

The New Yorker: A Century Of The Celebrated US Magazine [B2]

Cento anni fa a Manhattan nasceva una piccola rivista umoristica. Oggi, è un esempio di giornalismo rigoroso ed eccellenza letteraria.

When you see someone reading The New Yorker in Central Park or on the subway you can't help but think, "Ah, there is a true New Yorker... Someone who is sophisticated, educated, cultured and intellectual." This cliché is a bit passé now and seems snobbish, but one hundred years later The New Yorker is still a beacon of thoughtful journalism, literary quality and sharp cultural critique. With such outstanding credentials, the magazine has readers around the globe from many different walks of life with varied educational backgrounds.

ACCURACY AND FACT CHECKING

Although The New Yorker began in 1925, in the words of its co-founder and first editor Harold Ross, as a "Manhattan-centric fifteen-cent comic paper" with a focus on fiction, cartoons, criticism and humour, it quickly evolved into something far more ambitious. Today the weekly magazine publishes articles about culture, social issues and politics, and its scope goes beyond New York City and its intellectual milieu. It is globally known for its in-depth reporting and rigorous standards. David Remnick, the editor since 1998, recently told CBS that The New Yorker is characterised by "its deep, deep reporting, and prides itself on accuracy and fact checking."

That commitment to fact-checking is genuine. The New Yorker maintains a famously large and meticulous team of fact-checkers — a feature that is increasingly rare in modern journalism. The origins of this strict practice go back to a 1927 article about the poet Edna St. Vincent Millay that was allegedly filled with errors. The poet's mother's threat to sue the magazine for libel prompted the editor to put in place this vital part of the journalistic process.

NON-FICTION

But fact-checking is not enough if the facts that are checked do not make **compelling** journalism. The New Yorker built its prestige by printing serious **essays** and **long-form** journalism. Throughout its history, the magazine has published some of the best work by journalists and nonfiction writers such as Truman Capote, Susan Orlean, James Baldwin and Hannah Arendt. **Indeed**, The New Yorker has never been afraid of publishing ideas that may be controversial. An illustrative example of this was the series of articles by Hannah Arendt about the trial of Nazi official Adolf Eichmann. In the five-part **feature**, the philosopher and political thinker (herself a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany) introduced the concept of “the banality of evil” which challenged readers to reconsider the nature of moral responsibility.

FICTION

From its inception, fiction has also been a pillar of The New Yorker. The magazine has **featured** short stories **penned** by some of the most celebrated writers of the 20th and 21st centuries, including works by Vladimir Nabokov, J. D. Salinger, John Cheever, Shirley Jackson, Zadie Smith and Stephen King.

CARTOONS

But The New Yorker experience cannot be complete without its famous single-panel **cartoons**. Drawn by famous artists such as Charles Addams, Art Spiegelman, Edward Steed and Roz Chast, the style of these **cartoons** can be described as **deadpan** with a subtle sense of humour. **Indeed**, many of the **cartoons** may be considered a bit **highbrow**, and some are difficult to understand, even for New Yorkers! But there's also another way readers can experience The New Yorker **cartoons**... by writing **captions**! Every week, a cartoon without a caption is printed on the last page of the magazine. Readers are **encouraged** to interpret the drawing and conceive their own **punchline** by sending in their caption. The top three are selected as finalists and the public votes for the best caption on the magazine's website, with the winner receiving a copy of the cartoon signed by the artist.

THE VIEW OF THE WORLD FROM NINTH AVENUE

The New Yorker magazine is well-known not only for its writing and cartoons, but also for its artistic illustrated covers where there aren't any headlines that hint at the issue's content. Perhaps one of the most famous and representative covers in the magazine's history belongs to Saul Steinberg. Published in the March 29th 1976 issue and titled "View of the World from Ninth Avenue", it shows a map with Manhattan illustrated in great detail and, heading west, the Hudson River, New Jersey, a few US states and cities, the Pacific Ocean, and, even further away, distant countries like Japan, Russia, and China. Of course, this map is not realistic — many places between New York and those faraway nations are missing. That's the joke: the drawing exaggerates how some New Yorkers might see the world, as if New York is the center and everything else is much less important.

CONTROVERSIAL LANDMARKS

Over the years, The New Yorker has published many important articles, but two in particular stand out for how they challenged ideas, helped shape modern journalism, and have sparked controversy. In 1961, philosopher and political thinker Hannah Arendt covered the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann, a Nazi official captured by Israeli secret agents in Argentina and taken to Israel to stand trial. On a five-part series of articles, Arendt introduced the idea of "the banality of evil"; she argued that Eichmann was not a monster or an especially cruel man, but an ordinary cog in a bureaucratic machine who followed orders without thinking. For Arendt, this made his actions even more frightening because it shows how normal people can take part in terrible crimes when they stop questioning what they are doing. The articles, later published in book form under the title *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, sparked debates that continue today. Another groundbreaking moment for The New Yorker was the publication of Truman Capote's reporting on the 1959 murder of a family in Holcomb, Kansas. Titled "In Cold Blood", the articles covered the investigation of the crime and the trial of the killers. What made these articles so noteworthy was Capote's writing style. He combined real facts and crime reporting with the storytelling techniques of fiction — including dialogue, detailed scenes and character development. This approach, which

was known as “creative non-fiction”, changed journalism and is considered one of the foundations of true crime reporting. However, the articles were not without controversy. Some wondered how accurate Capote’s reporting was, since he had made up dialogues and scenes. Also, ethical questions were raised as Capote had become close to the criminals. Critics said that his relationship with the murderers **twisted** his objectivity, since he wrote about them **sympathetically**, and the mere fact that Capote focused on such **heinous** people instead of the victims was controversial at the time.

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Glossary

- **to sue** = denunciare, fare causa
- **issue** = numero (di una pubblicazione)
- **prompted** = provocare
- **punchline** = battuta
- **noteworthy** = degni di nota
- **headlines** = titoli
- **sparked** = accendere, innescare
- **stand trial** = essere processato
- **passé** = passato di moda
- **sharp** = acuta
- **fact checking** = verifica dei fatti
- **commitment** = impegno
- **put in place** = istituire, introdurre
- **sympathetically** = in modo compassionevole
- **heinous** = crudeli, orribili
- **prides itself** = essere orgogliosi
- **accuracy** = precisione
- **allegedly** = presumibilmente
- **long-form** = di lungo formato
- **groundbreaking** = rivoluzionario, innovativo
- **single-panel cartoons** = una vignetta singola
- **thoughtful** = riflessivo
- **outstanding** = eccezionali
- **walks of life** = ceti sociali, estrazioni sociali
- **cartoons** = vignette, fumetti
- **milieu** = ambiente
- **encouraged** = animare
- **twisted** = distorcere
- **libel** = diffamazione, calunnia
- **essays** = saggi
- **Indeed** = in effetti
- **penned** = scrivere
- **deadpan** = beffardo, impassibile

- **feature** = elemento, caratteristica
- **highbrow** = intellettuali
- **hint at** = suggerire, alludere
- **cog** = ingranaggio
- **beacon** = simbolo, punto di riferimento
- **scope** = ambito, portata
- **compelling** = convincente, interessante
- **captions** = didascalie, sottotitoli