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zoom

in on america

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THE ACADEMY AWARDS



A photographer takes pictures of Oscar statues. Photo AP

Questions & Answers

In this issue: The Academy Awards

Zoom in on America

“AND THE ACADEMY AWARD GOES TO...”

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE OSCARS

Are the Oscars and the Academy Awards the same thing?

Both expressions refer to the annual award ceremony established by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to honor achievements in the film industry. The official name changed in 2013 from the Academy Awards to the Oscars.

Is the Academy Award of Merit the same as an Oscar?

The Academy Award of Merit is the official name of the statuette presented to award winners--*Oscar* is the statuette's nickname.

What are the origins of the nickname “Oscar”?

There are a few different legends regarding the origin of the nickname. The best known story attributes the nickname to Margaret Herrick, who was a librarian at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. According to the legend, when Herrick saw the statuette for the first time, she said that it looked like her uncle, Oscar. The Academy officially adopted the nickname in 1939.

Who designed the statuette and what does it represent?

Irish-American art director and production designer Austin Cedric Gibbons (1893 – 1960) designed the award and American sculptor George Stanley (1903 – 1973) executed the design. The statuette, in the Art Deco style, shows a knight gripping a sword while standing on a film reel with five spokes. The spokes of the film reel represent the five original branches of the Academy: Actors, Writers, Directors, Producers, and Technicians.

When was the first Academy Awards ceremony?

The first ceremony was held on May 16, 1929 at the Roosevelt Hotel's Blossom Room in the presence of 270 attendees.

Where is the Oscars ceremony held?

Since 2002, the Oscars have been held at the Dolby Theatre (also known as Kodak Theatre) in Hollywood.



The coveted Oscar statue is shown at the R.S. Owens plant, makers of the award since 1983. Photo AP

Over the years, several other venues hosted the event:

- Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel (1929),
- The Ambassador Hotel and the Biltmore Hotel, Los Angeles (1930–1943),
- Grauman's Chinese Theatre, Los Angeles (1944–1946),
- Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles (1947–1948),
- Academy Award Theater, Los Angeles (1949),
- Pantages Theatre, Los Angeles (1950–1960),
- Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, Santa Monica (1961–1968),
- Dorothy Chandler Pavilion and the Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles (1969–2001).

Who won the first Academy Award?

Emil Jannings, named Best Actor for his performances in *The Last Command* and *The Way of All Flesh*, won the first Academy Award.

What is the Oscar statuette made of?

Originally, the statuettes were made of bronze with gold plating. Later the bronze was replaced by britannium alloy. First, it was plated in copper, then nickel silver, and finally in 24-carat gold. For three years during WWII, Oscars were made of painted plaster. After the war, the

Academy invited recipients to exchange the plaster figures for gold-plated metal ones.

How big is the Oscar statuette?

Each Oscar weighs 8.5 lbs. (3.9 kg) and is 13.5 inches (34.3 cm) tall.

Whose idea was it to establish awards for achievement in the movie industry?

In 1928, Louis B. Mayer, head of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) film studio, came up with the idea to establish an organization to benefit the film industry. A year later, the first awards ceremony was held under the auspices of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Douglas Fairbanks was the Academy's first president.

What has changed about how the award winners are announced?

When the Academy Awards were first established, the names of winners were announced three months in advance of the ceremony. Up until 1940, the winners' names were given to newspapers for publication at 11 p.m. the day before the ceremony. Now the winners' names are not revealed until during the ceremony itself. The winners' names are kept in sealed envelopes until that time.



Scenic artist Rick Roberts sprays a fresh coat of gold paint to Oscar statue props. Photo AP

For what categories are Oscars currently given?

Best Picture: since 1928

Best Directing: since 1928

Best Actor in a Leading Role: since 1928

Best Actor in a Supporting Role: since 1936

Best Actress in a Leading Role: since 1928

Best Actress in a Supporting Role: since 1936

Best Animated Feature: since 2001

Best Animated Short Film: since 1931

Best Cinematography: since 1928

Best Costume Design: since 1948

Best Documentary Feature: since 1943

Best Documentary Short Subject: since 1941

Best Film Editing: since 1934

Best Foreign Language Film: since 1947

Best Live Action Short Film: since 1931

Best Makeup and Hairstyling: since 1981

Best Original Score: since 1934

Best Original Song: since 1934

Best Production Design: since 1928

Best Sound Editing: since 1963

Best Sound Mixing: since 1930

Best Visual Effects: since 1939

Best Adapted Screenplay: since 1928

Best Original Screenplay: since 1940

Has anyone ever refused an Oscar?

A few awardees have refused to accept their Oscar. In 1935, Dudley Nichols refused to accept his Best Screenplay award for *The Informer* because of a conflict between the Academy and the Writer's Guild. In 1970, George C. Scott won the Academy Award for Best Actor for his role in the film *Patton*. His main objection was the ceremony itself, which he called "a two-hour meat parade." Two years later Marlon Brando declined his Best Actor Oscar for *The Godfather* (1972). He said he refused the award to protest discrimination toward Native Americans.



