

A Bit of Theater

All she could see in her mind's eye was the tiny dog, dancing around the fallen soldier, barking bravely as he took on a challenge a thousand times greater than himself. Suddenly, she had it—the name of a similarly brave and talkative character from one of her favorite plays. "Cyrano!" she called as loudly as she could. "Cyrano! Come! Come on, boy!"

Cyrano

Cyrano was a play written in 1897 about Hercule Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac who lived in Paris from 1619-1655. Cyrano was a soldier in the French Army. He had many talents including being an exceptional duelist, remarkable poet, and excellent musician. Because Cyrano had an extremely large nose, he felt he wasn't attractive. This prevented him from expressing his love to the beautiful and intelligent Roxanne.

Discussion

What name would you have selected for the pup? Why would your choice be better than the one Samira selected?



Hippolyta's Daughter

"I'm Hippolyta's daughter," Samira said, using her mother's code name. "Yes, I recognize you," said the Maquis leader. "My name is Odysseus."

Code Names (Greek Mythology)

Hippolyta - Amazonian queen who possessed a magical girdle

Odysseus - Greek king of Ithaca and the hero of Homer's epic poem the *Odyssey*

Perseus - beheaded the Gorgon Medusa for Polydectes and saved Andromeda from the sea monster Cetus

Jason of the Argonauts - famed for his expedition with the Argonauts - as the sailors on their ship the *Argo* were known - in search of the Golden Fleece in Kolchis on the Black Sea

Atalanta - huntress, unwilling to marry, and loved by the hero Meleager

Discussion

Why do you think the Maquis selected heroes from Greek Mythology for their code names?

Which name would you select for yourself if you were in a Resistance fighter? Explain how this Greek hero represents you.



Famous People in the 1940's

Alan Gratz added several famous people to his story.

Hank Greenberg - professional baseball player primarily for the Detroit Tigers

Joe DiMaggio - American baseball center fielder who played his entire 13-year career in Major League Baseball for the New York Yankees

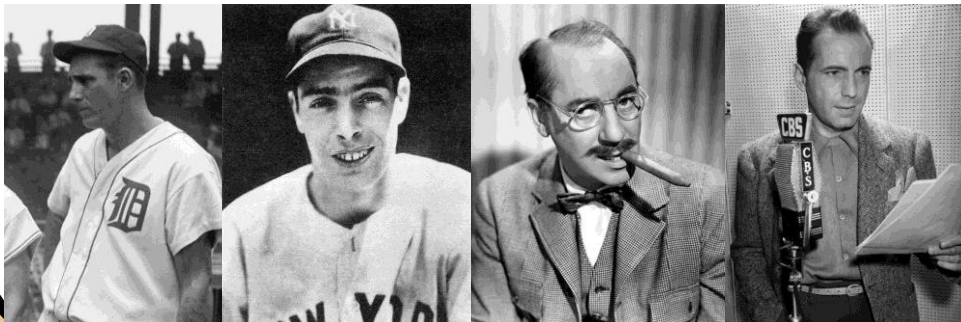
Groucho Marx - American comedian, writer, stage, film, radio, and television star (considered one of America's greatest comedians)

Humphrey Bogart - American film and theater actor - considered greatest male star of classic American cinema

Discussion

Alan Gratz included famous people of the 1930's-1940's to his story.

Explain why this was a good decision by Gratz.



Reinforcements

The private took a peek over the wall and ducked back down just before a German bullet hit the top of the wall, kicking up the kind of mortar that held rock walls together. "Friendly," the private said.

"Yeah, they're regular Betty Boops," said James.

The redheaded soldier shook his head. "A two-inch shell's not gonna do any good against that bunker they've got protecting it. It's just gonna tickle the top of it."

Betty Boop was an animated cartoon character. She was a carefree reminder of the days of the Jazz Age flappers.

Discussion

Explain the meaning behind the phrase "they're regular Betty Boops."

Gratz uses both sarcasm and hyperbole in the excerpt from *Allies*. Why would doing this when the characters are facing danger enhance the story?

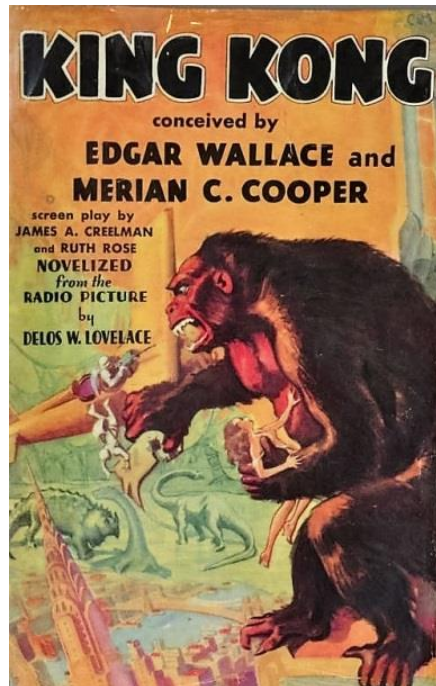


Burst Balloons

As a medic, Henry had been trained to keep his patients talking—in part to help them stay conscious, and in part to distract them from the sometimes-nauseating things he had to do to them. “Where ya from?” was the question all soldiers ended up asking each other when they first met, even if they were never going to see each other again. Henry, who loved movies, liked to ask everyone what their favorite film was instead. He got a lot of good ones that day—*King Kong*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Frankenstein*, *The Thin Man*, *Robin Hood*, *Gunga Din*. All movies Henry had seen again and again in the theater. While he talked movies, Henry extracted bullets. Bandaged wounds. Sedated shock victims.

Discussion

How does adding film titles to *Allies* enhance the story?



William the Conqueror and Bayeux Tapestry

“You know what’s funny?” Bill told his crewmates while they waited. “Almost nine hundred years ago, William the Conqueror and the Normans left from just about this very place in France”—he nodded toward the shore—“and invaded England. Battle of Hastings and all that. And now we’re going back! The English invading Normandy.”..... “I’m named for him, you know. William the Conqueror,” Bill went on, ignoring Davies. “William Richards, see? That’s why I took an interest. All me brothers and sisters are named for English kings and queens too. Richie, Bess, Vicky, George, and Henry.” Bill thought of his siblings back home and smiled.

Discussion

Alan Gratz provides a number of details about William the Conqueror and the Bayeux Tapestry in *Allies*.

Did you find this interesting? Explain why or why not.

How did adding Bill’s interests about William the Conqueror add to the story?



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