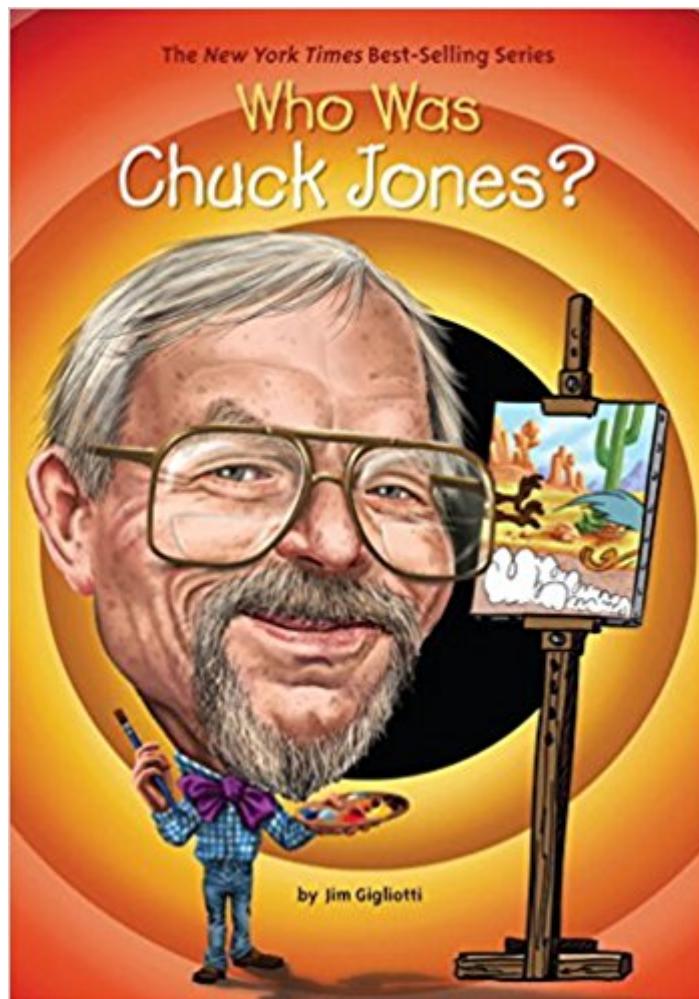


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Who Was Chuck Jones?



Synopsis

"What's Up, Doc?" Find out in this lively biography of the most celebrated director in animation history! Charles Martin "Chuck" Jones was an American animator, cartoon artist, screenwriter, producer, and director of many classic animated cartoon shorts. They starred Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, the Road Runner and Wile E. Coyote, Pepé Le Pew, Porky Pig and a slew of other Warner Brothers characters. When he moved on to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, his work includes a series of Tom and Jerry shorts as well as the television adaptation of Dr. Seuss's *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. Jones was nominated for eight Academy Awards, won three, and received an honorary Oscar for his work in the animation industry. His career spanned almost seventy years, during which he made over 250 animated films, including *What's Opera, Doc?*, a classic Bugs Bunny/Elmer Fudd short that is considered to be one of the greatest cartoons of all time.

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Customer Reviews

Jim Gigliotti is a freelance writer based in Southern California. A former editor at the National Football League, he has written more than 50 books for all ages. His writing credits include biographies for young readers on Olympian Jesse Owens and baseball star Roberto Clemente.

Who Was Chuck Jones? Chuck Jones was eight years old and living in Ocean Park, California, when a stray cat named Johnson walked up the sand to his back doorstep one summer day in 1921. Chuck had never seen the skinny, short-haired cat before. He called him Johnson, because that was the name written on a small, wooden tag around the cat's neck. Chuck liked Johnson, and Johnson liked Chuck. So Johnson decided as anyone with a cat knows, it was Johnson's idea to stay with the Jones family for a little while. Chuck laughed when Johnson would bat a grapefruit into a corner of the house, trapping it so he could bite into it and get at the juicy inside. And he laughed when Johnson would jump into the ocean and climb onto the shoulders of an unsuspecting swimmer. And when Johnson, covered in bits of tar and seagull feathers, surprised a group of sunbathers on the beach one day. By watching Johnson, Chuck realized that animals have their own personalities, just like humans do. And he realized that it was the unexpected things in life that made people laugh. When Chuck grew up to direct cartoons, he often used animals to tell his stories. And not just any animals, but some of the most famous cartoon animals ever created: Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, the Road Runner, Wile E. Coyote, Pepé Le Pew, Michigan J. Frog, and many more. His characters starred in short cartoons and feature-length cartoons, television shows and movies. What made Chuck's cartoon characters so memorable was that each had its own special personality, just like Johnson. And each behaved in surprising ways, just like Johnson. A rabbit sang opera. A skunk fell in love with a cat, a frog broke into a song-and-dance routine and a coyote tried all sorts of crazy ways to catch a roadrunner in the desert. And they all made people laugh. Many of Chuck's creations have entertained children and adults for more than fifty years!

