



B. How it all began

ONCE UPON A time, not more than about a hundred years ago, there were no comics. There were no superheroes, no talking ducks or cats. There was no Donald Duck, no Batman, no Calvin and no Hobbes.

Of course there were picture stories. Before people had a written language, they painted scenes from their lives on rocks or on the walls in their caves. But it is very difficult to compare the rock carvings of the Norwegian Stone Age man with the modern comic strip.

There were also cartoons. They were often carefully drawn with many details. Most of them had a short dialogue.

The history of modern comic strips started in 1895 when a bald little boy with big ears and bare feet appeared in a newspaper called the *New York World*. He was dressed in a night-shirt and the words he said were printed on it. People called him *The Yellow Kid* because the newspaper was using the colour yellow for the first time. He soon became a great success, especially among children, but also among the new immigrants who didn't understand much English or couldn't read at all.

It was, however, the cartoonist Randolph Dirks who, two years later, created the first modern comic strip: *The Katzenjammer Kids*. While *The Yellow Kid* had the inscription on his night-shirt, Dirks made "word balloons" and "word clouds". This was funny and easy to understand. They got so popular that by the early 1900s there were nearly 200 different strips in American newspapers.

Today cartoons and comic strips are found in almost every newspaper and magazine. The most popular ones are published all over the world. One of them is *Blondie* which was started in 1930. Every day more than 80 million people can read this strip in nearly 2000 newspapers and in about 20 languages.

Word Power

- cave** – hule
- compare** – sammenligne
- carving** – her: maleri
- bald** – skallet
- print** – trykke
- create** – skape
- comic**
- a paper full of comic strips
 - a comedian
- comic strip**
- a series of pictures that tells a story
- cartoon**
- a funny drawing
 - a film that tells a story by using moving drawings instead of real people and places

TASK 2

Do you like drawing? Make your own cartoon or comic strip and write a short text to go with your drawing(s). You can also ask your teacher for a worksheet with some comic strips and fill in the "word balloons". Perhaps the class can make its own comic book?