HISTORY OF COMICS

PART I

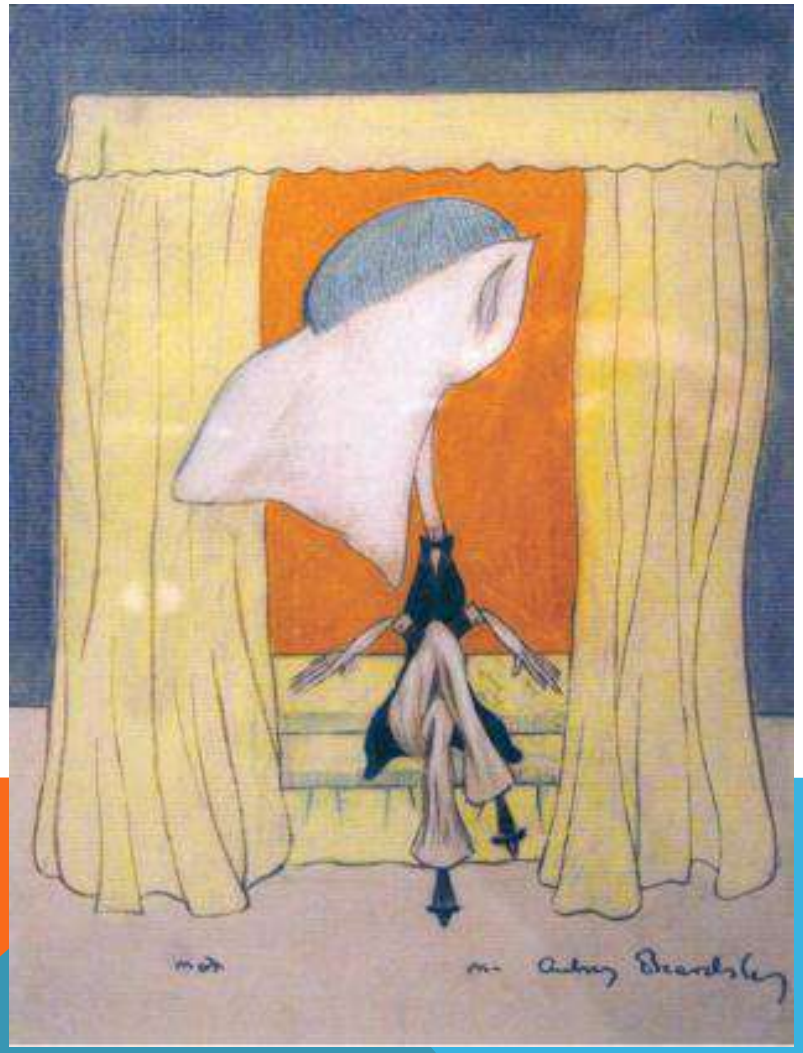
CARICATURES

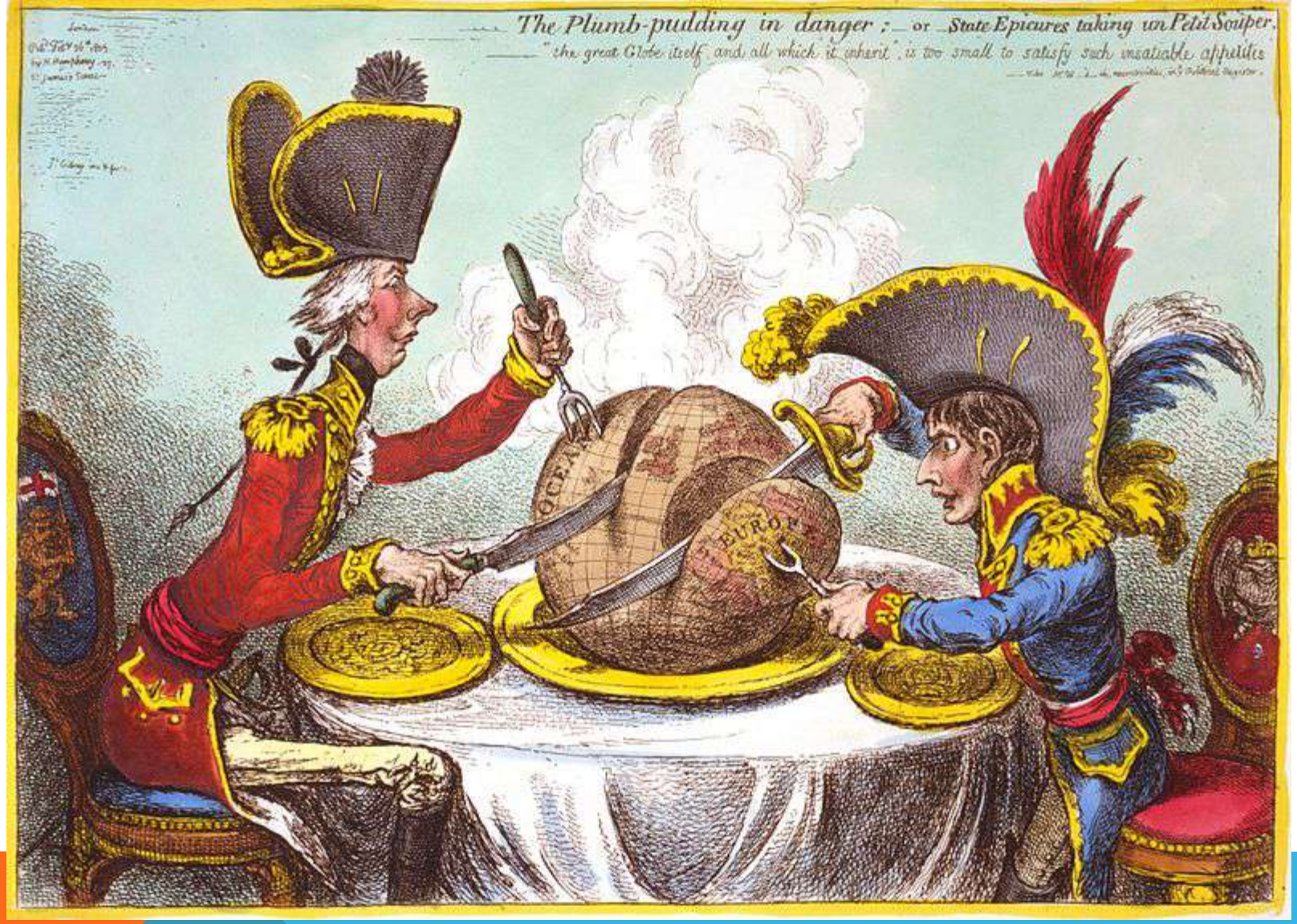
CARICATURES

A caricature is a portrait that exaggerates or distorts the essence of a person, animal or object to create an easily identifiable visual likeness. In literature, a caricature is a description of a person using exaggeration of some characteristics and oversimplification of others.

There were many caricaturists in the 1800's to include: Wilhelm Busch (German), Rodolphe Töpffer (Swiss), Honoré Daumier (French), Thomas Nast (American) and Aubrey Vincent Beardsley (English).

