

The History of the Circus

What is a Circus?

Have you ever been to a circus? Did you enjoy it? What was the best part? If you haven't been to the circus, you may have read about them or seen them on television. A circus is a show or **performance**. A circus can have clowns, a ringmaster, trained animals, jugglers and acrobats in it. It is great **entertainment**!

Who started the Modern Circus?

A man called Philip Astley started the modern circus. In 1768, he started a show in London. In the morning, he taught at his riding school and in the afternoon he **performed** horse tricks for an **audience**. Philip Astley decided he wanted some more **acts** in his show too. He used acrobats, rope dancers and jugglers in the show. His show soon became very **popular**. So next, Philip Astley took his circus to Paris!



Where else did the Circus go?

Soon after that, there were circus shows in America. In America, circus trains were sometimes used to move a circus from one city to the next. The circus trains were like a travelling town. Amazingly, they changed empty fields into **magical** places! Large **canvas** tents started to be used in the circus. Today we call this a Big Top! Circus shows soon got taken all over the world. In Russia, a **university** was started so that people could learn circus **skills**.



How has the Circus changed?

In the past, lots of **exotic** animals were used in the circus. Sometimes these animals were not looked after well. **Usually**, animals are looked after much better now. Some circus shows do not use animals, for example the Cirque du Soleil. The Cirque du Soleil has lots of dancers and acrobats but no animals.

History of the Circus – Follow-Up Work

What is a circus?

What time of the day did Philip Astley perform his horse tricks?

What was Philip Astley doing in the morning?

Did people like Philip Astley's show? What word makes you think that?

How do you think Philip Astley felt when he did his riding tricks?

Why do you think the writer says that circus trains were like a travelling town?

Why do you think they used a canvas tent for the circus?

Do you think Russian circus performers were good? Why?

Is this information text fiction or non-fiction? Why?

What is the writer trying to teach you about?
