

68 - Clowns

Clowns have been around for thousands of years but how did clowns start? What role have clowns played in society over the years? And why do some find them hilarious while others are scared of them?

Clowns and clowning go way back. The first documented clowns date back to Egypt in 2500 BC. Clowns were brought in to make the Pharaohs laugh. In fact, we know this because clowns were recorded in Egyptian hieroglyphics - making them part of Egyptian history forever!

But there are records of clowns in other parts of the ancient world, too -- like in China, Greece, and Rome. In Greece, clowns were short and bald and stuffed their clothes to look much bigger than they actually were. In Rome, they wore pointy hats and were called *stupidus* -- which sounds like an insult, but was all part of the act. But why did people need clowns?

During ancient times, there was a lot of war and strife and life was hard. People needed a way to have fun and laugh. Clowns were brought in for entertainment. They were also used to make fun of the people in power. It was through the art of comedy that clowns could mock and poke fun of the very same pharaohs and kings they were entertaining — without fear of being punished or imprisoned for it.

Things You Will Learn

1. Who was the first modern clown?
2. What is *coulrophobia*?
3. How does somebody become a professional clown?

Activities

1. Create your own clown face using a paper plate. Cut a hole in center and insert a small red balloon for the nose. Tape the balloon to the back of the plate to secure in place. Decorate with crayons, markers, glitter & glue or other fun materials.
2. At the circus, clowns are often acrobats too! They work hard to learn how to tumble safely. They have years of practice but you can clown around at home! Put painter's tape on the floor and pretend it is a balance beam or blow up a balloon and don't let it touch the floor while you hit it across the room.

3. Clowns try to make people laugh through their jokes and silliness. Here are a couple for you!

1. **Q: How do all the oceans say hello to each other?** They wave!
2. **Q: What did one wall say to the other wall?** I'll meet you at the corner!
3. **Q: What do you call a bear with no teeth?** A gummy bear!
4. **Q: What do you call cheese that isn't yours?** Nacho cheese!
5. **Q: Where do cows go for entertainment?** To the moo-vies!

Additional Resources

While clowning is thousands of years old, our modern interactions with clowns often happen at the circus. Many of the tricks and stunts performed are the result of hard work and science. While we can't all master the tightrope at home, you can check out [these](#) great circus themed STEM activities.

Kid News

Have you ever rowed a boat? Was it in a small pond or maybe you've used a rowing machine at school? Jasmine Harrison recently rowed a boat all the way across the Atlantic Ocean, averaging 20,000 strokes or 60 miles a day. At 21 years old, she is the youngest woman to row solo across the the Atlantic. Read more about her amazing journey and how she celebrated being on land again [here](#).¹

¹ This activity guide is for the Who Smarted? podcast www.WhoSmarted.com