Aubrey Vincent Beardsley Self-Portrait





A lot of caricatures are political in nature… like this one by James Gillray. *The Plumb-pudding in danger* (1805), caricatured Pitt and Napoleon, and was voted the most famous of all UK political cartoons.

Even in Ancient Pompeii, there was graffiti caricature such as this one of a politician.

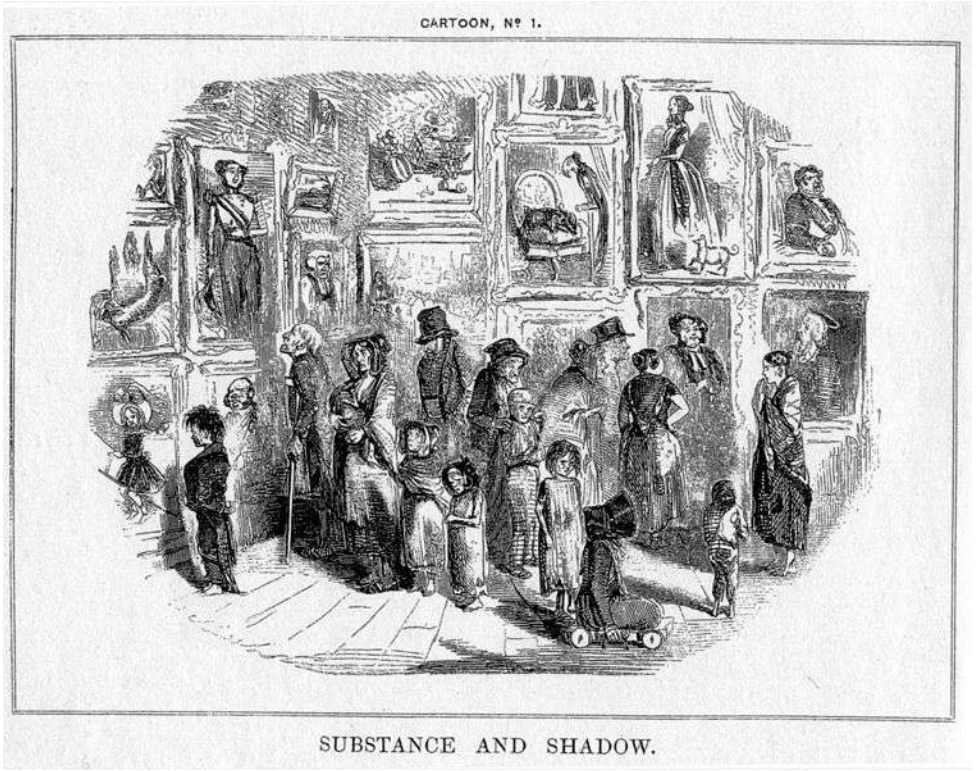
A modern, street-style caricature at a wedding, with the subject holding the picture for comparison.

