

# Who Is Steven Spielberg?

- ☐ A boy who was happiest with a camera in his hand
- ☐ The man who made a shark a movie star
- ☐ One of the most successful film directors of all time
- ☒ All of the above!

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Nancy Harrison

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By Stephanie Spinner  
Illustrated by Daniel Mather

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For Jane O'Connor, friend extraordinaire—SS

For Katie and The Wombat—DM

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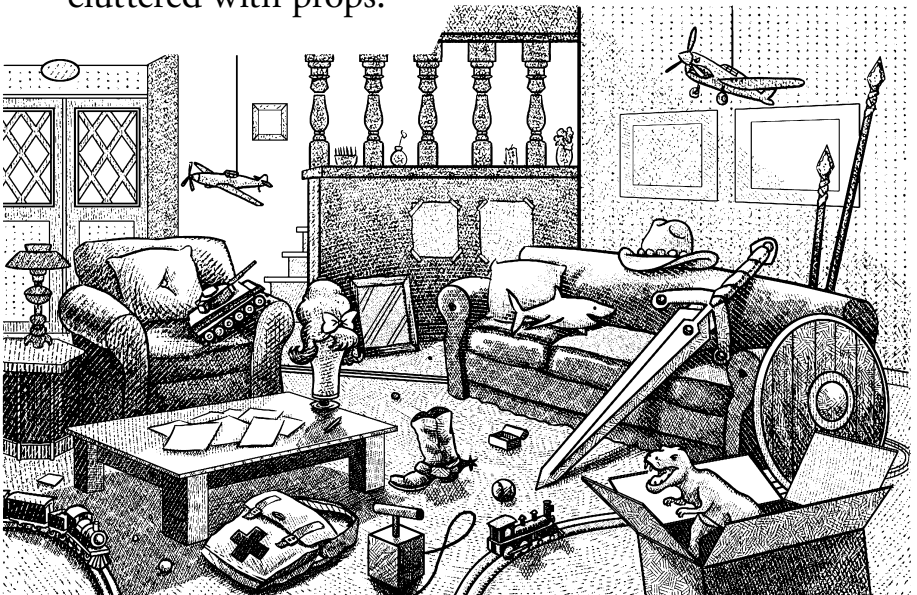


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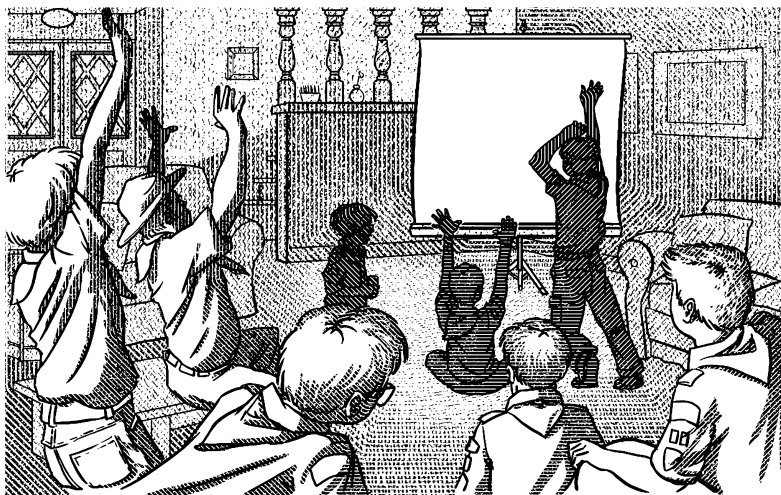
## Who Is Steven Spielberg?

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When Steven Spielberg was ten, he borrowed his father's movie camera. He used it to film all kinds of things—model-train wrecks, camping trips, and even the hubcaps on the family car. In fact, he borrowed the camera so often that his father finally gave it to him. From that day on, the Spielberg living room became a movie set, cluttered with props.



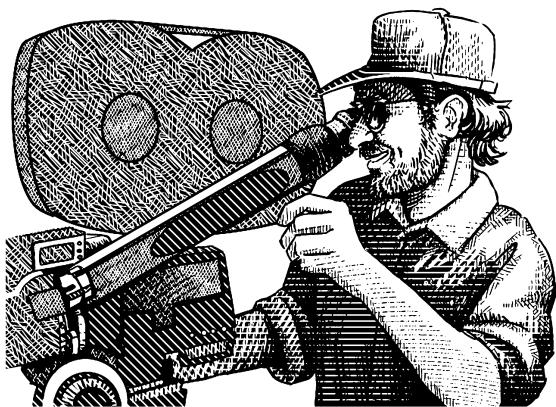




While other kids played sports, Steven dreamed up stories to film. Instead of doing homework, he wrote scripts. He figured out how to use lighting, sound, and camera angles to get the effects he wanted. He developed the knack of persuading his parents, his sisters, and anybody else who was around to put on costumes and act for him. Luckily for Steven, his parents encouraged him, and so did his friends. The very first time he showed one of his short movies to the members of his Boy Scout troop, they shouted and cheered.

