

# Groucho Re-MARX on Losing Everything

Groucho Marx was a famous stage and screen comedian from 1910 until his death in 1977. Born on New York's east side of Jewish immigrant parents, his family and their living conditions were poor at best. When Groucho was fifteen and his mother discovered that he could sing, she found him his first job in show business.

Later, along with his brothers, Harpo, Chico, Gummo, and Zeppo, he developed an act that came to be known as the funniest in vaudeville and then in films. Audiences and critics alike adored the Marx Brothers' wisecracking irreverent humor. By 1924 when they began performing on Broadway, the Marx Brothers were world-class talents with world-class earnings, much of which they invested in the soaring stock market.

In the 1920's the Marx Brothers and everyone else wanted to get in on investment opportunities offered by growing businesses with new, sought-after products and services. American consumerism fueled an economic boom that didn't seem like it could ever end, but end it did - in 1929. Many people, including Groucho Marx, lost everything they had in the October stock market crash. Still, Groucho took his losses and did what he did best, made jokes about them: "Some people I know lost millions. I was luckier. All I lost was two hundred and forty thousand dollars. I would have lost more, but that was all the money I had."



All of these adjectives could describe Groucho Marx **EXCEPT**

- A. Jewish.
- B. immigrant.
- C. talented.
- D. wisecracking.

A synonym for the word "irreverent" in the second paragraph would be

- A. disrespectful.
- B. unintentional.
- C. infamous.
- D. biannual.

Which question could the reader answer based on information in the passage?

- A. What were Groucho's parents' names?
- B. When was Groucho Marx born?
- C. Where did Groucho's career begin?
- D. Why did Groucho go into show business?

Groucho Marx was \_\_\_ to many people because of his \_\_\_.

- A. well-known ... living conditions
- B. funny ... high earnings
- C. world-class ... consumerism
- D. similar ... stock losses

**DIRECTIONS:**

- 1) **Number** each paragraph in the left hand margin.
- 2) As you read the text **highlight** in **YELLOW** important information (main ideas, description of people or places, facts, or other evidence).
- 3) As you read the text, **circle** in **GREEN** key terms, dates, historical events, names, places, and words that signal relationship (“this led to...” or “as a result of...”) or words that are repeated for emphasis. **If the phrase is longer than 3-4 words it should be highlighted not circled.**
- 4) As you read the text, **box** in **ORANGE** words with which you are unfamiliar. In the margins, **define** these words. Remember, this is an exercise in building your vocabulary. So, if you can use context clues to figure out what the word means, but can't define it on its own, you need to box and define that word. **Words that have been boxed for you must be defined! (Use a hard copy dictionary or [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com))**
- 5) **Summarize** each document:
  - a. In 1-2 sentences only, summarize the **main idea** being communicated by each document. Highlight the word “summary” in **PINK**.
- 6) **Analyze:** Answer the questions at the bottom of the worksheet.