

**INTRODUCTION TO FILM
EARLY HISTORY**

NAME _____ PERIOD _____

BASED ON THE INFORMATION FROM THE TEXT:

1. **WHAT IS THE NAME OF EDISON'S INVENTION?**

2. **WHAT IS THE NAME OF LUMIERE'S INVENTION?**

3. **DESCRIBE LUMIERE'S INVENTION AND HOW DID IT AFFECT BUSINESS?**

4. **WHAT IS LUMIERE'S MOST IMPORTANT FILM?**

5. **WHAT "TRICK" DID LUMIERE INTRODUCE TO FILMMAKING?**

6. **WHAT YEAR DID LUMIERE INVENT THE MOTION PICTURE CAMERA?**

7. **WHAT WAS LACKING IN EDISON'S MOTION PICTURE CAMERA?**

8. **WHAT WAS INTRODUCED IN 1929?**

9. **IDENTIFY CHAPLIN'S FOUR TRADEMARKS.**
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
 - D.

10. WHAT THREE TYPES DID HIS CHARACTER REPRESENT?
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
11. WHAT IS EISENSTEIN'S GREATEST CONTRIBUTION TO FILM MAKING?
12. WHAT 1987 FILM IMITATED EISENSTEIN'S "STEPS" SEQUENCE?
13. IN *BIRTH OF A NATION*, WHAT WAS VIEWED AS NEGATIVE ASPECT TO THE FILM?
14. WHAT TWO ELEMENTS CAN BE CREDITED TO THE GERMAN DIRECTORS?
 - A.
 - B.
15. WHAT FILM IS CONSIDERED THE GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT IN DOCUMENTARY?

FILM HISTORY

Lumiere and the First Motion Pictures

Written By: Eric Hasman (Editor in Chief)

In the early 1890s, William Dickson and Thomas Edison developed their own camera-like device which they called the kinetoscope. It was a great success and by 1894 peep-show parlors popped up all across the country. Soon every industrial nation developed their own camera. Louis and Auguste Lumiere were French pioneers that contributed a great deal to the development of the motion picture. They developed their own camera called the Cinematographe, which printed and projected films that the brothers made. The kinetoscope which Dickson and Edison could only be shown to one person at a time thus limiting the number of paying customers that had to wait in long lines to see the films. The Lumiere brothers knew their had to be a better way. Their contribution to the development of an effective projection system was their invention of a clawlike device that regulated the movement of the film in front of the source of light. This made it able so that mass audiences could see the film at the same time making the movies a much more profitable business. This all lead to the first public screening of the motion picture. On December 28, 1895, the Lumiere brothers premiered their first films. Although the films were less than a minute long depicting average every day event, they did show an understanding of basic film techniques, such as composition (depth in *Train Entering a Station*), and camera placement/camera angle (*The Hoser Hosed*).

Think for a second of what it would be like to see a photograph move for the first time. It's hard to think what it was like to see the first films ever made in 1895 because their has always been film and television in our lives. Even as babies we are subject to moving pictures and think nothing of it. That is why the first films ever made had such an impact on audiences. In Lumiere's *Train Entering a Station* the film had a train coming at the audiences at an angle which to early audiences felt like the train was really going to run them over. Audiences also marveled over "trick" shots in *Destruction of a Wall* which showed workers demolishing a wall and then the Lumiere brother reversed the film making it seem like the workers were putting the same wall back together again. We've seen it before for example of people jumping in the water and then jumping straight up out of the water. In the *The Hoser Hosed* the Lumiere brothers made one of the first "story films" or narratives. The film was a comedy about a kid stepping on a gardener's hose and then stepping off it when the gardener looks at the hose making him get all wet.

With their invention of the film camera and projector the Lumiere brothers helped pave the way for the future of motion pictures and influenced film directors forever.

CINEMA HISTORY

Films from the Silent Era

The Frenchman Louis Lumiere is sometimes credited as the inventor of the motion picture camera in 1895. Other inventors preceded him, and Lumiere's achievement should always be considered in the context of this creative period. Lumiere's portable, suitcase-sized cinematographe served as a camera, film processing unit, and projector all in one. He could shoot footage in the morning, process it in the afternoon, and then project it to an audience that evening. His first film was the arrival of the express train at Ciotat. Other subjects included workers leaving the factory gates, a child being fed by his parents, people enjoying a picnic along a river. The ease of use and portability of his device soon made it the rage in France. Cinematographes soon were in the hands of Lumiere followers all over the world, and the motion picture era began. The American Thomas Alva Edison was a competitor of Lumiere's, and his invention predated Lumiere's. But Edison's motion picture camera was bulky and not portable. The "promoter" in Lumiere made the difference in this competition. For a good description of these historical developments, read Erik Barnouw's *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*, 2nd revised edition, New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993.

