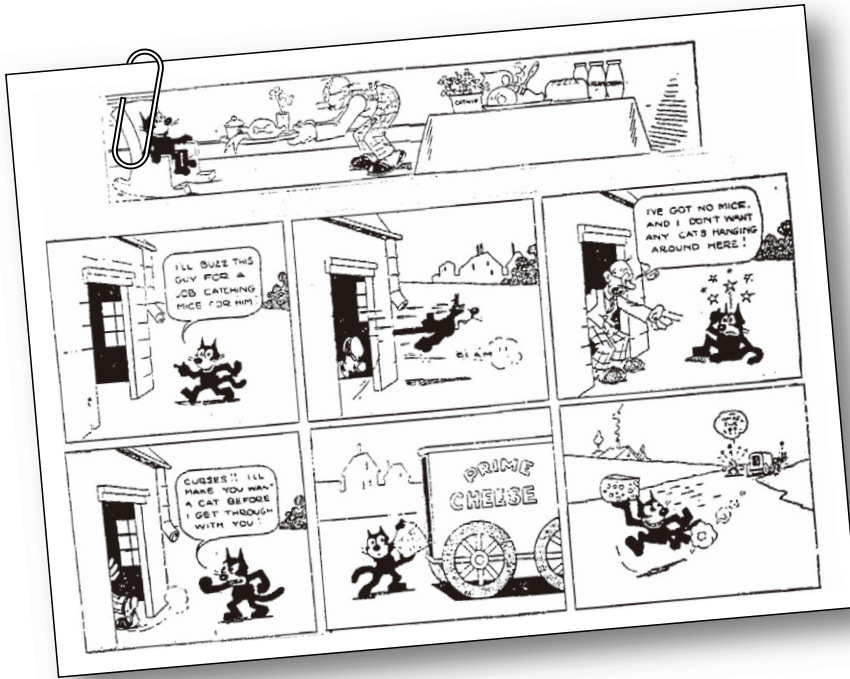


Animal Cartoon Characters

動物をモチーフにしたアニメキャラクターは、昔から世界中で人気があります。日本にも動物のキャラクターは数多くありますが、欧米と日本ではそうしたキャラクターに対する受け止め方が異なっているようです。はたして何が違うのでしょうか。



Pre-Reading Task



Mark or write your answers. Look up any new words in your dictionary.

1. How do you feel about animal cartoon characters?

- I love them. They annoy me. I don't take any notice of them.
 They are nice. They are just for kids. other: _____

2. What are your top two favorite animal cartoon characters?

Favorite: _____ Second favorite: _____

3. Which factors are necessary to make an animal cartoon character popular, do you think? Choose four:

- cuteness ability to speak personality familiarity intelligence
 funniness special abilities friendliness uniqueness originality



Ever since the days of silent movies, animal cartoon characters have been wildly popular. One of the earliest cartoon characters to become famous was Felix the Cat, the black and white cat with big eyes and an even bigger grin who made his debut in 1919. His success spawned a whole new genre of “funny animals” as such cartoon characters are called. Within a few years the cultural icon Mickey Mouse had made his appearance and won over audiences with the first animated movie featuring sound, Steamboat Willie.

Of course, prior to Felix and Mickey, talking animal characters such as Peter Rabbit had appeared in books and even in ancient tales such as Aesop’s “The Tortoise and the Hare” we are entertained by talking animals. There seems to be something about giving animals human characteristics that appeals to all of us. In fact this phenomenon has a name, anthropomorphism, and is a storytelling tradition found in most cultures around the world. Talking animals in a story can serve to entertain children, to add metaphor or humor to the tale or simply to expand the range of storytelling possibilities.

This tradition has grown somewhat these days. Animal cartoon characters are found all around us. In movies, on TV and in advertising they are big business. Popular animated movies can create a huge spin-off industry of animal character goods. Nemo from Finding Nemo (2003), Simba from The Lion King (1994), Po from Kung Fu Panda (2008) and Alex from Madagascar (2005) are just some of the movie talking animals that have become a part of pop-culture in recent years. The popularity of these characters cannot be underestimated; Finding Nemo for example is one of the top 20 grossing movies of all-time, with a worldwide box-office of close to \$1 billion.

