

BIOGRAPHY



GEORGES REMI



Co-funded by
the European Union



INSIDE A BUBBLE

CHARACTER: HERGÉ, Georges Prosper Remi

DATES: Etterbeek 22 May 1907/ Woluwe-Saint Lambert 3 March 1983

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: BELGIUM

HISTORICAL PERIOD: 20th century

SUMMARY: Georges is a cartoonist. From an early age he loves to draw. Immediately after graduating he starts working in a newspaper inventing the character of the photo reporter Tintin. At the turn of the century, he draws and writes a thousand adventures, becoming one of the most famous cartoonists of the last century.

KEY WORDS: comics, war, colours, talent

GENRE: BIOGRAPHY

AGE: 7/8 YEARS

AUTHOR: Barbara Lachi

INSIDE A BUBBLE

Under a dreary rain sky, the Remi family was moving house for the umpteenth time.

They hardly had time to put away the last piece of furniture, or book in the bookcase, when everything was back in the boxes again to move to a new address.

To little Georges, all this seemed pointless and sad.

It was perhaps these constant moves that made him restless.

So, whenever his parents took him to visit any relatives, they had to take paper and pencils with them, too. Only in this way would Georges calm down and stop being irritable.

Armed with pencils, he would start drawing and all the grey around him would disappear.

He would draw on everything he could find, behind a postcard a steam train, or a little blue car, or in the last hidden pages of school notebooks, filling them with little stories of soldiers.

Drawing was like breathing or listening, it came naturally to him.

