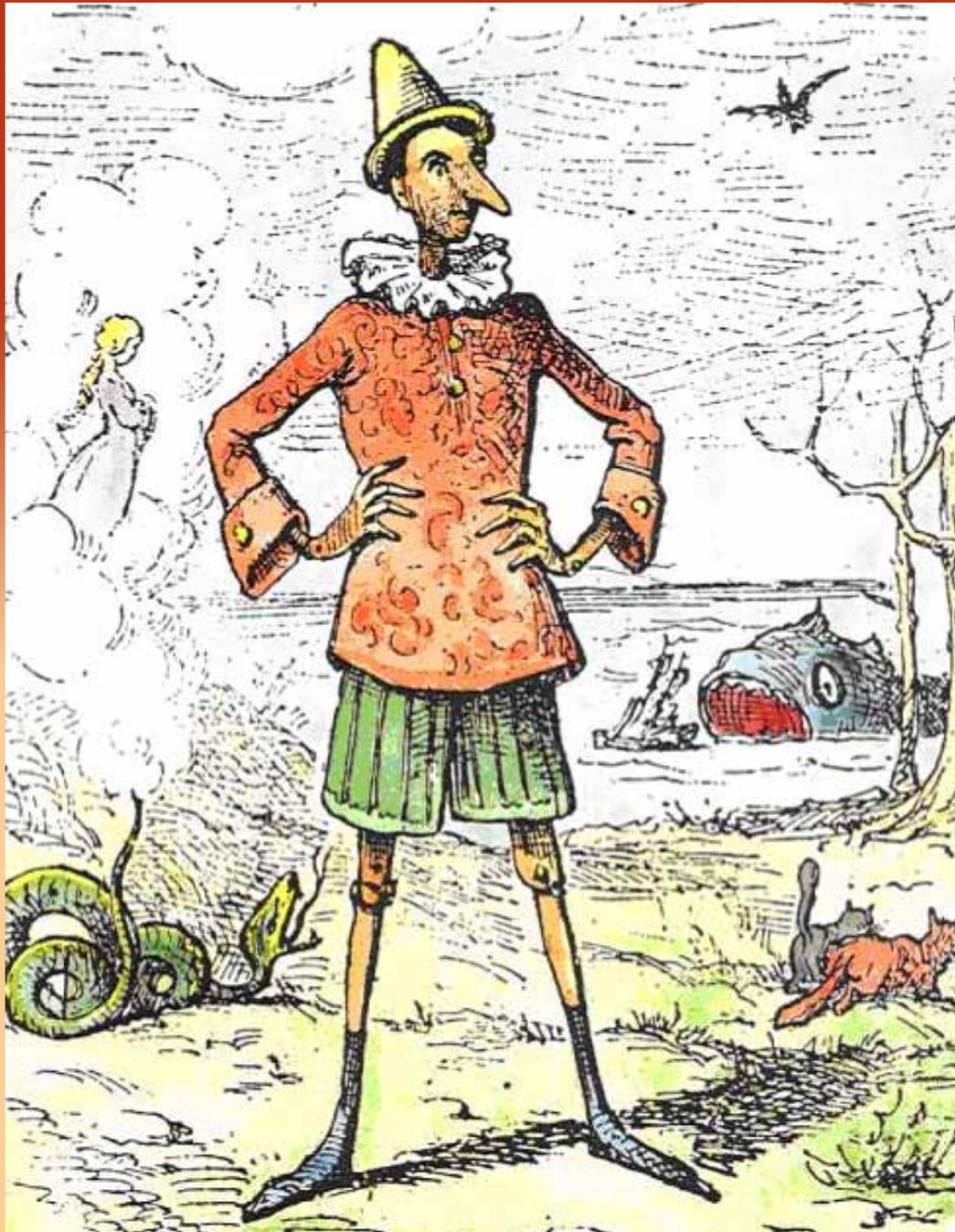


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ITALIAN AMERICAN MUSEUM OF LOS ANGELES

A REAL BOY:

