

Peanuts: The Longest Story Ever Told [B2]

I "Peanuts", la serie di fumetti creata da Charles M. Schulz e con protagonisti Charlie Brown, Snoopy e i loro amici, compiono 75 anni. Il segreto del loro successo? Il mix di emozioni che continuano a regalare.

With just a five-week break in late 1997, every day, from 2 October 1950 to the day he retired on 14 December 1999, US cartoonist Charles M. Schulz published a **comic strip** that became one of the most influential and beloved in history. It centred on a social group of school-age children, an anthropomorphic black and white beagle called Snoopy, and a **cute** yellow bird called Woodstock. The **comic strip** appeared under the title Peanuts, though very much against the wishes of its creator! With its **quirky** sense of humour and **cast of relatable characters**, Peanuts quickly grew in global popularity. It had emotional depth, contained gentle social commentary and **resonated with** readers of all **backgrounds** and ages.

CHARLIE BROWN

Peanuts evolved from a weekly cartoon strip named **Li'l Folks**, which Schulz published from 1947 to 1950 in his hometown of Minneapolis, Minnesota, for a local newspaper called the St. Paul Pioneer Press. Schulz (who went by the **nickname** 'Sparky') based the fictional dog Snoopy on his family dog, Spike. In the Peanuts stories, the group of children include memorable **siblings** Charlie and Sally Brown, and Lucy and Linus Van Pelt. The animals are very much their own beings: silent yet **personable**, with rich inner emotional lives, they too share their readership's aspirations and insecurities, hopes and delusions. Notably, adults are never seen in the strips. In the animated TV specials that followed from 1965, their voices are reduced to **muted** trombone sounds.

EVERY DAY AND SUNDAYS

Schultz built his universe of four-panel strips, or eight or nine on Sundays, offering readers a type of sentimental education. The stories are characterised by a unique blend of warmth and introspection; Peanuts was not just literate but had philosophical, psychological and sociological overtones. As the Charles M. Schulz Museum and Research Center eloquently describes it, Schultz's storytelling was "observational, wry, sarcastic, nostalgic, bittersweet, silly and melancholy, with occasional flights of fancy and suspension of reality."

INSPIRATIONAL

By the time of his death in February 2000, Schultz had created a total of 17,897 Peanuts comic strips, which had been translated into twenty-one languages, were published in more than 2,500 newspapers in seventy-five countries, and had acquired a readership of over 350 million. Schulz's lifelong dedication to his characters inspired many famous cartoonists to create their own unforgettable personalities, including Jim Davis (creator of Garfield), Bill Watterson (Calvin and Hobbes) and Matt Groening (The Simpsons). As professor Robert Thompson of Syracuse University put it, "Peanuts was arguably the longest story ever told by one human being."

WHY 'PEANUTS'?

Charles M. Schulz spent his life creating and developing the characters in his comic strip. At first, Schulz wanted to name the comic strip "Li'l Folks", a title he had used before for earlier cartoons but the publishing company, United Feature Syndicate, said it was too similar to other comic names. So they chose Peanuts instead, a word often used at the time to describe children or small things. However, Schulz disliked the name. He said that, for him, it was "totally ridiculous, has no meaning, is simply confusing, and has no dignity—and I think my humour has dignity." If you want to know more about this topic, read the article Nuts About Peanuts

Glossary

- **overtones** = sfumature
- **wry** = ironico
- **bittersweet** = agrodolce
- **silly** = sciocco, buffo
- **comic strip** = vignetta, striscia di fumetti
- **cast** = cast, lista di personaggi
- **nickname** = soprannome
- **muted** = tenui
- **literate** = alfabetizzato, colto
- **quirky** = stravagante, particolare
- **relatable characters** = personaggi con cui ci si può identificare
- **backgrounds** = provenienze, contesti
- **warmth** = calore, affetto
- **blend** = mix, combinazione
- **arguably** = probabilmente, verosimilmente
- **Li'l Folks** = personcine
- **siblings** = fratelli e sorelle
- **personable** = simpatici, amichevoli
- **four-panel strips** = strisce a quattro vignette
- **cute** = tenero, adorabile
- **resonated with** = entrare in sintonia con
- **flights of fancy** = castelli in aria, volare con la fantasia