

The Silent Era

1894-1929

Can you imagine putting on your favorite movie and turning off the sound? There wouldn't be much to see! That's why silent films, which were made mostly from 1894-1929, drew from a handy bucket of tools to tell understandable and entertaining stories.

Miming and title cards were an integral part of silent cinema. Silent film actors exaggerated their body language and facial expressions to make sure the audience understood. That's why slapstick was such a popular genre. (Think Charlie Chaplin!) Title cards filled in parts of the story like dialogue and narration to be even clearer.





By 1914, silent films were no longer completely silent. The movies still had no sound, but an orchestra would play while the movie was showing to create mood and signal the tone of the film to the audience.

Pretty soon, silent movies also got color—but not in the way movies are made nowadays. Color film had not been invented yet, so the film itself was tinted by hand! That's a whole lot of coloring.



To Review!

If you had lived during the silent era do you think you would have gone to the movies very often? Why?

What two techniques were used to influence the audience's viewing of a silent era film?

With a grown-up, look on MUBI.com for a Charlie Chaplin film. What techniques discussed above are used to tell the story?

<https://mubi.com/lists/public-domain-greats>

Draw a line from the word to its meaning.

1. integral

The art of portraying a character or idea by gestures and movements

2. mime

Comedy that's largely physical, like throwing pies in actors' faces

3. slapstick

Necessary or essential to complete a whole