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Fire destroys Wallace & Grommit history

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11 October, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Fire destroys Wallace & Grommit history

BNE: A fire has destroyed the building containing the clay models and movie sets of Wallace and Grommit. The blaze burnt down the three-storey building of Aardman Animations, the company that produced the two lovable animated characters. Models from the “Chicken Run” and “Creature Comforts” movies were also lost. The entire 30-year history of Aardman has gone up in smoke. Nick Park, creator of Wallace and Grommit, said: “Even though it is a precious and nostalgic collection and valuable to the company, in light of more recent tragedies, today isn't a big deal.”

The fire happened at the same time Aardman is enjoying box office success in the U.S. The first ever Wallace and Grommit film, “The Curse of the Were-Rabbit”, opened as the number one movie. It made more than \$16 million in sales in its opening weekend. The story of an absent-minded inventor and his long-suffering dog is keeping Cameron Diaz and Jodie Foster away the top spot. Nick Park is no stranger to success in America. He won two Academy Awards for his short movies “The Wrong Trousers” (1993) and “A Close Shave” (1995). He might triumph again with Wallace and Grommit’s latest adventure.

WARM-UPS

1. WALLACE & GROMMIT: In pairs / groups, talk about the animated characters Wallace and Grommit. When did you first see them? What do you like about them? Do you think they are very British?

2. CHARACTERS: What do you think of animation and animated characters? Talk with your partner(s) about the strong and weak points of the following characters. How do they compare to the animated characters from your country?

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. Wallace and Grommit | e. Thunderbirds |
| b. Nemo ("Finding Nemo") | f. The Pink Panther |
| c. Mickey Mouse | g. Snoopy and Charlie Brown |
| d. The "Toy Story" characters | h. Your country _____ |

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Fire / Wallace and Grommit / creature comforts / smoke / precious things / clay / recent tragedies / movies / rabbits / dogs / Cameron Diaz / Academy Awards

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. ANIMATION: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "animation". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. FIRE: Talk with your partner(s) about fires. What would you do if your house or apartment was destroyed in a fire? Where would you live? What would you be saddest about? What possessions would you miss most? What would you do to start again? Do you have fire insurance?

6. BIG DEALS: Wallace and Grommit's creator Nick Park said the fire which destroyed his company was no big deal, compared with more recent tragedies. Which of the following recent tragedies have you followed in the news? How much do you know about them?

- The South Asia earthquake
- Guatemala after Hurricane Stan
- The 200th US soldier killed in action in Afghanistan
- The African immigrants killed by Spanish police
- The twin Bali bombings
- The 17 mysterious deaths in Canada
- Hurricanes Katrina and Rita
- Other

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. In a new movie, the characters Wallace and Grommit die in a fire. | T / F |
| b. A fire destroyed a three-story building. | T / F |
| c. The 30-year history of Wallace and Grommit's company has gone. | T / F |
| d. Wallace and Grommit's creator focused on more important tragedies. | T / F |
| e. A Wallace and Grommit movie is number one at the US box office. | T / F |
| f. The movie is keeping Cameron Diaz at the top spot. | T / F |
| g. The Wallace and Grommit creator is a stranger to success in the U.S. | T / F |
| h. The creator had a close shave in the recent fire. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------|
| a. destroyed | considering |
| b. blaze | a near miss |
| c. precious | occurred |
| d. in light of | valuable |
| e. big deal | ruined |
| f. happened | forgetful |
| g. made | problem |
| h. absent-minded | most recent |
| i. a close shave | fire |
| j. latest | earned |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. The blaze burnt | inventor |
| b. the two lovable | down the three-storey building |
| c. gone up | more recent tragedies |
| d. a precious and nostalgic | triumph again |
| e. in light of | more than \$16 million in sales |
| f. enjoying | in smoke |
| g. It made | to success |
| h. an absent-minded | animated characters |
| i. Nick Park is no stranger | collection |
| j. He might | box office success |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Fire destroys Wallace & Grommit history

BNE: A fire has destroyed the building _____ the clay models and movie _____ of Wallace and Grommit. The _____ burnt down the three-storey building of Aardman Animations, the company that produced the two _____ animated characters. Models from the "Chicken Run" and "Creature Comforts" movies were also _____. The entire 30-year history of Aardman has gone up in _____. Nick Park, creator of Wallace and Grommit, said: "Even though it is a precious and nostalgic collection and _____ to the company, in light of more recent _____, today isn't a big deal."