Chapter 1: Growing Up in California

When Chuck Jones was a youngster, he loved stories. Chuck grew up before most people had radios and before television existed. But he enjoyed reading interesting books. He delighted in hearing the fantastic tales his relatives told. And he liked watching people act out funny performances onstage and in the movies.

Chuck was born Charles Martin Jones in Spokane, Washington, on September 21, 1912. His father's name also was Charles. His mother's name was Mabel. His oldest sister, Margaret, was born in 1908. Another sister, Dorothy, was born in 1910. Chuck's father worked at many different jobs. When he first met Mabel in 1906, he worked for a railroad company. That company sent him to Panama for a while to help work on the Panama Canal. Margaret and Dorothy were born in Panama, but the family moved back to the United States to Spokane, Washington shortly before Chuck was born. The family moved to southern California in 1913, when Chuck was about six months old. Chuck's younger brother, Richard, was born

two years later. Chuck's father wanted to open and run his own business. He had many different ideas about how to get started. Unfortunately, none of his businesses were very successful. He tried buying and selling land, growing flowers, even selling avocados, but nothing seemed to work out quite right. Every time Chuck's father started a new business, he ordered nice pencils and good paper on which he printed the name of his company. And every time the new company failed, he had stacks of paper and boxes of pencils left over. Since they all had the company name on them, they were no longer of any use to Mr. Jones. He always gave the paper and the pencils to his children. Chuck and his siblings usually had the best paper and the most pencils of any kids in their neighborhood. And they put it all to good use! Chuck drew at least twenty pictures every day for as long as he could remember. He was getting good at it, too.

“Chuck's talent began to show at a very early age,” his brother later said. Mabel encouraged her children to draw. She would never criticize their drawings, but she never praised them unless she really meant it, either. Instead, she just let them have fun with their artwork. “It was a happy experience to draw for the joy of drawing,” Chuck said. The Jones family moved several times throughout southern California. They lived in and around the Hollywood area and sometimes out by the beach. Wherever the family moved, Chuck's father made sure that they rented a house that came with furniture and books already in place. “And not just any books,” Chuck said, “but good books.” To Chuck's father, that meant books by famous authors such as Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, and O. Henry. Mr. Jones thought that reading was very important. In fact, conversation was not permitted at breakfast—only reading was allowed. If one of the Jones children forgot to bring a book to the table, he or she could read the cereal box! So Chuck learned to read by the time he was three years old. As he grew, he went through all the good books in all their different houses, and the not-so-good ones, too. When Chuck wasn't reading, he listened to his uncle Lynn tell stories. Uncle Lynn told some pretty crazy tales. Sometimes they were just silly, like one about a zebra whose stripes had slipped off his back. At other times, the stories helped the kids feel better. When Teddy, the Jones family dog, died, Uncle Lynn said that the dog had called him to say he was okay. Uncle Lynn wasn't entirely sure where Teddy was calling from, but he thought it might have been from Dog Heaven. On some weekends, Chuck and Richard would visit Uncle Kent, who sold cars in downtown Los Angeles. Uncle Kent always gave the boys money to see a live vaudeville show. Vaudeville had many different performers onstage, one after another. The first might be an acrobat, and the next a singer. Chuck liked the comedians best. He always enjoyed their funny skits and jokes. Chuck learned a lot about

comedy from watching the vaudeville acts. And he learned from watching silent movies, too. When Chuck was about six years old, his family moved to a house on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood. The house was only a couple of blocks away from where movie star Charlie Chaplin built his own studio in 1918. Chuck sometimes sat outside and saw famous stars such as Chaplin or Mary Pickford or Lloyd Hamilton— the greatest stars of the silent movies— going to or from work. This was almost a decade before “talking pictures”— movies with sound— were invented. Chuck went to the movies and saw how funny Chaplin was. He laughed at common, everyday things, like the funny way Chaplin walked. Chuck’s dad told him that Charlie Chaplin once filmed a scene 132 times until he got it just right. Chuck wondered if that was true. And he wondered if a zebra’s stripes could ever really fall down around its ankles.

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