

## Who Dares, Wins



Walt Disney and his wife Lillian posing with Mickey Mouse doll

## A Read the story

A young man was waiting outside an office, fiddling with his fingers nervously. He was barely 22 years old, but he seemed quite mature for his age. He was rather pale and had a moustache, which was fashionable in the USA in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The office was at the top floor of a building called *The Kansas City Star*, a newspaper in Kansas City for which it was named. It was considered to be a great deal to work for a newspaper, especially one which had been so successful in producing great reporters and getting lots of awards.

The office doors opened suddenly and the young man heard a coarse voice from the inside calling his name.

"Come in, Walter."

The young man, whose name we now know was Walter, entered the room and closed the door behind him.

"Sit down," said the voice authoritatively.

Walter saw a chair covered with catalogues and old newspapers and nervously went to pick them up to make space for himself. His clumsiness combined with an unordered pile resulted in the papers being scattered all over the floor.

'I'm sorry...', muttered Walter. "Let me pick them up."

The voice from the other side of the office said nothing, but Walter felt he was being watched with contempt.



He finally sat down and cast a nervous glance at the owner of the voice. It was an older man with a bald head and a strict gaze in his eyes. The man had a nameplate on his desk that said: The Chief Editor.

"You wanted to see me...", said Walter cautiously.

"Yes," answered the man. "I want to talk to you."

"About the drawings..." Walter started to say, but the Chief Editor interrupted him.

"You see, young Walter," said the Chief Editor condescendingly. "I am well aware that you have been working for this newspaper for a long time. But creating cartoons isn't the same as delivering newspapers."

"I've been practicing a lot. Whenever I have the time. You know I am able to manage two jobs, working delivery for you, and doing my sketches."

"Oh yes, about that," said the Editor. "I'm afraid you're

fired from your job. The delivery department is already full and we can't afford so many people anymore... and we most certainly don't need you as a cartoonist, so I have to ask you to leave today."

Walter looked at the man in disbelief. He had sent his sketches to the Chief Editor to try to get a job as a cartoonist but he got fired from his old job instead. Walter had been told that *The Kansas City Star* "gave many opportunities to talented young people" so he had decided to give it a shot. He prepared his best work, believing somebody would see it for what it was – potentially outstanding.

Sketching and drawing was everything to Walter. He remembered how he used to doodle at every given opportunity. His parents used to tell him that he should grow up and do something else, but all he wanted to do was to sketch characters from the stories and books he read, or he would just invent his own. All kind of vivacious cartoons would appear before his eyes and he would do his best to capture them on paper. And now, he was being rejected.

"But why," asked Walter, "what is wrong with my cartoons? And why am I getting fired from my old job?"

"To put it simply," continued the Chief Editor, "you lack imagination and good ideas. You will never be a good cartoonist and we need only the best for the job."

Walter felt like his entire world had collapsed, but he continued to listen to the cold voice coming from the opposite side of the office.

"We have recently decided to cut our expenses in the delivery department. You will be paid for this month and that's it."

"Please, reconsider!" pleaded the young man, "I really need my job! And if you take me as a cartoonist, I promise to give my best and to make the newspaper famous!"

The editor laughed cynically, giving his final answer:

"Close the doors on your way out," he said.

Walter stood up feeling lightheaded. He left the office, with the voice in his head repeating the Chief Editor's words like a chant.

*you lack imagination and good ideas*

*you lack imagination and good ideas*

*you lack imagination and good ideas*

Not only was he rejected as a cartoonist, he had lost his job in delivery as well. What had just happened in there?

Was he so extremely untalented that the man wanted to get rid of him like a bad charm?

He slowly walked to the building's exit. Opening the main door, he heard someone calling him. Walter saw his friend, another delivery boy, walking swiftly in his direction.

"Hey, wait," said the young man, "where are you going?"

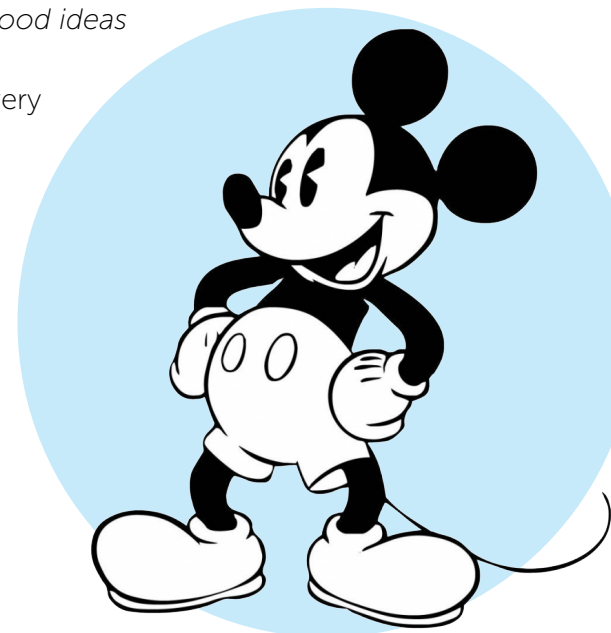
"I've been fired," said Walter with a gloomy voice. "I'm going home."