The fire happened at the same time Aardman is _____ box office success in the U.S. The first _____ Wallace and Grommit film, "The Curse of the Were-Rabbit", opened as the number one movie. It _____ more than \$16 million in sales in its opening weekend. The story of an absent-minded _____ and his long-suffering dog is keeping Cameron Diaz and Jodie Foster away the _____ spot. Nick Park is no _____ to success in America. He _____ two Academy Awards for his short movies "The Wrong Trousers" (1993) and "A Close Shave" (1995). He might _____ again with Wallace and Grommit's latest adventure.

lost
blaze
tragedies
smoke
containing
lovable
sets
valuable
stranger
ever
triumph
inventor
enjoying
won
made
top

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'top'** and **'spot'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "ANIMATION" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about Wallace and Grommit and other animated characters.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- fire
- lovable
- lost
- smoke
- valuable
- big deal
- enjoying
- made
- long-suffering
- top spot
- stranger
- triumph

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What did you think when you saw this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. What do you know about Wallace and Grommit?
- d. Do you like animated movies?
- e. How would you feel if your life's work went up in smoke?
- f. What things do you own that are valuable?
- g. Do you think Wallace and Grommit are for children or adults?
- h. Why do you think Wallace and Grommit are popular?
- i. What do you think of Nick Park saying recent tragedies are more important than the loss of his models?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think it is sad that the history of the animation company has been lost in a fire?
- d. Which kind of animated movies do you like, traditional cartoons, puppets, claymation or computer graphics?
- e. Do you have a favorite animated character?
- f. Do you know any absent-minded people?
- g. Do you know anyone who is long-suffering?
- h. Are you a stranger to success?
- i. When was the last time you had a close shave?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

SUCCESSFUL CHARACTERS: Some animated characters have been successful for decades. Why? Look at the characters below. In pairs / groups, decide why the characters are so successful. Some reasons might be brilliant design, fun, clever marketing, educational value, cuteness, social message, etc. You must make a mini-presentation on your ideas.

CHARACTER	REASONS FOR SUCCESS
Wallace and Grommit	
Mickey Mouse	
Snoopy	
Popeye	
Superman	
Other (from your country) _____	

Vote on the best presentations.

In pairs / groups, decide which of the characters is the best and why.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

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The fire happened at the same time Aardman is _____ box office success in the U.S. The first ever Wallace and Grommit film, "The _____ of the Were-Rabbit", opened as the number one movie. It _____ more than \$16 million in sales in its opening weekend. The story of an absent-minded _____ and his long-suffering dog is keeping Cameron Diaz and Jodie Foster away the top spot. Nick Park is no _____ in America. He won two Academy Awards for his short movies "The Wrong Trousers" (1993) and "A Close Shave" (1995). He might _____ again with Wallace and Grommit's latest adventure.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on Wallace and Grommit. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. CHARACTER COMPARISON: Make a poster comparing and contrasting two animated characters. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all show similar comparisons?

4. NEW: Write the profile of a new animated character (you must invent one). Describes the character's personality and the kind of adventures it is likely to have. Show what you created to your classmates in your next lesson.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F b. T c. T d. T e. T f. F g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. destroyed	ruined
b. blaze	fire
c. precious	valuable
d. in light of	considering
e. big deal	problem
f. happened	occurred
g. made	earned
h. absent-minded	forgetful
i. a close shave	a near miss
j. latest	most recent

PHRASE MATCH:

a. The blaze burnt	down the three-storey building
b. the two lovable	animated characters
c. gone up	in smoke
d. a precious and nostalgic	collection
e. in light of	more recent tragedies
f. enjoying	box office success
g. It made	more than \$16 million in sales
h. an absent-minded	inventor
i. Nick Park is no stranger	to success
j. He might	triumph again

GAP FILL:

Fire destroys Wallace & Grommit history

BNE: A fire has destroyed the building **containing** the clay models and movie **sets** of Wallace and Grommit. The **blaze** burnt down the three-storey building of Aardman Animations, the company that produced the two **lovable** animated characters. Models from the "Chicken Run" and "Creature Comforts" movies were also **lost**. The entire 30-year history of Aardman has gone up in **smoke**. Nick Park, creator of Wallace and Grommit, said: "Even though it is a precious and nostalgic collection and **valuable** to the company, in light of more recent **tragedies**, today isn't a big deal."

The fire happened at the same time Aardman is **enjoying** box office success in the U.S. The first **ever** Wallace and Grommit film, "The Curse of the Were-Rabbit", opened as the number one movie. It **made** more than \$16 million in sales in its opening weekend. The story of an absent-minded **inventor** and his long-suffering dog is keeping Cameron Diaz and Jodie Foster away the **top** spot. Nick Park is no **stranger** to success in America. He **won** two Academy Awards for his short movies "The Wrong Trousers" (1993) and "A Close Shave" (1995). He might **triumph** again with Wallace and Grommit's latest adventure.