



The Challenge of Comedy

Visual Prompt: What makes people laugh?

Unit Overview

If laughter is truly the best medicine, then a study of challenges would not be complete without a close examination of the unique elements of comedy. Overcoming challenges is often easier when we are able to look at the humorous side of life. However, finding humor is not always easy; it can be a challenge in itself. In this unit, you will learn how authors create humor and how they use humor to reveal a universal truth (theme).

GOALS:

- To analyze how a variety of authors create humor in print and non-print texts.
- To analyze how humor is used to reveal a universal truth (theme).
- To write a well-developed analysis of a humorous text.
- To analyze and perform a scene from a Shakespearean comedy.
- To understand verbals and how they are used in writing.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

juxtaposition
derision
denounce
caricature

Literary Terms

persona
satire
irony
dialect
hyperbole
yarn
alliteration
comedy
performance

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*Texts not included in these materials.

Language and Writer's Craft

- Verbals (4.2)
- Using Verbals (4.4)

Previewing the Unit

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Think-Pair-Share, QHT, Close Reading, Marking the Text, Paraphrasing, Graphic Organizer

My Notes

Learning Targets

- Preview the big ideas in the unit and make predictions about the topics of study.
- Analyze the skills and knowledge required to completed Embedded Assessment 1 successfully.

Making Connections

In the final unit you will encounter the challenging task of appreciating humorous texts and Shakespearean texts. You will use all your collaborative, speaking and listening, reading, and writing skills as you examine the ways in which authors create humor.

Essential Questions

Based on your current knowledge, respond to the following Essential Questions:

1. How do writers and speakers use humor to convey truth?
2. What makes an effective performance of a Shakespearean comedy?

Developing Vocabulary

Use a QHT chart to sort the terms on the Contents page. Remember, one academic goal is to move all words to the “T” column by the end of the unit.

Unpacking Embedded Assessment 1

Closely read the assignment for Embedded Assessment 1.

Write an essay that explains how an author creates humor for effect and uses it to communicate a universal truth.

Then, find the Scoring Guide and work with your class to paraphrase the expectations. Create a graphic organizer to use as a visual reminder of the required concepts (what you need to know) and skills (what you need to do).

After each activity, use this graphic to guide **reflection** about what you have learned and what you still need to learn in order to be successful in the Embedded Assessment.

INDEPENDENT READING LINK

For your outside reading for this unit, choose texts by writers whom you find humorous. You might look for humorous short stories as well as narrative essays and poetry.

Understanding the Complexity of Humor

ACTIVITY
4.2

Learning Targets

- Write an objective summary of an informational text.
- Use precise diction to explain a personal definition of humor.

Before Reading

1. **Quickwrite:** What makes you laugh? Describe your sense of humor.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Skimming/Scanning,
Predicting, Close Reading,
Marking the Text,
Summarizing, Revisiting Prior
Work, Discussion Groups

2. Skim and scan the title and headings (text features) of the following essay. Predict what kind of information you will learn from the text, and write your predictions next to the headings in the My Notes section.

My Notes

During Reading

3. As you read, mark the text to indicate key information, and then annotate the text by summarizing the main idea of each section.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marc Tyler Nobleman (b. 1972) has written more than 70 books. His current writing interest is picture books for readers of all ages. He is also a cartoonist whose work has been published in numerous well-known publications, including *The Wall Street Journal*, *Forbes*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and *New York Daily News*.

Essay

Made You Laugh

by Marc Tyler Nobleman

1 Would you like to know a language everyone in the world understands? You already do—because you laugh. Any two people from vastly different cultures who don't speak a word of the other's language still know exactly what is meant when the other person laughs.

2 Think of laughter as the unofficial language of Earth. Yet how much do any of us really understand about humor?

Understanding the Complexity of Humor

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Why does this article discuss the scientific nature of laughter?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Why does laughter seem to qualify as a biological function? What might be the biological function of laughter?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Why is this section called “Serious Stuff”? What is serious about comedy?