TEACHING CARLO COLLODI'S PINOCCHIO



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Table of Contents

The Original Work	2-3
Pinocchio's Biblical and Literary Historical Roots	3-5
About Pinocchio's Author, Carlo Collodi	5-7
Pinocchio: A Cultural Icon	7-8
Activities	8-10
Standards Addressed	11-12



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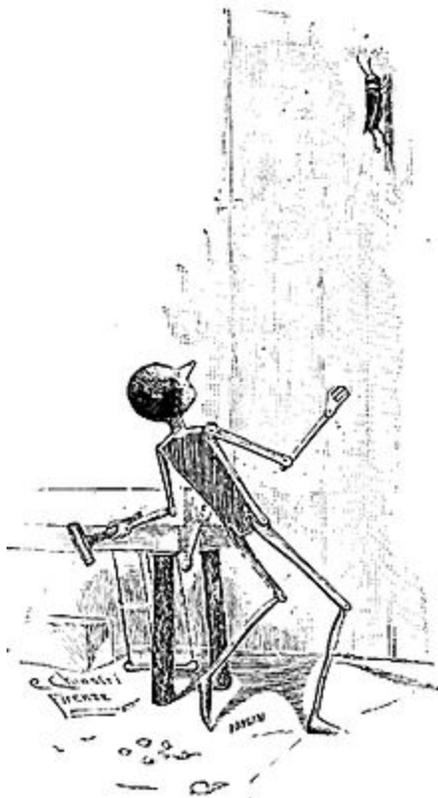


THE ORIGINAL WORK

Since its publication in 1883, *Le avventure di Pinocchio* (*The Adventures of Pinocchio*) has delighted generations of readers and occupies a revered place in the canon of children's literature. The iconic book has been translated into over 260 languages—a number exceeded only by the Bible—and has been adapted into countless films, television series, and other mass culture productions.

Pinocchio's popularity may surprise the modern reader who discovers the original story for the first time. As opposed to the lighthearted adaptations with which many of us are familiar, the original text, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, is not what we would consider a cheery children's story. Rife with dark undercurrents, the work was intended to be a tragedy, designed to warn children about the consequences of bad behavior. Its author, Carlo Collodi, published the story titled *La storia di un burattino* (*The Story of a Puppet*) as a series in the *Giornale dei Bambini*, one of Italy's first weekly magazines for children.

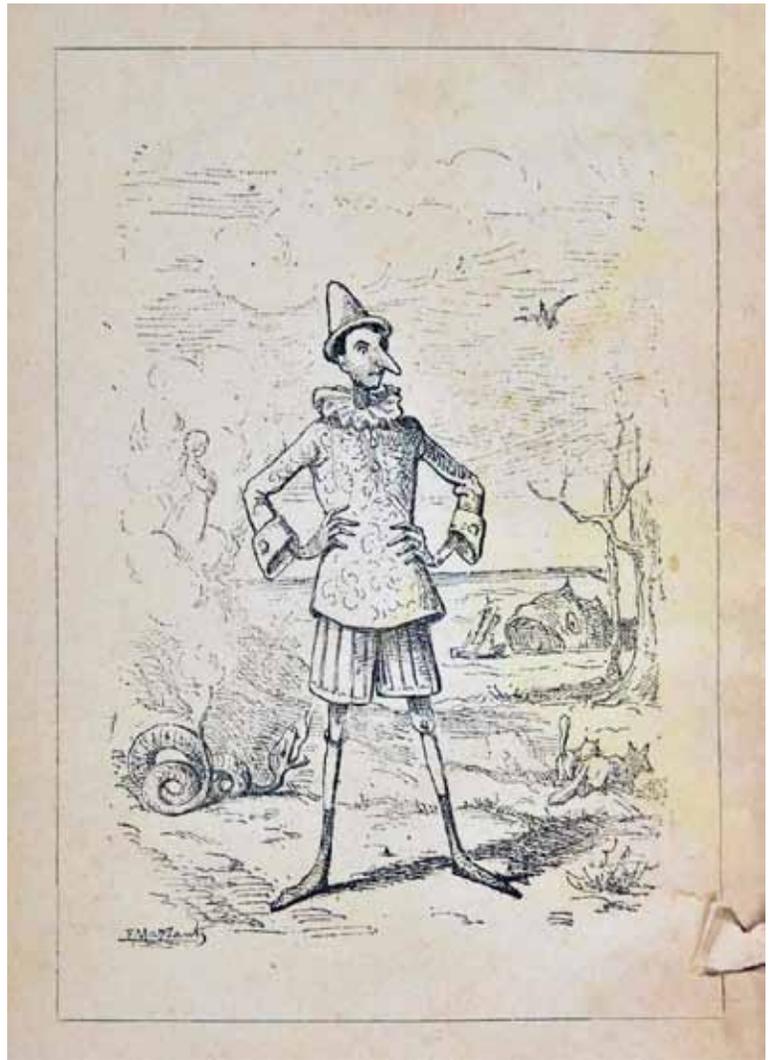
The Adventures of Pinocchio begins when a kind carpenter named Geppetto fashions a puppet out of



