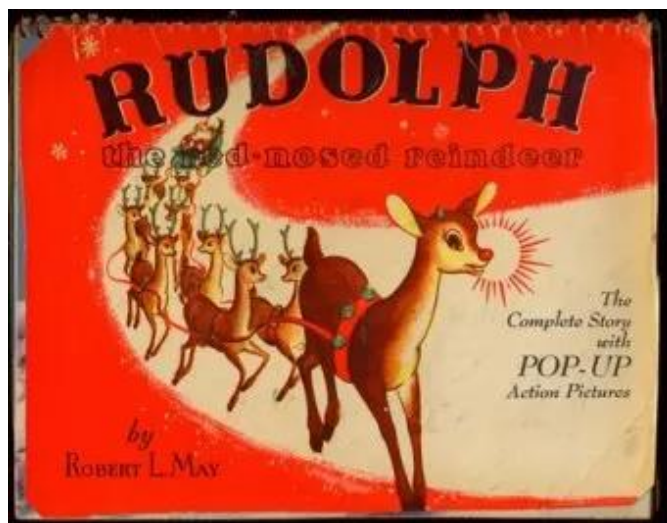


Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer



Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer first appeared in a marketing campaign for retailer Montgomery Ward.

The company gave away coloring books each Christmas to bring children and their parents into their store. In 1939, the company decided to produce the books themselves in order to save on cost. Describing the campaign as 'the perfect Christmas crowd-bringer,' the company gave away more than 2 million copies of the book in their first year, rising to 6 million copies by 1946.

The story of Rudolph was originally written as a poem by Robert May, an employee at Montgomery Ward.

Written in the same metre as 'Twas the night before Christmas' — which itself inspired imagery for Haddon Sundblom's Santa Claus — the tale has mass appeal, telling the relatable story of a small, shy character who is ostracized by those around him.

The true success of this holiday campaign is demonstrated in its post-war licensing, however, with Rudolph appearing in cartoons, songs, comics, animations and even a feature-length film.

In 1964, an eponymous stop-motion special was aired on television, and now remains the longest-running televised Christmas special of all time.

In a rare act of corporate generosity, the retailer handed over the Rudolph rights to its creator in 1947, who was struggling financially following the passing of his wife.

May became a millionaire through licensing the character.

Rudolph ceased to be a marketing campaign for Montgomery Ward, elevated instead to a product in his own right and transcending into common Christmas folklore.

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