GRAMMAR & USAGE

Subject-Verb Agreement

A verb form must agree in number (singular or plural) with its subject. When the subject is plural, the verb of the sentence must also be plural. For example:

Singular: “His **comedy is** funny . . .”

Plural: “**Comedians have** their own theories . . .”

The words each, each one, either, neither, everyone, everybody, anybody, anyone, nobody, somebody, someone, and no one are singular subjects and thus require a singular verb form. Do not be confused by words that appear between the subject and the verb. For example:

“**Everyone** who writes comedy **needs** to know the audience.”

On the Laugh Track

3 What makes things funny? READ asked John Ficarra, the editor of MAD magazine. After all, he should know. Here’s what he said: “Monkeys. They’re unbeatable. For example, show a photo of a dentist—not funny. Show a photo of a dentist with a monkey in his chair, and it’s comedy gold. Try this theory out on a few of your family photos, and you’ll see.” OK, so monkeys are funny. What else? How about this?

4 Two hunters were in the woods, when one collapsed. He didn’t seem to be breathing. The other called the emergency number and said, “My friend is dead! What can I do?” The operator said, “Calm down, I can help. First, let’s make sure he’s dead.” After a second of silence on the hunter’s end, the operator heard a gunshot. The hunter came back on the phone and said, “OK, now what?”

5 If you laughed, you’re not alone. In the year 2001, that joke was voted the funniest in the world as part of a project called LaughLab. Psychologist Richard Wiseman’s goal was to determine what makes people laugh and what is found to be funny among men and women, older and younger people, and people from different countries. His research team tested people in person and asked others to submit opinions online using a “Giggleometer,” which ranked jokes on a scale of 1–5. More than 40,000 jokes were tested.

6 You may be saying to yourself, “Studying jokes? Is that science?” But plenty of smart people say yes. Laughter is a biological function. It has a certain rhythm; laughter syllables build, then trail off, and they come out in a repetitive, not random, sequence. For example, “ha-ha-ho-ho-he” is typical, but “ha-ho-ha-ho-ha” or “he-ho-he” just doesn’t happen.

7 Babies begin to laugh instinctively when they’re about four months old, perhaps to form a connection with parents. Those born blind and deaf also laugh, so laughter is not dependent on sight and hearing. Other animals, notably chimps, exhibit laugh-like behavior when playing with one another. Even rats, when tickled, make high-pitched squeals that can be interpreted as laughter. (As you might guess, only a dedicated few know this firsthand.)

Comedy Is Serious Stuff

8 Comics know that the same jokes are not funny to everyone everywhere. Ed Hiestand, a writer for comedy great Johnny Carson, told READ, “Everyone who writes comedy needs to know the audience. On the Carson show, everybody would laugh on a Friday night. Nobody would laugh on a Monday.” Even within one state or town or family, senses of humor are as varied as the people are. Professional comics do not assume a 10 p.m. audience will like a joke because a 7 p.m. audience did.

9 Comedians who test jokes for a living say it’s hit or miss. “It’s a tough gig, and you have to have a large threshold for pain,” said stand-up Jay Nog. Performers whose jokes get a two-second laugh consider that a significant accomplishment.

10 Timing is critical. Starting stand-up Zubair Simonson said he’s learning the hard way that “good timing can cause a weak joke to soar, while poor timing can cause a strong joke to falter.” Authors and film actors do not often get immediate public feedback. But comics do.

11 What keeps the funny guys going? The laughs and after-effects. “The best humor has some sort of layer to it; it makes a statement of some kind or comment,” said Margy Yuspa, a director at Comedy Central. “An example is [Dave] Chappelle. His comedy is funny on the surface and also often comments on race or social issues.”

Funny You Said That

12 Comedians have their own theories about humor. “What makes us laugh is a surprise change in perspective that connects an unknown with a known idea in a unique manner,” said Ronald P. Culberson, a humorist at FUNsulting.com. “For instance, a three-legged dog walks into an Old West saloon and says, “I’m looking for the man who shot my paw.”