In Japan, cartoon character appreciation has reached unparalleled heights and animals are a big part of it. Homegrown animal characters are massively popular in Japan and at the top of the list is a cute little feline character from London. Hello Kitty has now spread in popularity outside of Japan, and brought a little bit of Japanese cuteness to millions around the globe. Even the Japanese government has got in on the act, naming Hello Kitty as Japan’s tourism ambassador to China and Hong Kong.

Doraemon would also rank as a famous Japanese animal character but in fact he is a robot from the future and therefore in a slightly different category. Not to worry, one thing that Japan has plenty of is cartoon characters. Everyone from frog lovers (Keroppi) to bear fans (Rilakkuma) can find a cartoon character to satisfy their tastes in Japan.

35 One difference between animal characters in Japan and overseas is in regards to their relationship with adults. In Japan it is acceptable for people to indulge their love of an animal cartoon character well into adulthood; buying a cartoon character strap toy for a mobile phone is completely normal for young Japanese women for example. In the West, interest in animal cartoon characters generally wanes in high school, but
40 who knows, as Japanese characters spread in popularity worldwide perhaps attitudes will change too.

cartoon: アニメ、漫画 **Felix the Cat:** 猫のフィリックス **Steamboat Willie:** 蒸気船ウィリー (ミッキー・マウスが蒸気船の船員役として初登場した作品) **Peter Rabbit:** ピーター・ラビット (童話の主人公のウサギ)
Aesop: イソップ (ギリシャの伝説的な寓話作家) **anthropomorphism:** 擬人化 (人でないものを人に見立てて表現すること) **spin-off industry:** 関連産業 **Finding Nemo:** ファインディング・ニモ **The Lion King:** ライオン・キング **Kung Fu Panda:** カンフー・パンダ **Madagascar:** マダガスカル **box-office:** 興行収入 **Hello Kitty:** ハロー・キティ

Vocabulary



Circle the correct meanings for these words. Do not use a dictionary. For words you do not know, try to guess the meaning from the context.

- | | | | |
|----------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. prior to ... | a. ...より前に | b. ...より後に | c. ...と同時に |
| 2. ancient | a. 最近の | b. 外国の | c. 大昔の |
| 3. expand ... | a. ...を広げる | b. ...を伝える | c. ...を超える |
| 4. popularity | a. 話題 | b. 人気 | c. 総数 |
| 5. ambassador | a. 宣伝 | b. みやげ | c. 大使 |
| 6. in regards to ... | a. ...に関して | b. ...に比例して | c. ...と一致して |

Comprehension: True or False



Check T (true) or F (false) for each of these statements:

- | | T | F |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Felix the Cat followed Mickey Mouse's screen debut. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Writing books about animals is called anthropomorphism. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. The top grossing movie of all time is Finding Nemo. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Cartoon character appreciation is most popular in Japan. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Hello Kitty has been given a role by the Japanese government. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Western people seem to lose interest in animal cartoon characters in their teens. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

分詞構文 (付帯状況) 「～して、そして…」

Even the Japanese government has got in on the act, naming Hello Kitty as Japan's tourism ambassador to China and Hong Kong.

分詞構文には時・理由・条件・譲歩・付帯状況の意味があり、付帯状況には「～して、そして」と「～しながら」のふたつの意味がある。

例 1 **Arriving** at the railway station, I saw the train moving off.

例 2 **Having** a bad cold, she did not come to the party.

例 3 **Turning** to the right, you will find the post office.

例 4 **Admitting** what he says, I cannot believe him.

例 5 She entered the room, **switching** on the light.

例 6 He felt asleep, **thinking** of her.

Listening Practice



Pre-read these questions and then listen to some more information about cartoon animals. Write or mark your answers:

1. Anthropomorphism means giving human characteristics to ...

2. Fill in the missing word:
However, there are _____ levels of anthropomorphism.
3. Which animal is an example of the most basic level?
 Goofy Pluto Donald Duck
4. In the third level, what can animals do?
 communicate using gestures speak only to other animals
 speak to both animals and humans
5. Suggest an example of an animal cartoon character for the top category:

Writing and Discussion



Read these statements with your classmates and teacher. Do you agree or disagree? Try to give a reason for your answer in English.

1. Anthropomorphism in books and cartoons is a good thing.

2. Minor animal cartoon characters are more interesting than the major ones.

3. Animal characters are only for kids, not for high school or university students.