a piece of enchanted wood. Geppetto names the puppet Pinocchio (Italian for "pine eyes"), and treats him like a son, but mischievous Pinocchio plays pranks on him and runs away from home. When the police catch Pinocchio, he accuses Geppetto of abuse, and Geppetto is arrested. Pinocchio, now free to make trouble without parental oversight, is scolded by Il Grillo Parlante ("the Talking Cricket"). Il Grillo Parlante admonishes Pinocchio and says that good boys obey their parents, which angers the puppet, and Pinocchio uses a hammer to kill the cricket.

After Geppetto regains his freedom and returns home, an unapologetic Pinocchio complains of being hungry and expresses a desire to go to school. The ever-forgiving Geppetto gives his son his last bit of food and pawns his own winter coat to buy Pinocchio books, which Pinocchio then trades for admission to a puppet show. Pinocchio is nearly burned to death by the show's puppeteer. He begs for his life and narrowly escapes with some gold coins, which a fox and cat steal as a result of his impudence. Pinocchio endures horrific abuse

Collodi, C. (1901) The Adventures of Pinocchio (C. Chiostrri, Illustrator).



Collodi, C. (1883) The Adventures of Pinocchio (E. Mazzanti, Illustrator)

because of his poor choices; he is kidnapped, tortured, and left for dead, hanging from a tree. This morbid style of storytelling, not unlike that of the Brothers Grimm, was common in the nineteenth century. Collodi originally intended to end the story here, with the puppet's death serving as a grave warning to insubordinate youth. Letters began pouring in from readers, imploring the newspaper to continue the tale of Pinocchio, and Collodi relented.

Collodi invented a kind fairy, La Fata Turchina, also known as the Blue Fairy, who comes to Pinocchio's rescue. Ashamed to answer the questions about his past deeds, Pinocchio lies to the fairy repeatedly, and with each lie, his nose grows longer. After more misadventures, Pinocchio makes an attempt to reform his ways by attending school. Before long, however, a classmate named Candlewick convinces him to depart for the Land of Toys, a purported haven of freedom for children.



Pinocchio and Candlewick live a life of pleasure and debauchery for months in the Land of Toys. The two are horrified to discover that they have been turned into donkeys (a symbol of ignorance in Italian culture) and have been sold. Pinocchio is first trafficked to a circus and then to a musician, who plans to use his hide to make a drum. The musician ties a rock around Pinocchio's neck and drops him into the ocean in an attempt to drown him. Pinocchio manages to escape and is swallowed by the Terrible Dogfish, a giant shark. Inside the shark's stomach, Pinocchio finds Geppetto, whom he learns had been swallowed by the shark two years earlier while at sea searching for Pinocchio. The two break free, and Pinocchio nurses his father back to health. In the end, the Blue Fairy rewards Pinocchio for his virtue by turning him into a real boy.

Collodi, C. (1901) The Adventures of Pinocchio (C. Chiostri, Illustrator).