13 Ask an average person why humans laugh, and he or she would probably say, “Because something was funny.” But comics need to know what gives the giggles; their livelihood depends on it.

14 Comedian Anthony DeVito told READ that “people tend to laugh at things that reinforce what they already believe. Comedy tells them they’re right.”

15 Gary Gulman, a finalist in Last Comic Standing, a reality TV show and comedy competition, gave specifics. “Sometimes it’s a keen observation about something you thought you lived through. Sometimes it’s a **juxtaposition** of words. Sometimes it’s a gesture or a sound. An encyclopedia couldn’t do this question justice.”

What Are You Laughing At?

16 Yet laughter is not always a planned response to a joke. One study found that 80 percent of the time, we laugh at something that just happens. People often laugh just because someone else does. Like a yawn, a laugh is contagious. That’s why some sitcoms use laugh tracks.

17 Laughter is also social, a way to bond with others. After all, how often do you laugh alone? When two or more people laugh at the same thing, it is as if nature reminds them of what they have in common.

18 Behavioral neuroscientist Robert R. Provine conducted a 10-year experiment in which he eavesdropped on 2,000 conversations in malls, at parties, and on city sidewalks. He found that the greatest guffaws did not follow intentionally funny statements; people laughed hardest at everyday comments that seemed funny only in a certain social context.

19 “Do you have a rubber band?” is not in and of itself humorous, but it is if it’s said in response to “I like Amelia so much. I wish I could get her attention.”

Theories of Funniness

20 There are three main theories about humor.

21 Release theory—Humor gives a break from tension. In a horror movie, as a character creeps through a dark house (often idiotically) to follow an eerie noise, he might open a door to find a cat playing with a squeeze toy. The audience laughs in relief. Humor also lets us deal with unpleasant or forbidden issues, such as death and violence. People are often more comfortable laughing at something shocking said by someone else, though they would never say it themselves. Comedian Keenen Ivory Wayans once said, “Comedy is the flip side of pain. The worst things that happen to you are hysterical—in retrospect. But a comedian doesn’t need retrospect; he realizes it’s funny while he’s in the eye of the storm.”

My Notes

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

Juxtaposition, a technique used by artists and writers, places normally unassociated ideas, words, and phrases next to one another for effect (e.g., surprise or wit).

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Why are comedians most interested in figuring out what makes people laugh and why?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Why is unplanned humor often funnier than planned humor?

Understanding the Complexity of Humor

Literary Terms

A **persona** is the voice or character speaking or narrating a story.

WORD CONNECTIONS

Superiority has the Latin root *super*, which means “placed above.” This root is found in many English words, including, *superb*, *superlative*, *supreme*, *supervise*, *superintendent*, and *supernatural*.

An *incongruity* happens when things do not match as they are expected to. The word *incongruity* has the root *-congru-*, which means “to come together,” “to agree,” or “to coincide.” The prefix *in-* means “not” or “without.”

Literary Terms

Satire is a form of comedy that uses humor, irony, or exaggeration to expose and criticize issues in society or people’s weaknesses.

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

What distinction can you make between what makes children laugh and what makes adults laugh? Why might children laugh more often than adults?

22 Superiority theory—Audience members laugh at those who appear to be more stupid than they judge themselves to be. Slapstick humor, such as seeing a guy slip on a banana peel, often falls into this category. This theory dates back to Plato in ancient Greece and was prominent in the Middle Ages, when people with deformities were often employed as court jesters.

23 Some comedians exploited this theory by building a routine—or even a **persona**—around the idea that they were losers who couldn’t catch a break. Larry David, David Letterman, and Woody Allen are comedians who have done this, each in his own way.

24 Incongruity theory—People laugh when things that are not normally associated with each other are put together. Many comedy duos, from Laurel and Hardy to David Spade and Chris Farley, feature a thin man and a fat man, a visual contrast.