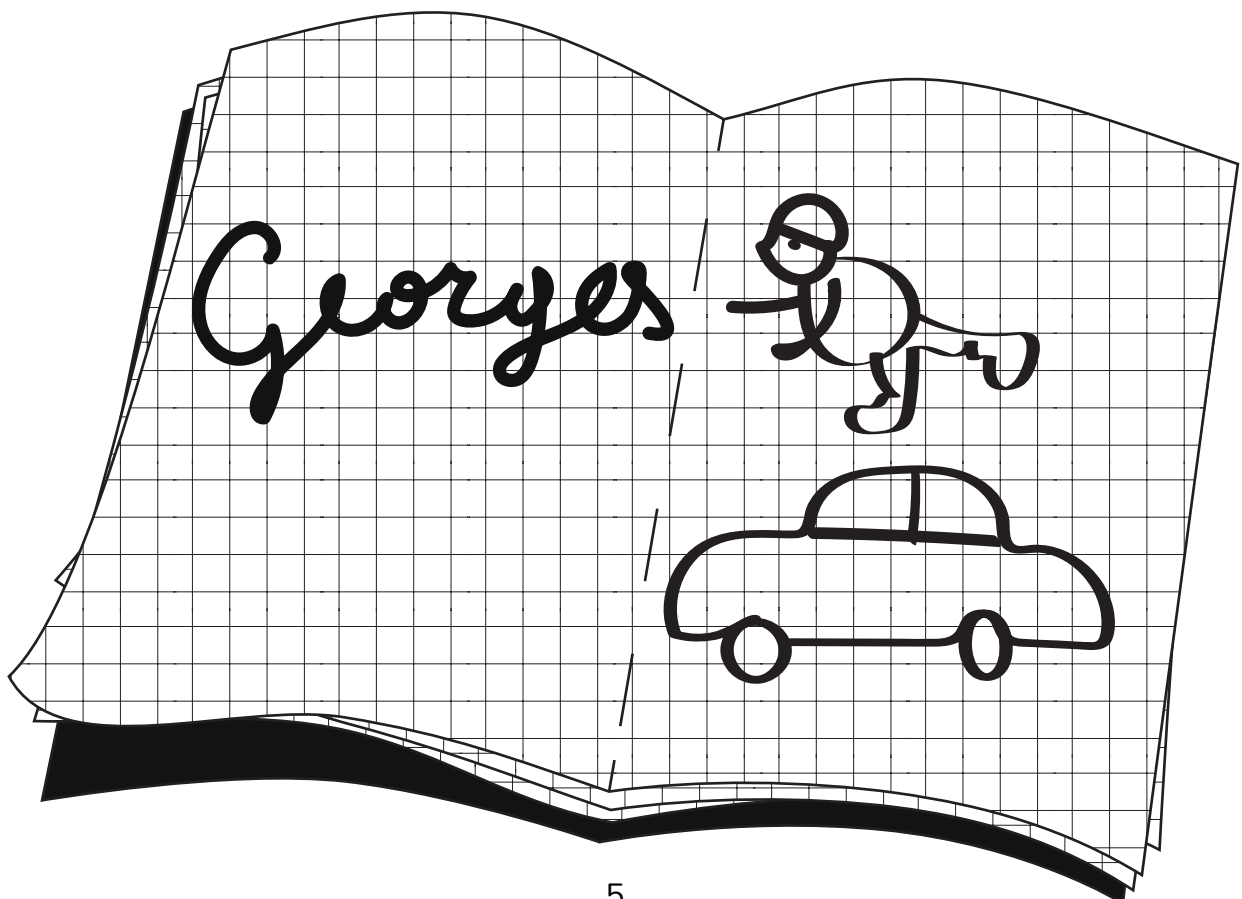


Hidden in the back of the classroom, he drew.
His hand traced soft, reassuring, familiar lines. When the teacher, lifted her gaze to glance at the attentive heads of the pupils, she noticed Georges's head sprawled over his desk. "Remi! Mr. Remi, what was I saying? Come on, could you stand up and repeat?"

The teacher said almost shouting.

In a calm voice, without hesitation, Georges replied: "In 1797, with the Treaty of Campoformido, Austria confirmed the cession of the Netherlands... I draw with my right hand and listen with my left!"

Perhaps because of this insolence, the teacher often criticised Georges's drawings: "You won't find fame with these! But Georges didn't care, he just wanted to draw."



The years passed in greyness and boredom, and Georges kept drawing. At the age of 13, his parents sent him to the boarding school of Saint-Boniface in Brussels, and enrolled him, despite his reluctance, in the scouts. The Great War, which had devastated the whole of Europe had recently ended.

Georges studied, excelling in all subjects except ... drawing.

At this school, he could only draw geometric solids and their shadows, straight lines with a ruler and square and perfect circles with a compass. Each stroke or line costed him incredible effort, his hand wanted to follow other paths, other shapes and contours. "Why waste paper and pencils on such useless things," Georges huffed.

During the months of camping with the Boy Scouts, Georges, whom everyone called "Curious Fox", drew cowboys and Indians. He filled entire notebooks with faces covered in large hats or feathered headgear. Georges began to sign them with a name of his own invention: combining the initial of his surname and then that of his first name, he created the pseudonym. "Her-gé! Sounds good, and that is how I want to call myself from now on!"



After finishing high school, he looked for work, occasionally doing some drawings for a small daily newspaper called the “Vingtème Siècle”.

Those were difficult years for everyone, dark years. Although the Great War was over, something darker was beginning to creep across Europe like a pus, infected and viscous. Fascism and Nazism were spreading.

A dark chasm had been created in the souls of many, which was being filled with this poison: totalitarian, brutal, racist and violent regimes, in the name of which unprecedented crimes were committed.

At the newspaper, meanwhile, Hergé was asked to draw the adventures of a young reporter and his dog.

Hergé saw the round face of a boy with an intelligent look and hair standing up lively begin to emerge on his paper.

Alongside him stood his faithful dog.

“I will call him Tintin! And the dog Milou!”

The adventures of the journalist photographer, thrilled readers week after week and the newspaper saw its sales triple.

At first Hergé did not seem very pleased with himself, he felt as if he had gone to a party in an old, tattered suit, but despite this he continued to draw.

However, his right hand, unlike his left hand that could listen, began not only to draw but also to do the Roman salute...



Sometimes people make bad decisions, even if only to keep drawing... and this is what happened to Hergé, as Tintin jumped from one adventure to another, from one book to another, along with other characters who populated his tales, such as Quick and Flupke; Hergé also drew for newspapers that collaborated with the dictatorial regimes.



Meanwhile, imitating American comic strips, Hergé began to write dialogues in what were known as «bubbles»... small round or square white spaces coming straight out of the characters' mouths, which made the dialogues faster and more direct.



He also began to document himself, looking for inspiration to write a new adventure for his character.

However, he wanted something different from what he had done in the previous stories, where the settings were imaginary and based on stereotypes and preconceptions.

He wanted to draw something that was real.

One day, while looking for information and images about China, where he wanted to set his new story, he was introduced to a young Chinese artist named Tchang. It was friendship at first sight. Tchang and Hergé were contemporaries, both 27 years old, they shared many things, it was as if he had met another self. Tchang taught him the art of Chinese calligraphy with the yàn tay (ink stone) that transforms the drawing into something more vibrant, more sincere. Tchang told him about his country, taught him about its culture and philosophy and showed him how to observe nature.

“Look at this tree, it is like you: it has a soul, it feels, it breathes. It is not just part of the landscape.”

Their friendship, profoundly changed Hergé’s way of drawing, which became more careful, meticulous and less superficial.