Films from the Silent Era

YEAR	FILM	DIRECTOR	COUNTRY
1915	Birth of a Nation	D. W. Griffith	USA
1919	Broken Blossoms	D. W. Griffith	USA
1919	The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari	Robert Wiene	Germany
1922	Nosferatu	F. W. Murnau	Germany
1922	Nanook of the North	Robert J. Flaherty	USA
1924	The Last Laugh	F. W. Murnau	Germany
1925	Strike	Sergei Eisenstein	Russian
1925	Potemkin	Sergei Eisenstein	Russian
1925	The Gold Rush	Charlie Chaplin	USA
1925	The Street of Sorrow	G. W. Pabst	Germany
1926	Metropolis	Fritz Lang	Germany
1927	Sunrise	F. W. Murnau	Germany
1929	The Blue Angel	Josef Von Sternberg	Germany
1930	All Quiet on the Western Front	Lewis Milestone	Germany
1931	M	Fritz Lang	Germany
1931	City Lights	Charlie Chaplin	USA
1936	Modern Times	Charlie Chaplin	USA

Commentary:

For the first twenty years of motion picture history most silent films were short--only a few minutes in length. At first a novelty, and then increasingly an art form and literary form, silent films reached greater complexity and length in the early 1910's. The films on the list above represent the greatest achievements of the silent era, which ended--after years of experimentation--in 1929 when a means of recording sound that would be synchronous with the recorded image was discovered. Few silent films were made in the 1930s, with the exception of Charlie Chaplin, whose character of the Tramp perfected expressive physical moves in many short films in the 1910's and 1920s. When the silent era ended, Chaplin refused to go along with sound; instead, he maintained the melodramatic Tramp as his mainstay in *City Lights* (1931) and *Modern Times* (1936). The trademarks of Chaplin's Tramp were his ill-fitting suit, floppy over-sized shoes and a bowler hat, and his ever-present cane. A memorable image is Chaplin's Tramp shuffling off, penguin-like, into the sunset and spinning his cane whimsically as he exits. He represented the "little guy," the underdog, someone who used wit and whimsy to defeat his adversaries.

Eisenstein's contribution to the development of cinema rested primarily in his theory of editing, or montage, which focused on the collision of opposites in order to create a new entity. One of the greatest achievements in editing is the Odessa Steps sequence, in his film *Potemkin* (1925). Eisenstein intercut between shots of townspeople trapped on the steps by Czarist troops, and shots of the troops firing down upon the crowd. Members of the crowd became individual characters to viewers as the montage continued. Within the editing track the fate of these individuals was played out. A mother picks up her dead child and confronts the troops. Then she is shot. A student looks on in terror and then flees--his fate uncertain. An old woman prays to be spared, but she is killed by a soldier who slashes her face with his saber. When a woman holding her baby carriage is killed, she falls to the steps, and the carriage begins a precipitous decline--shots of the baby crying are intercut with wide shots of the carriage rolling down the steps. To Eisenstein, each individual shot contributed an energy within the editing track that yielded far more than the sum total of shots. In other words, the "combination" of shots through editing created a new entity, based on the expressive emotional energy unleashed through the editing process.

Brian De Palma imitated the Odessa Steps sequence in *The Untouchables* (1987) in a scene where Kevin Costner, playing Eliot Ness, and his companions are waiting to ambush several mobsters. This confrontation is punctuated by the use of the baby carriage plummeting down a long series of steps while the good guys and the bad guys remain in a standoff. A more effective homage to Eisenstein can be seen in Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse, Now* (1976), when at the end of the film a cow is slaughtered ritualistically by the native people deep in the Vietnamese jungle. Shots of the slaughter are intercut with shots of the Martin Sheen character wielding a machete against the hulking Marlon Brando character, the crazed former American officer who has retreated to the jungle from the horrors of war and has become a sort of deity to the native people in his compound. Coppola was aware of a famous scene in Eisenstein's *Strike* (1925), when two dramatic scenes are intercut: one of Czarist troops massacre peasants, another of a cow being butchered.

Although the technology for making movies was invented in 1895, a significant realization of the potential for film as art occurs with the appearance of D. W. Griffith's 1915 full-length epic, *Birth of a Nation*. In this film Griffith utilized crosscutting (parallel editing) effectively, particularly at the climax, when a number of editing tracks play off one another. He also portrayed battle scenes magnificently, with action in one set of shots moving from left to right, while action in another set of shots moves from right to left. But Griffith's work is diminished severely by the overt racism employed in characterizations and plotting and the positive portrayal of the Ku Klux Klan. As a sidelight, readers interested in films about Griffith should check *Good Morning, Babylon* (1987), directed by the Taviani brothers. It tells the story of two Italian immigrants who become carpenters on the set of Griffith's epic film *Intolerance* (1916). The English actor Charles Dance plays Griffith. Other well-known Griffith melodramas include *Broken Blossoms* (1919) and *Way Down East* (1920).

The German directors listed below deserve credit for their experimentation with unusual camera angles and complex stage settings. Two examples of this approach is *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919) by Robert Wiene and the nightmare-like *Nosferatu* (1919) by F. W. Murnau. The latter is also credited with perfecting the use of visual language in *The Last Laugh* (1924), a film about a lonely old man who is ridiculed by others. Few titles are used in the film because Murnau is able to communicate meaning by virtue of well-placed visual cues. One of the most unforgettable openings to a film is the opening scene from *M* (1931), directed by Fritz Lang. In that opening a child is shown playing with a ball. These shots are intercut with shots of the child's mother setting the table for a meal. As the scenes progress, it becomes evident that someone is following the child. Meanwhile, the mother completes the table setting. The last shot in the scene shows the ball rolling away. Where is the child? The murderer (M) has taken her. Fritz Lang went on to make films in America in the 1930s and 1940s. Another German director who went to Hollywood is F. W. Murnau. He made his first American film in 1927. The film, *Sunrise*, portrayed a married man's downfall when he is seduced by an evil dark temptress.

A last note: the 1922 film *Nanook of the North*, directed by the American Robert Flaherty, is often credited as the first great achievement of documentary (or non-fiction) film. Flaherty lived among the Eskimos for six months, edited the film back in America, and was lauded for his achievement when the film premiered in New York City. Only a few documentary titles will appear in the lists of films that follow. I hope you will enjoy perusing these lists and consider renting titles you have not viewed before.