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## **Fire destroys Wallace & Grommit history**

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**11 October, 2005**

## **THE ARTICLE**

### **Fire destroys Wallace & Grommit history**

**BNE:** Fire has destroyed the warehouse containing the sets and props of Wallace and Grommit animators Aardman Animations. The blaze gutted the three-storey building in spite of the efforts of ten firefighting teams. The entire history of Aardman, from the 1976 character Morph, through to the “Chicken Run” and “Creature Comforts” movies and the “Wallace and Grommit” series, has gone up in smoke. Much of the priceless archive of sets and clay models is irreplaceable. A stunned studio spokesman said the whole company is “mourning the loss of thirty years of history”. Nick Park, creator of many of Aardman’s popular characters was philosophical, saying: “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 broke out at a time when the company 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 and grossed more than \$16 million in its opening weekend. The claymation story of an eccentric, absent-minded inventor and his long-suffering sidekick dog is taking America by storm and is keeping the likes of Cameron Diaz and Jodie Foster from claiming 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). The recent fire did not get any of the sets or props from his latest Wallace and Grommit movie as they were stored elsewhere.

## **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 / firefighters / smoke / priceless things / clay / recent tragedies / movies / claymation / eccentricity / 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 gutted 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? What happens if the fire insurance policy is lost in the fire?

**6. BIG DEALS:** Wallace and Grommit's creator Nick Park said the fire which destroyed his company was no big deal, "in light of 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
- The devastation left in Guatemala by Hurricane Stan
- The 200<sup>th</sup> 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 blaze gutted a three-story building.                                | T / F |
| c. Many animation sets and models have gone up in smoke.                 | 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. "Wallace and Grommit" is created using a technique called claymation. | 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. gutted        | started          |
| b. stunned       | forgetful        |
| c. mourning      | decimated        |
| d. in light of   | dazed            |
| e. big deal      | earned           |
| f. broke out     | in another place |
| g. grossed       | partner          |
| h. absent-minded | considering      |
| i. sidekick      | problem          |
| j. elsewhere     | grieving         |

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

- |                             |                                  |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. sets and                 | in smoke                         |
| b. The blaze                | to success in America            |
| c. gone up                  | collection                       |
| d. a precious and nostalgic | box office success in the U.S.   |
| e. in light of              | props                            |
| f. the company is enjoying  | more recent tragedies            |
| g. grossed                  | by storm                         |
| h. eccentric,               | gutted the three-storey building |
| i. taking America           | more than \$16 million           |
| j. Nick Park is no stranger | absent-minded inventor           |

## 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:** Fire has destroyed the warehouse containing the sets and \_\_\_\_\_ of Wallace and Grommit animators Aardman Animations. The blaze \_\_\_\_\_ the three-storey building in spite of the efforts of ten firefighting teams. The \_\_\_\_\_ history of Aardman, from the 1976 character Morph, through to the "Chicken Run" and "Creature Comforts" movies and the "Wallace and Grommit" series, has gone up in \_\_\_\_\_. Much of the \_\_\_\_\_ archive of sets and clay models is irreplaceable. A stunned studio spokesman said the whole company is "\_\_\_\_\_ the loss of thirty years of history". Nick Park, creator of many of Aardman's popular characters was philosophical, saying: "Even though it is a precious and \_\_\_\_\_ collection and valuable to the company, in \_\_\_\_\_ of more recent tragedies, today isn't a big deal."

*smoke*  
*mourning*  
*gutted*  
*light*  
*props*  
*priceless*  
*nostalgic*  
*entire*

The fire \_\_\_\_\_ out at a time when the company is enjoying box office success in the U.S. The first ever Wallace and Grommit film, "The Curse of the Were-Rabbit", \_\_\_\_\_ as the number one movie and grossed more than \$16 million in its opening weekend. The claymation story of an \_\_\_\_\_, absent-minded inventor and his long-\_\_\_\_\_ sidekick dog is taking America by storm and is keeping the \_\_\_\_\_ of Cameron Diaz and Jodie Foster from \_\_\_\_\_ the top spot. Nick Park is no \_\_\_\_\_ to success in America. He won two Academy Awards for his short movies "The Wrong Trousers" (1993) and "A Close Shave" (1995). The recent fire did not get any of the sets or props from his latest Wallace and Grommit movie as they were stored \_\_\_\_\_.