Pinocchio's Biblical and Literary Historical Roots

The influence of the Bible on *The Adventures of Pinocchio* is striking. Interpreted as an allegory of the relationship between a merciful God and sinning mankind, the story of Pinocchio, a reckless,

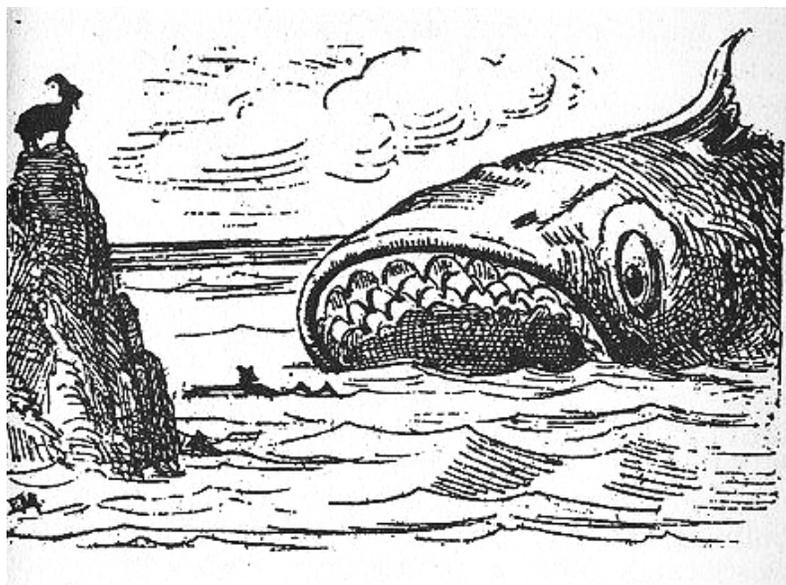
disobedient child who is continually forgiven and loved unconditionally by his father, bears similarities with the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32). In this story, a father gives the younger of his two sons a portion of his estate. The son squanders the entire sum, finds himself impoverished and hungry, and returns home to beg for his father's forgiveness. The father welcomes him with open arms, which enrages the older son, who claims his brother does not deserve such acceptance after disgracing their family. The father states that he presumed his son to be dead, but he is in fact alive, and this is what is most important.

Pinocchio also bears similarities to the story of the creation of humankind in the Book of Genesis. Just as God creates Adam from dust, gives him life with his own breath and places him in the Garden of Eden, Geppetto constructs a marionette out of wood, names him Pinocchio, and sends him into the world. The name *Geppetto* derives from the Hebrew name *Yehôséph*, which translates to Joseph. Joseph, the husband of Mary, is recognized as Jesus's stepfather. Like Joseph, Geppetto is a carpenter, and like Jesus, Pinocchio dies in order to be born again.

When Geppetto is swallowed by the Terrible Dogfish, inside of which he is later reunited with Pinocchio, one recalls the story of Jonah and the whale. God had selected Jonah to be a prophet, but Jonah resists his mission and embarks on a sea voyage instead. To express his anger at Jonah's actions, God sends a terrible storm, and Jonah's fellow sailors cast him overboard to save their ship. Jonah is swallowed by a "great fish," widely interpreted to be a whale, and he spends three days and nights repenting in the creature's belly. God eventually forgives Jonah and saves him.



*Collodi, C. (1901) The Adventures of Pinocchio
C. Chiostrì, Illustrator).*



*Collodi, C. (1901) The Adventures of Pinocchio
C. Chiostrì, Illustrator).*

Yet another biblical influence found in *Pinocchio* is the Blue Fairy. This archetypal mother figure is seen as a symbol of the Virgin Mary. Like Mary, she wears the color blue.

The Adventures of Pinocchio also reflects the influence from a period of cultural history known as the classical era, which took place between 8th century BCE and 6th century CE and centered around the Mediterranean and the interlocking civilizations of ancient Greece and ancient Rome. Philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle shaped Europe, North Africa, and Western

Asia during their lifetimes and for centuries following their deaths. The Renaissance reinvigorated interest in their writings. Collodi was familiar with Plato's *Laws*, a seminal text that asks who should be credited for establishing a civilization's laws. The book likens the human soul to a marionette, the strings representing influences such as pleasure, pain, and other emotions. Through education, societies can pull these strings and shape a person's disposition.