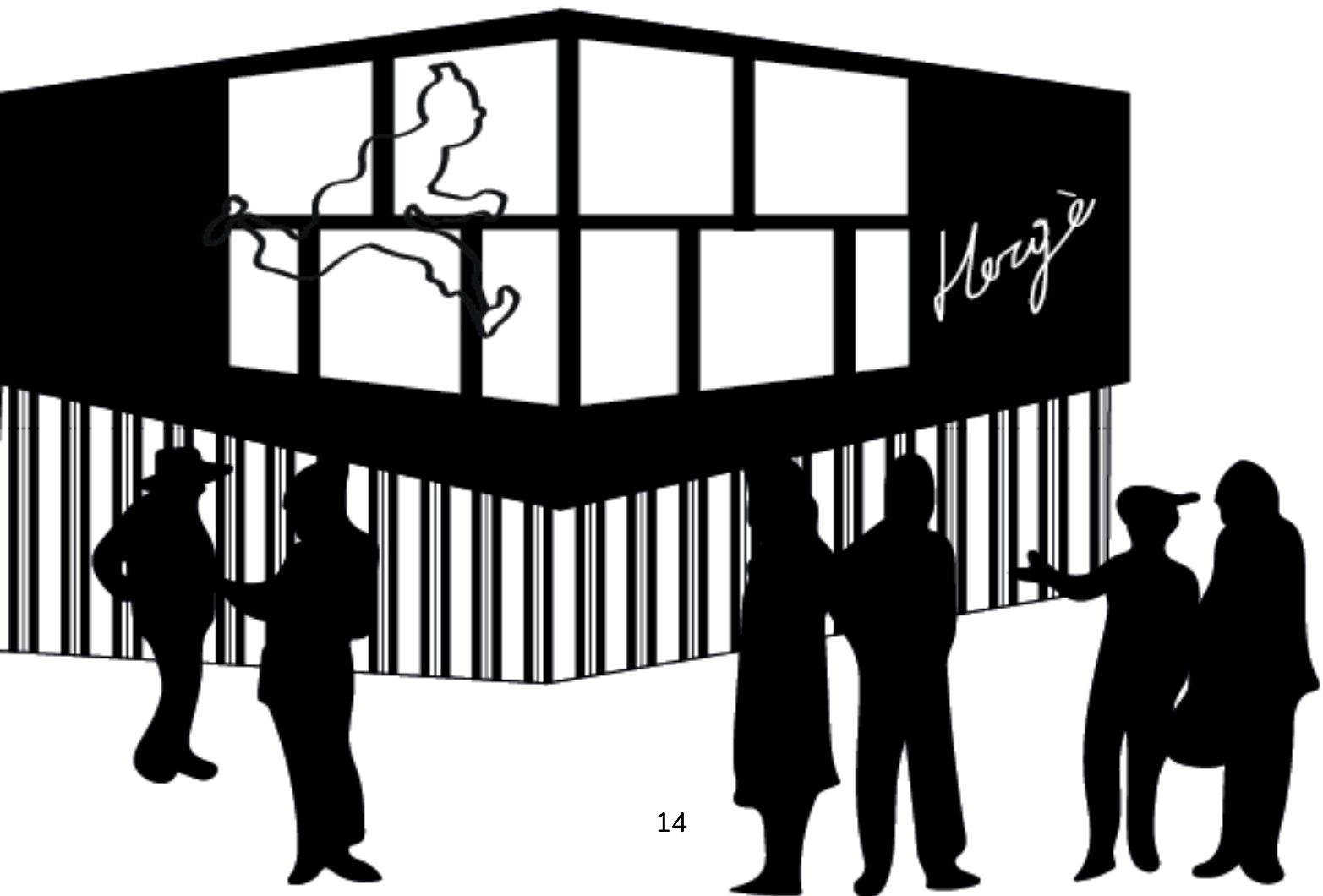
The war inflamed the cities, and perhaps to get away from the horror, Hergé invented escape stories for Tintin and his readers. His books became colourful as the world conflict finally drew to a close. However, it was in those days that Hergé and other editors and journalists of the newspaper Le Soir, who sided with the regime, were arrested for collaborating. Hergé had only ever drawn pictures, and never showed support with articles, but he was arrested anyway for a short time and his books were prevented from being published.

After the end of the war, however, thanks to ex-combatant Raymond Leblanc, who had always loved his stories, Hergé returned to storytelling and publishing in the newspaper founded by Leblanc, called The Tintin Newspaper.

Hergé invented new characters who continued to enrich the adventures of Tintin, in whom he perhaps recognised himself and mirrored himself. But if as a child his drawings calmed him, growing up, they did not always keep him safe from fears and ghosts.



In the years that followed, he became increasingly famous, and his stories were translated and read in all languages. A museum dedicated to his life and talent was built. The talent of a cartoonist, a storyteller and a man whose life was black and white, just like his early drawings. In dying, he also took his character Tintin with him, because as he often liked to repeat: Tintin is me.







Co-funded by
the European Union

All content is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

The STORIAS project is co-financed by the ERASMUS+ programme of the EU. Its content reflects the views of the authors, and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information therein.

(Project code: 2021-1-FR01-KA220-SCH-000029483)