CARTOONS

CARTOONS

A cartoon is a form of two-dimensional illustrated visual art. While the specific definition has changed over time, modern usage refers to a typically non-realistic or semi-realistic drawing or painting intended for satire, caricature, or humor, or to the artistic style of such works. An artist who creates cartoons is called a cartoonist.

An animated cartoon horse, drawn by rotoscoping from Eadweard Muybridge's 19th-century photos.



John Leech's "Cartoon no.1: Substance and Shadow" (1843) satirized preparatory cartoons for frescoes in the Palace of Westminster, creating the modern meaning of "cartoon".

The term originated in the Middle Ages (over 600 years ago) and first described a preparatory drawing for a piece of art, such as a painting, fresco, tapestry, or stained glass window. In the 19th century, it came to refer to humorous illustrations in magazines and newspapers, and in the early 20th century and onward it referred to comic strips and animated films.

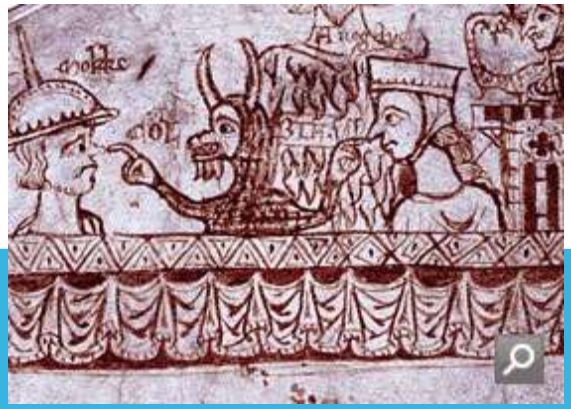
A MEDIEVAL MYSTERY

Can you decode the dark secrets of this cartoon?

Tax records can tell us a great deal about life in the Middle Ages. They don't usually come with pictures, but this one does.

It is a cartoon from 1233 during the reign of King Henry III. It's a detailed, complex cartoon and it is a bit of a mystery.

It was found on an Exchequer Roll, a kind of government document recording various payments that is stored rolled up. This roll listed tax payments made by Jewish people in the city of Norwich in Norfolk.



1233: A tax roll with a nasty tale to tell (E 401/1565)

1. Look at the cartoon and see if you can find:

- A castle
- Pitchforks
- A set of scales
- A woman
- A crown
- Devils

2. So far, what do you think the cartoon might be about?
3. Now read some of the Background section on the next slides. Does this give you a better idea of what the message of the cartoon is?

BACKGROUND

Persecution of the Jews

The terrible treatment of Jews by the Nazi Government in the 1930s and 1940s was not a new event. Though nothing had ever been seen on the scale of the appalling 'Final Solution' begun in 1942 in which 6 million were murdered, Jews have been the victims of mistreatment since Roman times, as their different religion and their success in business attracted hatred and jealousy. Laws were sometimes passed against them, such as the 1215 ruling by the Catholic Church that Jewish men had to wear spiked hats to identify them. At other times they have been made to wear stars on their clothing or change their names.

