

Analysing and Creating Humorous Texts: a student work ebook



Lessons and exercises based on
developing knowledge of and
writing skills in the humour genre

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a student work ebook*

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3. Why do we laugh?

Humour allows us to communicate with people and see the world differently.

In your reflections and discussions about humour you may have come up with some of the following ideas about why we laugh. We find things funny when:

- something unexpected or incongruent happens
- someone says something unexpected, like telling the truth
- accidental language like malapropism, spoonerism or ambiguity is used
- word plays like puns are used
- non-verbal facial expressions, gestures and costumes are used
- roles are reversed – male/female, teacher/student, etc.
- the conventionally unmentionable – body functions, crude language, swearing, etc. is used
- something terrible happens to someone else
- something embarrassing happens to someone else
- someone does something silly, awkward or clumsy.

Complete the exercise below.

Exercise 3: Why do we laugh?

1. Look at the cartoon below. What makes it funny? Explain your ideas.



By Jean Pierre Gallot

https://www.flickr.com/photos/jean_pierre_gallot_69009/7772720406

1. The Unexpected

- a. Create a cartoon showing someone behaving in an unexpected way.

2. Telling the Truth Unexpectedly

- a. Role-play a situation in which someone tells the truth unexpectedly. The setting can be the principal's office, the classroom, at the dinner table, etc.

3. Something terrible or embarrassing happens

- a. Often we find people's misfortunes humorous. Write a list of incidents, which could be potentially embarrassing or dangerous, which you would find funny.

4. Being Silly

- a. The word pixilated means slightly crazy or intoxicated. Free write in a pixilated manner for two minutes.
- b. Group activity: To do the activity below, the first person in the group begins by writing one line for the conversation and then passes it on to the next person to continue. Every person should write about two lines.
- c. Come up with two characters. Let your two characters meet at the beach for lunch. Write an outrageous dialogue (very silly) about what they choose to eat for lunch and their general conversation.

5. Accidental language and word plays

- a. Choose two characters from the list given:
 - trembling surgeon
 - builder of a temple
 - a liar
 - boy wearing hippy clothes
 - tourist with bird poo in his hair
 - the sunlight on a sleeping cat
 - woman who dreams of being a movie star
 - the sun
 - a murderess
 - a thief.
- b. Write down one question to ask each of your characters.
- c. Write two answers (one for each character) that your selected characters would give in response to your question. Include accidental language and/or word plays in your answer.

Extend yourself

1. You are invited to a 'Come as Your Madness' Costume Party. Write about your own madness (300 words).
 - a) What form does this madness take?
 - b) What costume did you wear to express this madness?
 - c) What happened at the party?
 - d) What happened the day after?
2. Illustrate your 'madness'.

