



Hollywood is a suburb of Los Angeles, in California. It used to be the capital of the film-making world. The famous sign used to read “Hollywoodland” and it was used as an advertisement for some new houses (built in 1923). The sign we see today dates from 1978. It is four floors high and 120 metres long. American filmmakers first went to California because of the good weather. By the 1920s, the large studios, such as Paramount, Warner Brothers and MGM made hundreds of silent films each year. They often used the same actors and locations to make two or three films at the same time. The films were silent so the producers often hired an orchestra to create the right mood for actors during filming. The professional actors were usually chosen for their looks and had little acting experience.

The Italian Rudolf Valentino was a big star at this time. He moved to the USA as a teenager and at first he was a professional dancer in New York before he went to California to become a movie star. Valentino was famous for making romance movies; most were very popular during this era. Sadly, he died at the age of thirty-one. Charlie Chaplin was another great star, particularly of silent comedy films. He continued to make films but wasn’t as successful after the arrival of sound (this was generally the case for most actors, who found they didn’t sound good on film).

The “Golden Age” of Hollywood was from 1930 to 1948. The studios owned everything: the actors, the sets and the cinemas. They made many different types of films. Johnny Weismuller, an Olympic swimmer, appeared in the first “Tarzan” film in 1932, and in 1939 John Wayne made the famous western “Stagecoach”. Most of these movies were black and white but in 1939 two very popular films appeared in Technicolour - “The Wizard of Oz” and “Gone with the Wind”.

By the 1950s, television was becoming more and more popular and the Hollywood studios became less powerful. Today, Paramount is the last important studio left in Hollywood. However, it continues to be involved in some very popular films, including the newer Star Trek movies and the distribution of most of the recent Marvel films.

Because of the cost of filming in Hollywood and the fact that there are no longer any useable facilities, means that the Golden Age has long gone. However, it will always be associated with movie making and turning ordinary people into stars.

Questions (Find the evidence first before you answer):

TRUE OR FALSE?

	T	F
1- Hollywood was the capital of California		
2- The original Hollywood sign dates back to 1978		
3- The same locations were used for different films		
4- Most movies in the 1920s were made in colour		
5- Rudolph Valentino was famous for starring in comedy films		
6- Actors in silent movies had a lot of experience		
7- Charlie Chaplin starred in silent and talking movies		
8- Johnny Weissmuller was an Olympic runner		
9- 'Stagecoach' was a Western		
10- Hollywood became more powerful in the 1950s		

1. What is Hollywood?
2. What was the original sign?
3. How high and long is the sign today?
4. Why did the filmmakers choose California?
5. What were the most important studios at that time?
6. What were the films like?
7. What did the producers do to help the actors?
8. What nationality was Rudolf Valentino?
9. What did he do in New York?
10. Did Charlie Chaplin only act only in silent films?
11. When was the "golden age" of Hollywood?
12. What were the studios like at this time?
13. When did the first films in Technicolour appear? What are the titles of these films?
14. When and why did the studios become less powerful?
15. Can you name some important actors and films of the past?
16. What is the last important studio in Hollywood?

Answers

TRUE OR FALSE?

	T	F
Hollywood was the capital of California		X
The original Hollywood sign dates back to 1978		X
The same locations were used for different films	X	
Most movies in the 1920s were made in colour		X
Rudolph Valentino was famous for starring in comedy films		X
Actors in silent movies lacked experience	X	
Charlie Chaplin starred in silent and talking movies	X	
Johnny Weissmuller was an Olympic runner		X
'Stagecoach' was a Western	X	
Hollywood became more powerful in the 1950s		X

What is Hollywood? **A place famous for its filmmaking**

What was the original sign? **An advert for new houses**

How high and long is the sign today? **4 floors high and 120 metres wide**

Why did the filmmakers choose California? **The good weather**

What were the most important studios at that time? **Paramount, Warner Bros. & MGM**

What were the films like? **They had no sound (silent)**

What did the producers do to help the actors? **They hired orchestras to help the atmosphere**

What nationality was Rudolf Valentino? **Italian**

What did he do in New York? **He was a professional dancer**

Did Charlie Chaplin only act only in silent films? **No, but he wasn't very successful**

When was the "golden age" of Hollywood? **Between 1930 and 1948**

What were the studios like at this time? **Studios owned everything: actors, sets and cinemas**

When did the first films in Technicolour appear? **1939** What are the titles of these films? **The Wizard of Oz, Gone with the Wind**

When and why did the studios become less powerful? **In the 1950s television became more popular**

Can you name some important actors and films of the past? E.g. **John Wayne, Johnny Weissmuller**

What is the last important studio in Hollywood? **Paramount**