Oscar Statue backstage at the Oscars at the Dolby Theatre on Sunday February 24, 2013, in Los Angeles. Photo AP

Has any silent movie ever won an Oscar?

Yes. Paramount Pictures' 1927 movie *Wings*, set during World War I, was named Best Picture at the first Academy Awards ceremony. The statuette (which was not yet known as the "Oscar") was presented by Douglas Fairbanks to actress Clara Bow on behalf of the producers, Adolph Zukor and B.P. Schonberg. In 2012, the French film *The Artist* became the first mainly silent film since *Wings* to win the Oscar for Best Picture.

What was the first color movie to win an Oscar?

Gone With the Wind (1939) was the first movie filmed in color to win the Best Picture award.

When was the Foreign Language Film category introduced and what was the first film to win?

In 1947 the first special award to honor a foreign language motion picture was presented to the Italian film *Shoe-Shine*, but the Foreign Language Film category was added in 1956.

Have there been any posthumous winners of Oscars?

Yes, more than a dozen people have been awarded Oscars after their death, including: screenwriter Sid-

ney Howard, awarded Best Writing for *Gone With the Wind* (1939), Walt Disney (1968), awarded Best Short Film (Animated) for *Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day*, and Eric Orbom, awarded Best Art Direction for *Spartacus*.

Who has emceed the most Academy Awards ceremonies?

Each Academy Awards ceremony has a host, also known as an emcee (or Master of Ceremonies), who leads the show. Many famous people have hosted the Academy Awards, including Will Rogers, Frank Capra, Jack Benny, Fred Astaire, Jack Lemmon, and David Letterman. Some people have hosted the ceremony more than once. Bob Hope hosted a record eighteen Academy Award ceremonies. Runner-up Billy Crystal has hosted the ceremony eight times.

Who is the youngest Oscar winner?

Tatum O'Neal won Best Supporting Actress for *Paper Moon* in 1973 when she was 10.

What famous phrase is used when Oscar winners are announced?

Up until 1989, the phrase was: "And the winner is..." The phrase currently used is: "And the Oscar goes to..."



A large Oscar statue and a series of billboards herald the arrival of the 80th Academy Awards outside the Kodak Theatre in Los Angeles, California, on Saturday, February 23, 2008. Photo AP.

Have any films won each of the five “major” Oscars?

The five most important Oscars are considered the awards for Best Picture, Actor, Actress, Director, and Screenplay. Three films in history have won all five major awards. They are: *It Happened One Night*, *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, and *The Silence of the Lambs*.

Have all Oscar ceremonies been televised?

No, the first televised Academy Awards ceremony was in 1953. The first color broadcast of the Academy Awards took place in 1966.

How big an audience can fit in the Dolby Theater?

The Dolby Theater seats 3,400 people.

How long is the famous red carpet?

On Oscar night, all 3,400 guests walk the 500-foot red carpet to reach the award ceremony venue.

How long are Oscar winners’ acceptance speeches?

Award winners are invited to speak after receiving their award but they have to keep their remarks short. After 45 seconds, the orchestra begins playing music to signal that it is time for the speech to end.

What movie received the most Oscar awards?

There is a three-way tie for the movie with the most Oscars. *Titanic*, *Ben-Hur*, and *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King* all won 11 awards.

What are the equivalent awards in other fields of entertainment?

There are Tony Awards for theater, Emmy Awards for television and Grammy Awards for music and recording artists.



The Oscar statues are placed backstage during the 79th Academy Awards at the Kodak Theatre in Los Angeles Sunday, February 25, 2007. Photo AP

Activity Page

Exercise 1 SPEAKING

Work in a group of 3-4 students and discuss:

1. It is a big moment for every Oscar winner to hear his or her name read out at the Oscar gala. Everyone reacts in a different way. There are outcries of joy or tears ... Sometimes, the winner gets too excited to walk on the floor and ... jumps on the back of chairs, like director and actor Roberto Benigni after winning the Oscar for best foreign language film for *Life is Beautiful*. The moment was caught on a camera by photographer Eric Draper. (see the top photo on the right)



2. We dress up for big occasions, so, if you know you will be presenting the Oscar for best achievement in makeup, you might consider getting makeup like Ben Stiller did to hand out the Oscar for Makeup to Barney Burman, Mindy Hall and Joel Harlow for *Star Trek* at the 82nd Academy Awards, on Sunday, March 7, 2010. Photographer Mark J. Terrill took this photo of him.



3. The winner takes it all ... Winning involves competing with others, and only one person or team is the winner. In the photo below, heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali, left, makes a surprise appearance on the Academy Awards show, accusing actor Sylvester Stallone in jest of stealing "my script" and then sparring with Stallone, who wrote and starred in the boxing film "*Rocky*" on March 28, 1977. Stallone and Ali presented the award for best supporting actress.

All photos AP

Talk with other students in your group. Has anybody watched or read about any of the ceremonies in the photos in your group?

Now tell your friends: 1. how you would react to winning, 2. how you dress for important occasions, and 3. your road to success in terms of competition with others.

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C-3PO, the robot character from the fictional Star Wars universe, is shown in front of a giant Oscar at the 50th Academy Awards in Los Angeles, April 3, 1978. Photo AP