At the time this roll was written Jews in England were subjected to heavy taxes, had property stolen or confiscated and were sometimes attacked. The most serious attack on a Jewish community was the York Massacre in 1190 in which 150 Jews were killed as they took refuge in Clifford's Tower, one of the city's castles. The 12th century historian William of Newburgh accused the townspeople of an attempt at 'sweeping away the whole race in their city'.

BACKGROUND

Medieval Norwich

In the 13th century, Norwich was one of the largest and most important towns in England. One of its richest and most powerful residents was Isaac fil Jurnet, a Jewish money lender who owned a large amount of property in the city and was a banker to the king. To some jealous citizens Isaac seemed like a sort of king himself.

Isaac employed other Jews to collect the money that borrowers in the city owed to him. The most well known (and most disliked) were Mosse Mokke and his wife Abigail.

This cartoon is an example of the feelings many people had towards Jews in medieval England. It is about real people and their situation within 13th century society.

4. Look at the left hand part of the cartoon image.

- What is the man holding?
- What do you think he could be weighing?
- What does this man do?
- What is behind him and why does it have a forked tongue?

5. Now look at the centre of the cartoon.

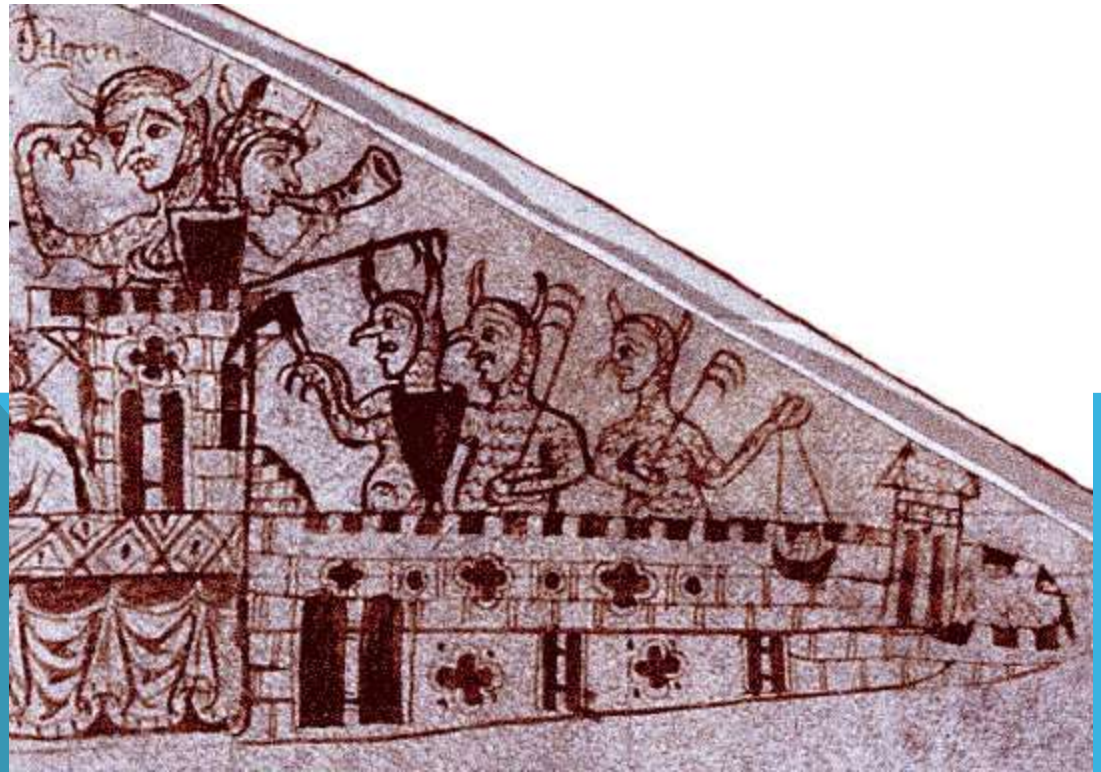
- Who are the people shown here?
- How has the cartoonist shown that the man and the woman are Jewish?
- Can you work out the name of the demon? (Hint: Look at the letters on either side of him)

6. Look at the largest figure in the centre of the cartoon.

- Who do you think he is supposed to be?
- Why does he have three faces?
- He isn't a king so why is he wearing a crown?
- Do you think he is standing in his own castle or is he in hell being tormented by demons? Why do you think that?

7. Now look at the right hand side of the cartoon.

- What do you think these characters are supposed to be?
- List what each of them is carrying.
- What do you think their role is within the cartoon?