"You're fired? How is that possible?"

"I don't know," said Walter, "I don't want to talk about it just now."

"Wait a second," said Walter's friend, "what about your cartoons? What did he say?"

"Nothing. He said they were nothing," explained Walter, "but I don't want to talk about that either. I'm going home first, then I will see what to do next."



"Well, I'm very sorry to hear that," responded the young man. "Good luck."  
"Thank you, Cooper," said Walter, and put his hand forward. "You're a good man." Cooper accepted his hand and shook it vigorously.  
"That's OK, Walt. See you around."

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Walter 'Walt' Disney went home, only to be rejected several more times by other newspaper editors who also thought his ideas unimaginative and dull. More than three hundred different bankers told him he was no good and refused to lend him money for his projects. However, Walter didn't give up. He continued to draw and to create new characters.

Years later he returned to The Kansas City Star, this time not to find a job there, but to buy the entire newspaper company. He had won several Academy Awards and earned millions of dollars. He was the father of the iconic Mortimer the Mouse, later to be called Mickey Mouse. He was the father of Disneyland. But it didn't end there. For the rest of his life he continued his work, making numerous cartoons and even giving voice to some of his famous characters who live even in our times. Walt Disney became a legend.

*"All the adversity I've had in my life, all my troubles and obstacles, have strengthened me... You may not realise it when it happens, but a kick in the teeth may be the best thing in the world for you."*  
Walt Disney

## GLOSSARY\*:

<b>fiddle</b>	touch something in a restless or nervous way
<b>coarse</b>	rough
<b>unorderly</b>	not arranged, disordered, confused
<b>contempt</b>	the feeling that a person or a thing is worthless
<b>glance</b>	a brief or hurried look
<b>gaze</b>	a steady intent look
<b>outstanding</b>	remarkable, great
<b>vivacious</b>	full of life
<b>condescendingly</b>	showing an attitude of patronising superiority
<b>plead</b>	making an emotional appeal
<b>lightheaded</b>	dizzy and slightly faint
<b>chant</b>	a song or a repeated rhythmic phrase
<b>charm</b>	an object, act, or saying believed to have magic power
<b>swiftly</b>	at high speed, quickly
<b>vigorously</b>	in a strong manner
<b>dull</b>	boring, monotonous
<b>adversity</b>	a difficult or unpleasant situation

\*Words and expressions have been looked up in the Oxford online dictionary. Some of them have been partially modified (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com>).

**B** Decide whether the following sentences are true (T), false (F) or the information is not given (NG).

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| 1 The Chief Editor had a patronising tone over Walter.                                  | T / F / NG |
| 2 Walter hated his old job because it didn't give him the opportunity to draw cartoons. | T / F / NG |
| 3 The Chief Editor thought Walter wasn't creative enough.                               | T / F / NG |
| 4 The Kansas City Star newspaper employed successful reporters.                         | T / F / NG |
| 5 Walter didn't believe his sketches were good enough for The Kansas City Star.         | T / F / NG |

**C** Here is a list of adverbs you can choose from to describe Walter's personality. Explain your choice.

- |              |                 |                  |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------|
| • ambitious  | • impatient     | • fearless       |
| • persistent | • adventurous   | • hard-working   |
| • impulsive  | • brave         | • independent    |
| • cowardly   | • nervous       | • passionate     |
| • calm       | • careful       | • patient        |
| • dishonest  | • communicative | • self-confident |
| • foolish    | • courageous    | • irresponsible  |
| • greedy     | • determined    | • stubborn       |

**D** What do you think? Discuss.

- Do you like the story? Why/Why not?
- What would you do in Walter's place? Do you get discouraged easily?
- What is the main idea of the story?
- Do you know a similar story or an example?

**E** Can you explain these proverbs?

*The journey of a thousand miles begins with a broken fan belt and leaky tyre.*

*Failure is the mother of success.*

*Who dares, wins.*

*That which does not kill us makes us stronger.*



## WRITING

**F** Your turn!

Imagine you are the Chief Editor at *The Kansas City Star*. Twenty years have passed. You are writing a letter to Walt Disney. What is your life like? Do you still work for *The Kansas City Star*? Do you regret not helping the young man who has become so successful in the meantime? Start the letter with: *Dear Mr. Disney, ...*