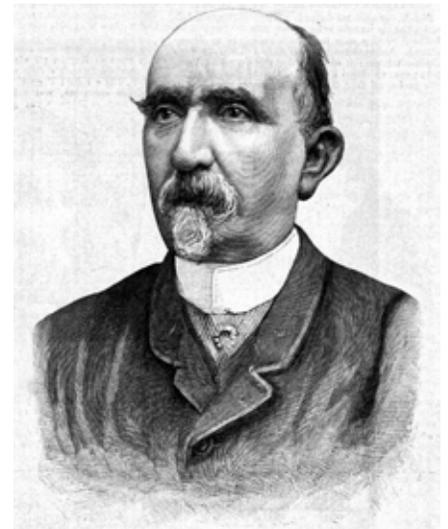


*Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino. (1508 - 1511)
The School of Athens. Apostolic Palace, Vatican City.*

About Pinocchio's Author, Carlo Collodi

Carlo Collodi, the creator of what would become one of the world's most iconic books, was born Carlo Lorenzini in Florence, the capital of Tuscany, Italy, in 1826. His mother was a seamstress and his father worked as a cook for a prominent Tuscan family. Collodi was the eldest of ten children, seven of whom died during childhood. He spent much of his youth living with his grandmother in the Tuscan town of Collodi, where his mother was born, and later took the town's name as his pseudonym, or pen name.

Carlo Collodi (1826 – 1890).



The *Adventures of Pinocchio* borrows from a number of sources: the legendary Greek poet Homer; the Italian poet Dante Alighieri; the satirical and situational comedic style of Roman and Greek New Comedy; the structure of the Tuscan novella (a short story born out of fourteenth century Tuscany, Italy); and the story arch of the Trickster Tale, in which a mischievous main character is often used to teach children lessons. For readers of Collodi's time, Pinocchio shared similarities with the Italian dramatic tradition of *Commedia dell'Arte*. *Commedia dell'Arte* was an improvisational style of theatre popularized in northern Italy during the early sixteenth century. Performances often followed basic literary plotlines, such as star-crossed lovers, but *Commedia dell'Arte*'s immense popularity was largely due to the stock characters that reflected stereotypes of the time, such as the dimwitted yet comical *Arlecchino* (Harlequin), the boisterous yet easily fooled *Il Capitano* (The Captain), and the foolish old man known as *Pantalone*.

Collodi's entrance to the professional world coincided with a critical period of Italy's history. Italy as we know it today did not exist, and the Italian peninsula was divided into many fragmented states, some of which were ruled by foreign powers such as Spain and Austria-Hungary.

By the time Collodi neared adulthood, a strong movement for Italian unification was underway, and he enlisted in the Tuscan Army. Collodi also became active in the Risorgimento, a movement based in northern Italy that agitated for unification. He founded and wrote for many pro-unification newspapers, including *Il Lampione (The Lightpost)*, and wielded the pen as a political weapon. Following the unification of Italy in 1861, Collodi's political activism largely ended. While Italy existed on paper, the people of the young nation continued to identify with their town or region as opposed to considering themselves "Italian." To generate a sense of national consciousness and identity among the citizenry, the government initiated a series of programs to "make the Italian people Italian." Believing that he could shape the future of the new nation by influencing the minds of its youth, Collodi turned his attention to writing for children.

His first attempt at children's literature was an 1876 translation of French fairy tales, which inspired him to publish his own set of children's stories entitled *Racconti delle Fate, or Tales of The Fairies*. He followed this with other books for children, many of which seem to have served as an inspiration for Pinocchio. These include a series about a wild and ill-mannered boy named Giannettino who travels Italy making trouble, and another book titled *Minnuzolo*, which teaches the history of Ancient Rome through the escapades of a mischievous child.