Their applause only confirmed what Steven already knew: that his favorite place in the world was behind a camera.

Today, just about everybody knows who Steven Spielberg is. He directed four of the most successful films of all time: *Jaws*, *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*, and *Jurassic Park*. He's won two Oscars for Best Director and an Oscar for Best Picture. He's produced dozens of films and



television shows, created video games, and headed up his own movie studio. His work has dazzled fans all over the world.

But his favorite place is still behind a movie camera. Chances are, it always will be.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Brownie Hog**

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Steven Allan Spielberg was born on December 18, 1946, in Cincinnati, Ohio. World War II was finally over, and the country was getting back to normal. In the mid-forties that meant fathers commuted to their jobs, most mothers stayed home with their kids, cars were American, and telephones were connected to wires. It was a time when middle-class families flocked to the suburbs. Life there was safe, peaceful, and just a little bit dull.

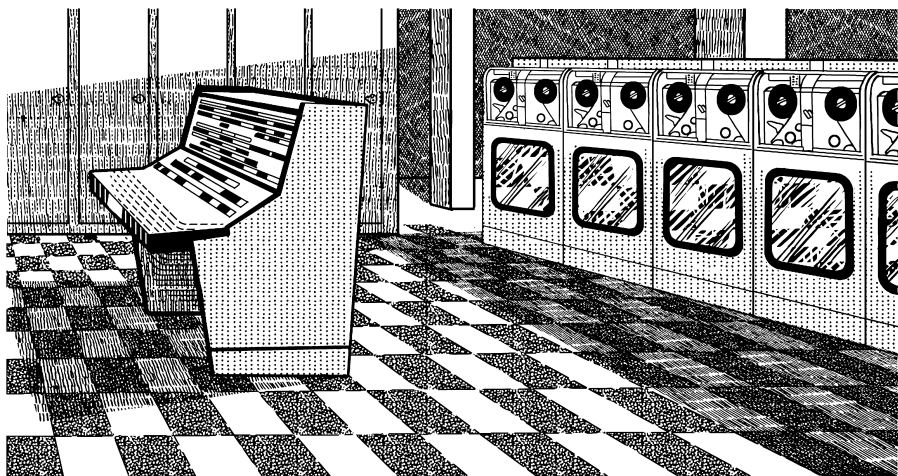
Steven grew up in suburbia, but his household was far from dull. His parents, Leah Posner and Arnold Spielberg, were Jewish, the children of immigrants. Though they were both from Cincinnati, they didn't meet until 1942, after



Arnold had enlisted in the army. Shortly after their first and only date, he was shipped off to fight in Burma, a small Asian country on the other side of the world. But he and Leah wrote to each other until he came home in 1944, and they were married the next year.



Arnold loved science and machines. After finishing his studies in electrical engineering, he quickly found work in the brand-new field of computer science. At that time computers were the



size of entire rooms, and few people knew about them. Arnold was one of the first.

Leah came from a devout family that was also very creative. She had relatives in vaudeville and the theater. One of her uncles was a lion tamer—a fairly unusual profession for someone in an Orthodox Jewish family.

It was difficult to find a place where the family could put down roots. Because Arnold was such an outstanding engineer, he was always being offered new and better jobs—which meant that the Spielbergs moved a lot.

They went from Ohio, where Steven was born, to Camden, New Jersey. After his sister Anne was born, the family moved to Haddon Township, New Jersey, where his sisters Sue and Nancy were born. When Nancy was still a baby, they moved to Phoenix, Arizona.

