What was the average number of children in a 'nuclear family'?
6. What was the first animated series that Netflix produced?

## How *The Flintstones* set the stage for the adult animation boom

### Level 1 • Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

#### Yabba dabba do! How *The Flintstones* set the stage for the adult animation boom

David Barnett

8 October, 2020

- 1 People who were children in the 1970s probably remember *The Flintstones* as a Saturday-morning cartoon full of prehistoric jokes and dinosaurs. But when it was first shown in 1960, the adventures of Fred and Wilma, the Stone Age family of the title, were for adults. They are the direct ancestors of the golden age of adult cartoons we enjoy today.
- 2 It was first shown on 30 September, 1960 at 8.30pm, after bedtime for most children. It was the first prime-time show from the studio started by the creators of *Tom and Jerry*. They had spent months trying to convince TV networks that a cartoon for an adult audience could work.
- 3 It was certainly a risk to show a cartoon at 8.30pm, but it worked, and *The Flintstones* became amazingly popular. Today, it might seem to be just another children's cartoon series from the 60s, but it dealt with very adult topics. It was only when it was shown for the second time that it became a regular part of children's television.
- 4 "We watch *The Flintstones* today, and you can see the lifestyle is clearly based on the post-war boom," says Dr Steve Henderson, the director of the Manchester Animation Festival. "Wilma and Betty are constantly saying, 'Charge it!', which was a reference to the rise of credit cards in the 1960s. And although there are all these Stone Age jokes, they are actually a very modern family."
- 5 As well as the many jokes, there were also serious – and sometimes dark – topics. Henderson says: "*The Flintstones* was actually the first show to show married couples sharing a bed, which wasn't normal for TV at the time. And there are episodes where Barney and Betty discuss not being able to have kids, and when they eventually get a baby, they have to enter a custody battle."
- 6 "Fred has a gambling addiction and will also do anything to be able to go bowling." Henderson says, too, that there was even an episode where Barney was going to kill himself. "And when you look at all that, you realize that this was not at all a show for children."
- 7 While they were never as popular as *The Flintstones*, more prime-time shows followed, for example *Top Cat* and *The Jetsons*. Without *The Flintstones*, we might not have had *The Simpsons* almost 30 years later and, from there, the adult animation that is so common today.
- 8 "While *The Flintstones* were the post-war boom family of the 1960s, *The Simpsons* were the nuclear family with 2.4 children of the late 1980s," says Henderson. "And the success of that caused the networks to start asking for more shows based on family life, and so we get *Family Guy*, *American Dad!* and *Bob's Burgers*."
- 9 *BoJack Horseman* was the first animated series from Netflix, and the rise of streaming services could lead to an increase in the quality and number of shows thanks, partly, to Covid. Henderson says: "Obviously, after *The Flintstones* and *The Simpsons*, everyone wants that success, but they have to do something differently, which is why we are seeing so many new ideas. We are definitely living in a golden age for adult TV animation, and I think that's going to increase. Coronavirus has changed the entertainment industry. People can see that you can make animation with several people sitting at home and you don't need to get lots of people into a studio to make a show. So I think there will be more quality animation coming out of this period."
- 10 If Henderson is right, animation fans should definitely remember the cartoon series from 1960 which built the success of the cartoons they enjoy today.

© Guardian News and Media 2020

First published in *The Guardian*, 08/10/20

## How *The Flintstones* set the stage for the adult animation boom

### Level 1 • Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

#### 4 Comprehension check

Match the beginnings and endings to make statements about the text.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. <i>The Flintstones</i> was a popular TV cartoon series, and it ...                     | a. ... there were also some serious and dark topics.  |
| 2. The TV company took a risk when ...  | b. ... there are more and more cartoon shows based on family life on TV.                      |
| 3. <i>The Flintstones</i> had a lot of jokes, but ...                                     | c. ... is a good thing because it means people don't have to travel to studios to make films. |
| 4. Fred Flintstone was addicted to gambling and ...                                       | d. ... was the first cartoon series that was made for an adult audience.                      |
| 5. After the success of <i>The Simpsons</i> , ...   | e. ... it decided to show a cartoon at 8.30 in the evening.                                   |
| 6. It is possible to make animated films at home, and in the age of coronavirus, this ... | f. ... also liked to go bowling whenever he could.  |

#### 5 Chunks

Rearrange the words to make phrases from the text.

- modern a family very
- years almost later thirty
- late the eighties nineteen
- family more on life shows based
- at sitting home people several
- age the cartoons of golden

#### 6 Two-word phrases

Match the words in the left-hand column with those in the right-hand column to make expressions from the text.

- |                  |              |
|------------------|--------------|
| 1. credit        | a. time      |
| 2. prime         | b. age       |
| 3. family        | c. industry  |
| 4. golden        | d. addiction |
| 5. entertainment | e. card      |
| 6. gambling      | f. life      |

## How *The Flintstones* set the stage for the adult animation boom

### Level 1 • Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

#### 7 Word stress

Put these words from the text into two groups according to their stress.

cartoon  
convince

lifestyle  
service

common  
discuss

enjoy  
bedtime

success  
modern

A o o	B o 0

#### 8 Discussion

- Which are better – cartoons or live-action films and series? Why?