When the first installment of *La storia di un burattino*, the story that became *Pinocchio*, was published in 1881, Collodi was 55 years old. It seems that his penchant for gambling may have partially motivated the talented writer

**October 6, 1848 issue
of *Il Lampione*
The Lightpost) Newspaper.**



to create content for the children's magazine. After submitting his first installment, Collodi wrote them: "If you print this, pay me well enough to make me willing to continue."

Evidently they did, for Collodi continued writing until he ended the story in 1883. Because of its success with readers, Collodi published it in book form just a month later and titled the work *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. Italian artist Enrico Mazzanti provided illustrations for the text, and the book was an immediate hit. The publishing company printed four editions in Collodi's lifetime. Unfortunately, Collodi would not live long enough to enjoy his growing fame. He died in Florence seven years later.



Sharpsteen, B. (Director). (1940). Pinocchio [Film]. Walt Disney Productions

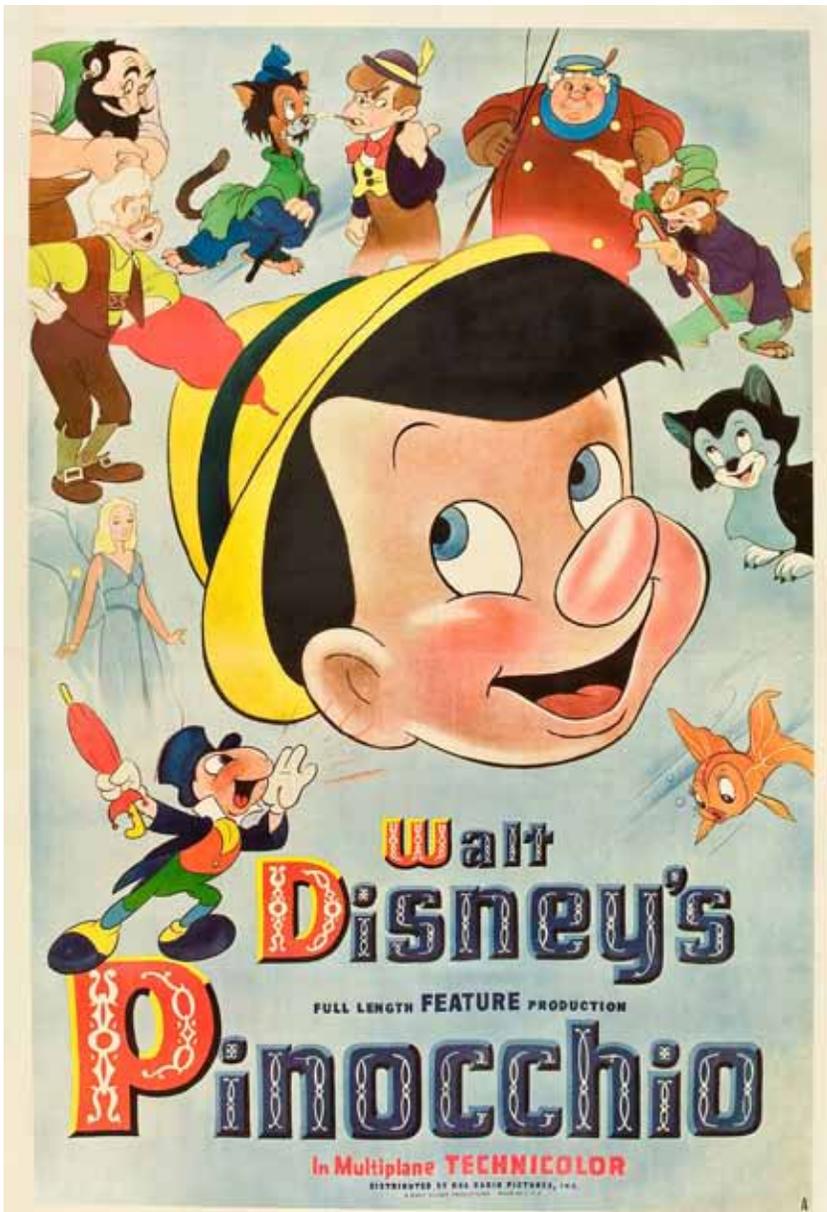
Pinocchio: A Cultural Icon

To what can we attribute Pinocchio's popularity and enduring legacy? Why does a story written for children in the 1880s resonate with people of all ages across continents over a century later, while other literary characters fade into oblivion? Walt Disney's 1940 adaptation certainly deserves credit for popularizing the story among modern audiences, yet decades later, people around the world remain taken with Pinocchio. Some cite the story's universally understandable themes of physical and spiritual transformation, sacrifice, and redemption as responsible for this fascination with Pinocchio. Others attribute the story's popularity to the idea that Pinocchio is an allegory for human nature. Like Pinocchio, we are driven by our impulses, emotions, and weaknesses, and are often torn between pleasurable temptations and the desire to act morally. Pinocchio aims to be a real boy just as many of us seek avenues to improve ourselves. The story has become a classic because its characters are true for all times and all places. It is little wonder that Pinocchio has become a muse in postmodern popular culture.

Activity 1:

Students, independently or in groups, read the 1927 English language translation of *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, which can be found using this link. As a class, discuss how literature and film are alike and how they differ. Ask students to consider the following:

- The various tools authors and filmmakers use to tell a story and to appeal to audiences.
- How authors and filmmakers each handle aspects of storytelling, such as point of view, narrative structure, and time frame.
- The various techniques writers and filmmakers employ to tell a story.
- A work of literature is created by just one person while a film is created by a team of people.