Going from one school to another was hard for Steven. As soon as he got to know kids his own age, the family was on the move again. He was

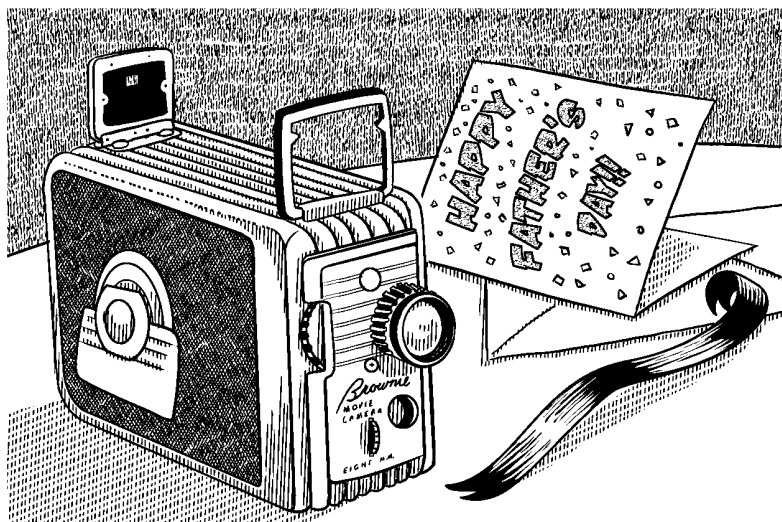


always the new boy in class and spent a lot of his childhood feeling like an outsider. In Phoenix his refuge was his cluttered bedroom. He kept turtles, free-flying parakeets, and a lizard in there, and he wrote stories instead of doing his homework. Steven often longed for a friend who was as different as he was. Sometimes he thought that a small, kindly alien would be ideal.





Years later, Steven made *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*, one of the most popular movies of all time. But in 1957, kids like Steven didn't make movies; they watched them. That changed on Father's Day, when Leah gave Arnold a movie camera.

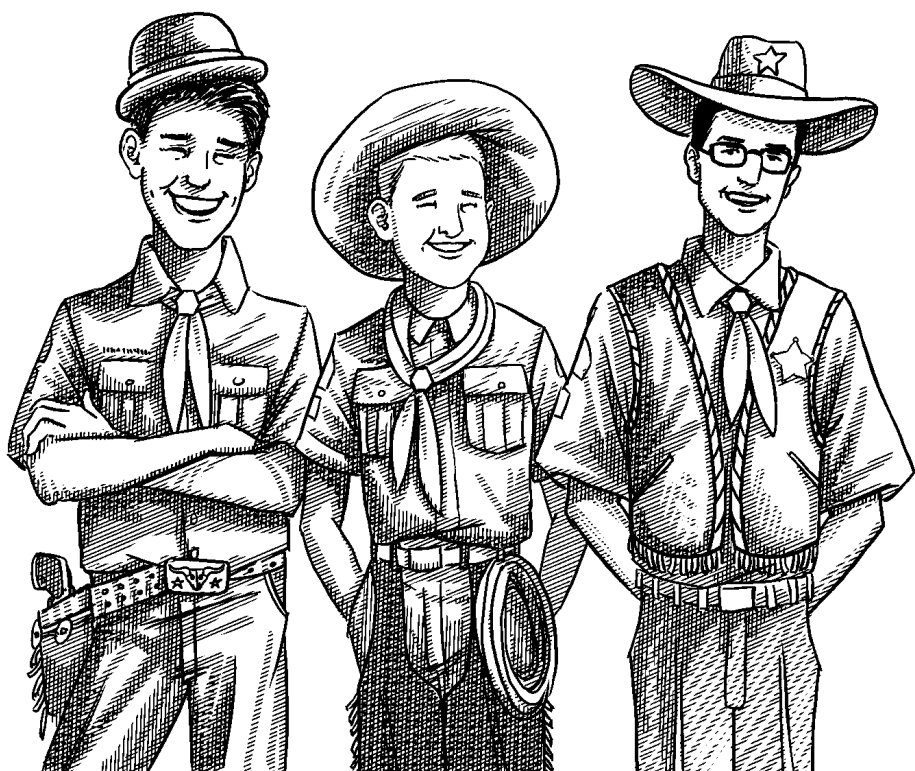


It was an eight-millimeter Brownie—inexpensive and easy to operate—the kind people used for home movies. Steven couldn't wait to borrow it. At first he staged and filmed crashes



with his Lionel trains and watched the films over and over. He thought they were great. His dad's movies, on the other hand, were blurry and boring. Steven had lots of suggestions for improving them, but his father had a better idea. He simply gave Steven the camera.

Steven took on the job of filming the family's camping trips. He got his parents and sisters to wear costumes, gave them parts to play, and told them how and where to move. As young as he was, he quickly mastered the Brownie and began taking it with him everywhere.



In the Boy Scouts he made a nine-minute Western to earn a merit badge in photography. He cast his fellow Scouts as cowboys, and when he screened it for them, the troop went wild—shouting, whistling, and cheering. “In that moment,” Steven said later, “I knew what I wanted to do with the rest of my life.” He was eleven years old.