A history of film

Everyone loves going to the movies. But without the French brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière films, as we know them today, wouldn’t exist. The Lumière brothers made the first moving pictures in 1895 and started a film industry which American cinema now dominates.

The silent era

The world’s first cinema opened in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1905. Two years later there were 4,000 cinemas across America. In 1914 Hollywood, in California, became the centre of the American film industry. However, at that time films were silent. There was no dialogue, the only sound came from a piano player, or even an orchestra, playing music in the cinema to accompany the film. The greatest movie of the silent era was The Birth of a Nation, in 1915.
The talkies

In 1927 the ‘talkies’ arrived – movies with talking (and of course, music). More people started to go to the cinema and the studios became very rich. 1929 saw the first Oscars ceremony. The Oscars helped to advertise films across America.

By 1930 there were five big film studios: MGM, Paramount, RKO, Warner Brothers, and 20th Century Fox. These studios made all the films. They also owned all the cinemas. Famous talkies include The Jazz Singer (Warner Brothers) and Citizen Kane (RKO).

Blockbusters

Today, there are many independent film studios but the big film studios still dominate. They now produce ‘blockbusters’. These are very expensive films to make, with famous actors in them and very good special effects. E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial and After Earth are examples of Hollywood blockbusters.