- By studying a cinematic adaptation of a literary work we can observe how words are converted to visual media.
- Films, especially those of high production value, can be an art form that communicates the written word differently than books, yet with great impact.



Sharpsteen, B. (Director). (1940). *Pinocchio* [Film]. Walt Disney Productions

Record students' responses to the prompt using a Venn diagram. Then students write an essay comparing and contrasting Collodi's work to the 1940 Walt Disney film. Students should be able to cite at least five instances in which the original book, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, and mass media adaptations—the Walt Disney film—differ.

Activity 2:

After reading Carlo Collodi's *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, students recount the story and identify the tale's central messages, themes, lessons, and morals. Discuss with the class concepts such as honesty, truthfulness, deceit, and bravery. Ask students to select an episode from the book and recount how the principal characters responded to major events and challenges citing details from the text. Students write a brief paragraph describing the event; the character's response; the moral of the episode; and the concept it illustrates, e.g. selflessness, consequences, or courage. Then students create an illustration of the passage they selected. The illustrations can be attached to the paragraph and students' work displayed. Students can also present their written explanations and illustrations to the class.

Activity 3:

As part of a Life Science unit on physiology or the structure and function in living systems, students research the Pinocchio Effect. Have students summarize the key finding of researchers on the physiological effects of lying.

Activity 4:

Political cartoons, also known as editorial cartoons, are designed to send a message, make a point, influence public opinion, or ridicule a person, group, or idea. Cartoonists employ five main elements to convey their point of view:

- Symbolism: using an object to represent an idea, such as a dollar sign (\$) to indicate money, a donkey to identify a Democrat, or an elephant to stand for a Republican
- Captioning and labels: to clarify and emphasize opinions
- Analogy: comparing two unlike things that share some characteristics
- Irony: the difference between the way things are and the way things are expected to be
- Exaggeration: overstating or magnifying a problem or a physical feature

Discuss how political cartoons often contain propaganda.



Kallaugher, K. (2015, August). The Economist.

Ask students to find political cartoons portraying various figures with long noses to symbolize lying. Discuss how this symbol, which traces its origins to Pinocchio, has become a piece of shared cultural knowledge that makes it possible to convey an idea efficiently, even without words.