*stranger*  
*suffering*  
*opened*  
*claiming*  
*broke*  
*likes*  
*elsewhere*  
*eccentric*

## AFTER READING / LISTENING

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

- 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:

- sets
- spite
- smoke
- mourning
- philosophical
- big deal
- enjoying
- grossed
- suffering
- storm
- likes
- stranger

## **DISCUSSION**

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

- a. What were your initial thoughts on 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. Have you ever felt gutted about anything?
- g. What are the things you own that are irreplaceable?
- h. Do you think Wallace and Grommit are for children or adults?
- i. Why do you think Wallace and Grommit are taking America by storm?
- j. What do you think of Nick Park saying recent tragedies are more important than the loss of his set and props?

### 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 eccentric or 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

**LONG-LASTING CHARACTERS:** Some animated characters have stood the test of time and have enjoyed continued success for decades. What makes them so enduring? 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... 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.

### Fire destroys Wallace & Grommit history

**BNE:** Fire has destroyed the warehouse containing the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of Wallace and Grommit animators Aardman Animations. The blaze \_\_\_\_\_ the three-storey building in spite of the efforts of ten firefighting teams. The \_\_\_\_\_ history of Aardman, from the 1976 character Morph, through to the "Chicken Run" and "Creature Comforts" movies and the "Wallace and Grommit" series, has gone up \_\_\_\_\_ . Much of the priceless \_\_\_\_\_ of sets and clay models is irreplaceable. A stunned studio spokesman said the whole company is "\_\_\_\_\_ the loss of thirty years of history". Nick Park, creator of many of Aardman's popular characters was philosophical, saying: "Even though it is a precious and \_\_\_\_\_ collection and valuable to the company, \_\_\_\_\_ more recent tragedies, today isn't a big deal."

The fire \_\_\_\_\_ at a time when the company is enjoying 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 and \_\_\_\_\_ more than \$16 million in its opening weekend. The claymation story of an \_\_\_\_\_, absent-minded inventor and his long-suffering \_\_\_\_\_ dog is taking America by storm and is keeping \_\_\_\_\_ Cameron Diaz and Jodie Foster from claiming the top spot. Nick Park is no \_\_\_\_\_ to success in America. He won two Academy Awards for his short movies "The Wrong Trousers" (1993) and "A \_\_\_\_\_" (1995). The recent fire did not get any of the sets or props from his latest Wallace and Grommit movie as they were stored \_\_\_\_\_.

## **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). Describe 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. T      g. F      h. F

### SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                  |                  |
|------------------|------------------|
| a. gutted        | decimated        |
| b. stunned       | dazed            |
| c. mourning      | grieving         |
| d. in light of   | considering      |
| e. big deal      | problem          |
| f. broke out     | started          |
| g. grossed       | earned           |
| h. absent-minded | forgetful        |
| i. sidekick      | partner          |
| j. elsewhere     | in another place |

### PHRASE MATCH:

- |                             |                                  |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. sets and                 | props                            |
| b. The blaze                | gutted the three-storey building |
| c. gone up                  | in smoke                         |
| d. a precious and nostalgic | collection                       |
| e. in light of              | more recent tragedies            |
| f. the company is enjoying  | box office success in the U.S.   |
| g. grossed                  | more than \$16 million           |
| h. eccentric,               | absent-minded inventor           |
| i. taking America           | by storm                         |
| j. Nick Park is no stranger | to success in America            |

### GAP FILL:

#### Fire destroys Wallace & Grommit history

**BNE:** Fire has destroyed the warehouse containing the sets and **props** of Wallace and Grommit animators Aardman Animations. The blaze **gutted** the three-storey building in spite of the efforts of ten firefighting teams. The **entire** history of Aardman, from the 1976 character Morph, through to the "Chicken Run" and "Creature Comforts" movies and the "Wallace and Grommit" series, has gone up in **smoke**. Much of the **priceless** archive of sets and clay models is irreplaceable. A stunned studio spokesman said the whole company is "**mourning** the loss of thirty years of history". Nick Park, creator of many of Aardman's popular characters was philosophical, saying: "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 **broke** out at a time when the company 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 and grossed more than \$16 million in its opening weekend. The claymation story of an **eccentric**, absent-minded inventor and his long-**suffering** sidekick dog is taking America by storm and is keeping the **likes** of Cameron Diaz and Jodie Foster from **claiming** 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). The recent fire did not get any of the sets or props from his latest Wallace and Grommit movie as they were stored **elsewhere**.