8. Have you unravelled the mystery behind the cartoon? What is your final conclusion on what the cartoon's message is?

COMIC BOOKS

COMIC BOOK

A comic book is a magazine made up of "comics"—narrative artwork in the form of separate panels that represent individual scenes, often accompanied by dialog (usually in word balloons, emblematic of the comic book art form) as well as including brief descriptive prose.

The first comic book appeared in the United States in 1933, reprinting the earlier newspaper comic strips, which established many of the story-telling devices used in comics.

The term "comic book" arose because the first comic books reprinted humor comic strips. Despite their name, comic books are not necessarily humorous in tone; modern comic books tell stories in a variety of genres.

Since the introduction of the comic book format in 1933 with the publication of *Famous Funnies*, the United States has produced the most titles, along with British comics and Japanese manga, in terms of quantity of titles.

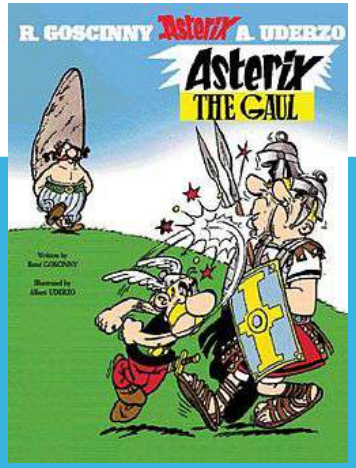
Cultural historians divide the career of the comic book in the U.S. into several ages or historical eras:

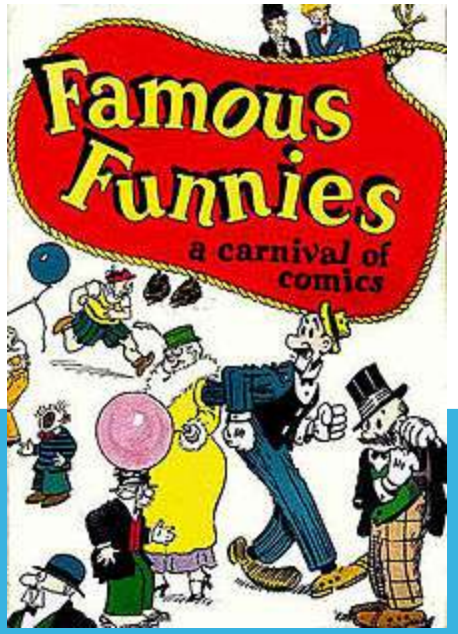
- Proto-comic books and the Platinum Age
- Golden Age
- Silver Age
- Bronze Age
- Copper age
- Modern Age

Over the club year we will cover the different ages of American Comics, a little bit of European Comic History, and a bit of Japanese Manga History as well!

漫画

The kanji for "manga"





Comic books continue to evolve and change. Today, there are now colleges that offer degrees in comic books.

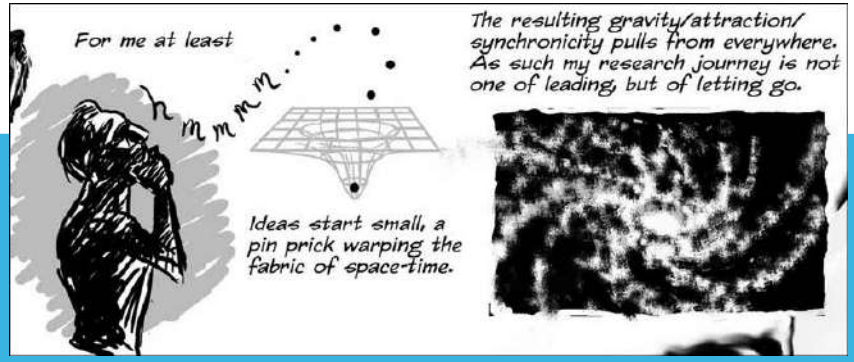
The University of Dundee in England is offering a master's degree in literature with an emphasis on comics, which might even articulate up to a PhD in comics.

California College of the Arts has a Masters in Fine Arts in Comics.

2010
GRAD

Minneapolis College of Art and Design also has a program in Comic Art.

Michael Uslan, originator and executive producer of the Batman film franchise since 1989, received the world's first fine arts doctorate in comic books on Oct. 10.

There are even college students who have been given permission to complete their college dissertations in comic book format!

Images from Columbia Teachers College doctoral student Nick Sousanis.