Students then analyze the political cartoon they found by following these steps:

1. Identify the characters, symbols, and objects in the cartoon.
2. Look for clues and details that would give further meaning.
3. Identify the main idea of the cartoon by reading any captions and by putting the message in their own words.
4. Identify the cartoonist's point of view or bias (what side of the issue are they on?) Does the cartoon fall into the category of propaganda?
5. What is the event or issue that inspired the cartoon?
6. What symbols are used in the cartoon, and what do they represent?
7. What background knowledge do you need to have in order to understand the message? (That is, if the cartoon refers to the Bay of Pigs or President Theodore Roosevelt's Big Stick Diplomacy, having an understanding of these events will be critical to comprehending the cartoon's message.)
8. Who are the people depicted in the cartoon, if any?
9. Did the artist employ caricatures to promote their point? (A caricature is a picture, description, or imitation of a person or thing in which certain striking characteristics are exaggerated in order to create a desired effect.)
10. What is the cartoonist's opinion about the topic portrayed?
11. Does the caption help you understand the message? How?
12. Do you agree or disagree with the cartoonist's message? Why?

Activity 5:

After reading Collodi's *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, students read the *Parable of the Prodigal Son* (Luke 15:11-32); the *Parable of the Lost Sheep* (Matthew 18:12-14), and Luke (Luke 15:3-7); and the story of *Jonah and the Whale* (Jonah 1-4). Then students prepare short written responses to the following questions or discuss as a group:

- How does Pinocchio compare to the Prodigal Son? (Pinocchio, like the Prodigal Son, leaves home in search of adventure and gives little consideration to how his actions will affect his family. Pinocchio and the Prodigal Son both squander their money and live recklessly before having an awakening and returning home in search of forgiveness.)
- How are the actions of Geppetto similar to those of the Shepherd? (In the *Parable of the Lost Sheep*, a shepherd (symbolizing God), has a flock of one hundred sheep (symbolizing humans). When one sheep goes missing, the shepherd, like Geppetto trying to find Pinocchio, searches high and low.)

Activity 6:

Make a marionette. There are online sites containing step-by-step instructions for marionette-making activities for a variety of age groups and skill levels.

Standards Addressed: English Language Arts

(Grades 2-5) Compare and contrast two or more versions of the same story (e.g. Cinderella stories) by different authors or from different cultures.

(Grades 2-3) Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.

(Grade 4) Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g. opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events (e.g. the quest) in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures.

(Grade 5) Compare and contrast the overall structure (e.g. chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts.

(Grade 6) Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they “see” and “hear” when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.

(Grade 6) Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g. stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

(Grade 7) Compare and contrast a written story, drama, or poem to its audio, filmed, staged, or multimedia version, analyzing the effects of techniques unique to each medium (e.g. lighting, sound, color, or camera focus and angles in a film).

(Grade 8) Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.

(Grade 8) Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. Apply grade 8 Reading standards to literature (e.g. “Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new”).

(Grades 9-10) Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g. how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible, or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).

(Grades 11-12) Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g. recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text.

Standards Addressed: Social Science

6.7 Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures during the development of Rome.

10.1 Students relate the moral and ethical principles in ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, in Judaism, and in Christianity to the development of Western political thought.

10.2 Students compare and contrast the Glorious Revolution of England, the American Revolution, and the French Revolution and their enduring effects worldwide on the political expectations for self-government and individual liberty.

12.1 Students explain the fundamental principles and moral values of American democracy as expressed in the U.S. Constitution and other essential documents of American democracy.

12.3 Students evaluate and take and defend positions on the fundamental values and principles of civil society (i.e. the autonomous sphere of voluntary personal, social, and economic relations that are not part of government), their interdependence, and the meaning and importance of those values and principles for a free society.

12.8 Students evaluate and take and defend positions on the influence of the media on American political life.

Standards Addressed: Science

Grade Seven-Structure and Function in Living Systems 5. The anatomy and physiology of plants and animals illustrate the complementary nature of structure and function.

Grade Nine-Physiology 9. As a result of the coordinated structures and functions of organ systems, the internal environment of the human body remains relatively stable (homeostatic) despite changes in the outside environment.