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# Who Was Charlie Chaplin?



by Patricia Brennan Demuth

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by Patricia Brennan Demuth  
illustrated by Gregory Copeland

Penguin Workshop

For my sisters, Mary, Rite, and Tess—  
with laughter and love—PBD

For my dad—GC

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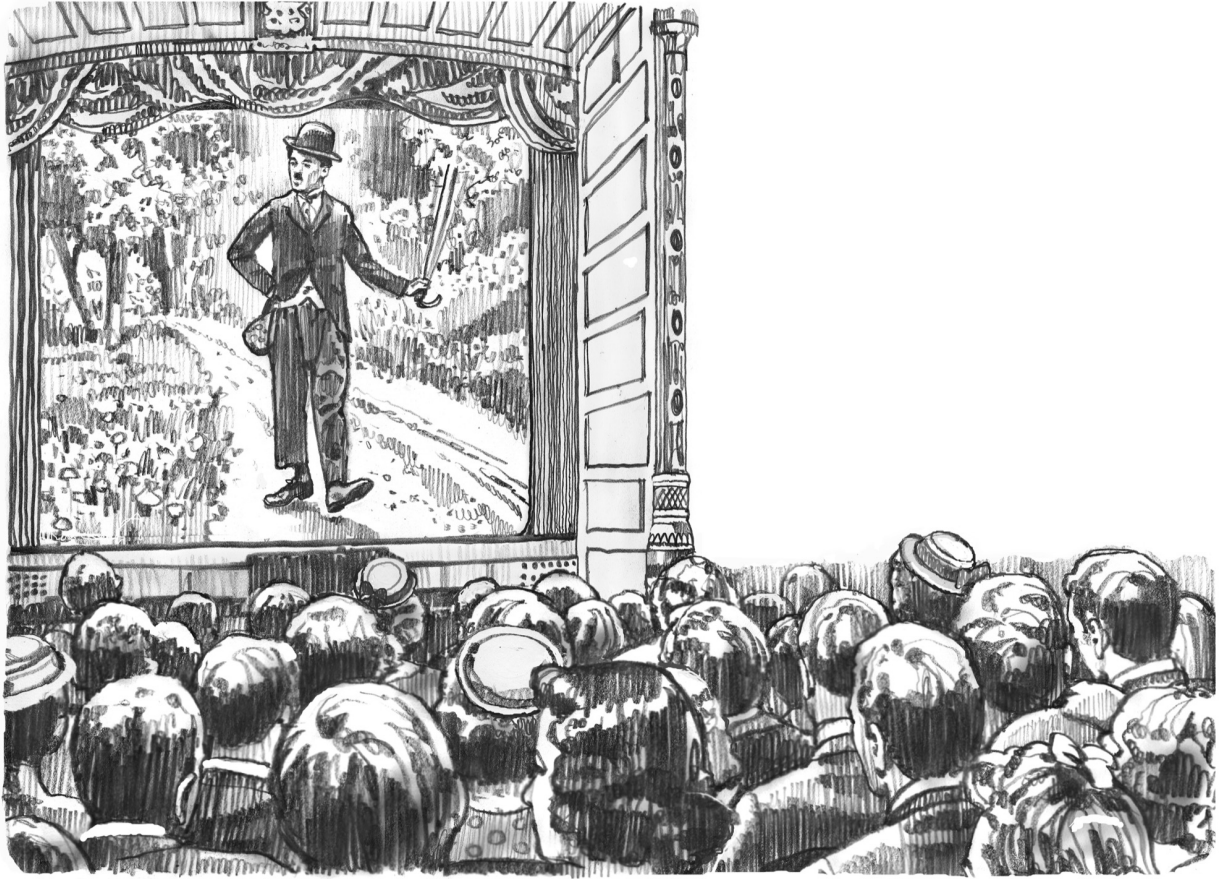
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## Who Was Charlie Chaplin?

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In the early 1900s, movie theaters across America rocked with laughter. It was all because of a funny little guy on the big screen. His pants and shoes were too large. His hat and coat were too small. He walked in an oddball way with both feet turned outward. And when his eyes grew big and he twitched his little mustache, the audience couldn't wait to see what trouble he would get into next. The screen character was called the Little Tramp.

Charlie Chaplin was the actor behind the mustache. He invented the Little Tramp. Charlie also wrote, starred, and directed his own movies. The Little Tramp was always broke and out of work. But Charlie himself was the highest-paid actor in the world—and the most famous. He managed all that without saying a word on-screen.

This was the age of silent films. No sound came from the screen. Inventors hadn't yet found a way to record sound for films. Instead, actors used gestures and facial expressions to act out the story, as in a game of charades. There was none better at this than Charlie Chaplin.

Although his "reel life" was filled with humor, Charlie's real life was not. His poor London childhood had been heartbreaking. His father deserted the family. And his mother couldn't care for her children properly because of mental breakdowns. Yet history remembers Charlie with a smile. He was a pioneer in film who tickled America's funny bone.