

DRINKS WITH DEAD PEOPLE

QUARANTINE EDITION

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[HAROLD LLOYD](#)

Thanks to one iconic photo, chances are you know who Harold Lloyd is even if you've never seen a silent film in your life: a bewildered guy in glasses, hanging onto the hands of a high-rise clock face as it dangles above traffic.

THE STORY

Lloyd's first characters in commercial film were attempts to copy Charlie Chaplin. But as time passed, Lloyd created his own character and decided to make an accidental daredevil out of a wholesome young man in horn-rimmed glasses, since: "...*funnier things happen in life to an ordinary boy than a Lonesome Luke.*"

The Glass Character and his wild stunts became incredibly popular and very lucrative, making Lloyd one of the highest-paid stars of the silent film era.

Lloyd's teetering slapstick pioneered the genre of "thrill comedy," a mix of fear and humor that even his established predecessors came to copy – just think of Charlie Chaplin's [teetering house](#) in "The Gold Rush," or Keaton's narrow escape through the window of [a falling house](#) in "Steamboat Bill, Jr."

While shooting a publicity photograph in 1919, a supposed prop bomb exploded in Lloyd's hand, burning his face and blowing off the thumb and index finger of his right hand. After eight months in recovery, Lloyd returned to filmmaking with a prosthetic designed to hide his injury, and went on to make the most memorable of his comedies, 1923's *Safety Last!*

When talkies took over the film industry, Lloyd transitioned to a private life of charity work and creativity. A gifted photographer and pioneer in early [3-D imaging](#), Lloyd shot hundreds of thousands of images using a "stereoscopic" 3-D camera. Many of these were [pin-up or nude shots](#) of Hollywood lovelies, and Lloyd's own fame meant that his models included the likes of [Marilyn Monroe](#) and Jayne Mansfield.

Read on [at the blog](#) for more detail and resources.

DISCUSS:

What did it mean for Lloyd to do his own stunts in this early era of film?

There are a few clips linked in this sheet. What do you think about silent film's ability to communicate emotion, humor or drama?

How is body language important to storytelling?

Why do audiences want to believe that on-screen danger is real?

Hi, I'm Betsy. Stuck at home? Let's learn history together, because the past helps us to understand that we are not alone. Weekday updates during #COVID19.

Questions? Comments? Say hello.

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READ MORE:

"[The Double Life of Harold Lloyd](#)," The Telegraph (UK)

"[Harold Lloyd's Death-Defying Comedy](#)," JSTOR Daily

"[The Realistic Surrealism of Harold Lloyd](#)," Indiana University Cinema

The [climactic climbing scene from "Safety Last!"](#) (VIDEO)