

Dear Parents,

Today your child learned about some of the pieces of art in our “**cartooning**” collection. A cartoon is a form of two-dimensional illustrated visual art. It generally refers to a non-realistic or semi-realistic drawing or painting intended for satire, caricature or humor. The term originated in the [Middle Ages](#) to describe a preparatory drawing for a piece of art. In the 1800s, it came to refer to humorous illustrations in magazines and newspapers, and starting in the early 1900s it refers to [comic strips](#) and [animated](#) films. Specifically, we looked at the following three very different examples of cartooning.

### **Animated Cartoon – *Fantasia* Etching from *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice***

The next piece of art from the collection is the *Fantasia* Etching from the *animated cartoon* the *Sorcerer’s Apprentice*. An animated cartoon is a hand-drawn (or made with computers to look similar to something hand-drawn) [film](#) for the [cinema](#), [television](#) or computer screen, featuring some kind of story or plot (even if it is a very short one). Traditional, hand drawn animation uses cels (short for [celluloid](#)) -- transparent sheets on which objects are drawn or painted. Generally, the characters are drawn on cels and laid over a static background drawing. Some cels are not used for the actual production, but may be a “special” or “[limited edition](#)” version of the artwork, sometimes even printed (“[lithographed](#)”) instead of hand-painted, as we have in our collection.

*The Sorcerer’s Apprentice* (*L’apprenti sorcier*) is a “[symphonic poem](#)” by the French composer [Paul Dukas](#), written in 1896-97. This musical piece was inspired by [Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s](#) 1797 written [poem of the same name](#). In 1940, the acclaimed animated dialogue-free [Disney](#) film *Fantasia* popularized the story and the music in one of eight animated [shorts](#) based on classical music. The piece, which retains the title “[The Sorcerer’s Apprentice](#),” follows von Goethe’s original poem closely, except that the sorcerer is stern and angry with his apprentice when he saves him. Thus, this piece does a great job of pulling together several art forms – music, poetry, and visual art.

The animated short, which we viewed in class, begins as an old [sorcerer](#) (“Yen Sid”, or *Disney* backwards) departs his workshop, leaving his [apprentice](#) (Mickey Mouse) with chores to perform. Tired of fetching [water](#) by pail, the apprentice enchants a [broom](#) to do the work — using magic in which he is not yet fully trained. The floor is soon awash with water, and the apprentice realizes he doesn’t know how to stop the broom. In an effort to control it, he splits the broom in two with an axe, but each of the pieces becomes a new broom, takes up a pail and continues fetching water at *twice* the speed. When all seems lost, the old sorcerer returns, quickly breaks the spell and saves the day. The poem finishes with the old sorcerer’s statement that powerful [spirits](#) should only be called by the master himself. The children may also notice the similarity to the storyline in the classic children’s book *Strega Nona* by Tomie dePaola.