25 People also laugh when there is a difference between what they expect to happen and what actually occurs. They are being led in a certain direction, and then that direction abruptly changes, and the unpredictability makes them laugh. Children see birds all the time without reaction, but if one flies into their classroom through an open window, they will probably explode in giggles.

Got Laughs?

26 What we laugh at changes as we age. Here are some examples.

Audience	Often Likes
Young children	Slapstick, or silly physical humor
Elementary-school Children	Puns , simple jokes that play off the sound rather than the meaning of a word, such as “Lettuce all go to the salad bar”
Teens	Jokes about topics that authority figures would consider rebellious, a way to use humor to deal with nerve-racking subjects
Adults, particularly well-educated ones	Satire , which makes fun of the weaknesses of people and society

27 Generally, children laugh more than adults. One study found that adults laugh 20 times a day, while children laugh 200 times!

The Secrets of Humor

28 Certain comedic devices turn up again and again in jokes, comic strips, and filmed entertainment—because they succeed.

29 “There were tricks,” said Hiestand of his days writing for *The Tonight Show* hosted by Johnny Carson, “things you would see, certain things always got laughs.” One of the most popular is often called the rule of threes. That is a pattern in which two nonfunny elements are followed by a third that is funny (yet still makes sense within the context). Many jokes start off with a list of three, such as “A rabbi, a lawyer, and a duck walk into a bar.” As the joke unfolds, the rabbi says something straightforward, then the lawyer does as well, but the duck finishes with something witty or absurd.

30 Three guys were stranded on an island. An antique lamp washed ashore. When the guys touched it, a genie came out. “I’ll grant each of you one wish,” the genie said. The first guy said, “I want to go home,” then disappeared. The second guy said, “I also want to go home,” and he too disappeared. The third man suddenly looked sad. He said, “I want my two friends back to keep me company.”

31 Certain concepts seem to be more amusing than others. If you tell any joke involving an animal, and it doesn’t matter which one you use, think Donald and Daffy. In the LaughLab experiment, scientists determined that the funniest animal is the duck. (It’s not arbitrary that a duck was used in the rule-of-threes joke.)

Do Tell—But Do It Right

- 32** There are also known techniques for telling jokes well.
- **Keep it short**—Don’t include any details that are not necessary to bring you to the punch line. In the genie joke, there was no need to specify it was a tropical island or to name the castaways. The quicker you tell a joke, the funnier it will be.
 - **Be specific**—Some comedians swear that a joke is funnier if you say “Aquafresh” instead of “toothpaste.” The attention to detail makes the story seem more real.
 - **Keep a straight face**—Deliver the joke deadpan, or without emotion. That way, any strangeness in the joke will seem even stranger because the person telling it doesn’t seem to notice.
 - **Don’t laugh at your own joke**—Let your audience decide whether it is funny or foolish—or both.

33 Theories and techniques aside, much about humor remains a mystery. According to Hiestand, Carson many times said, “I don’t understand what makes comedy a sure thing. There’s no 100-percent surefire formula.” Meanwhile, for most of us, laughter is never a problem. It does not need to be solved, just enjoyed.



My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Name one “secret” of successful comic devices that you have witnessed as being successful.

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

How do the first two techniques relate to narrative writing?

Understanding the Complexity of Humor

My Notes

After Reading

- Write an objective summary of a section of the text by putting the main points into your own words. Remember that a summary is a broad overview of the text; stick to the main points by writing about big ideas and excluding smaller details.

Using Precise Diction to Analyze Humor

- To analyze a text carefully, one must use specific words to describe the humor and explain the intended effect. Work collaboratively to define terms and to understand the nuances of words with similar denotations (definitions). You have already encountered some of these words.

Words to Describe Humor	Denotation	Connotations
amusing		
cute		
facetious		
hysterical		
ironic		
irreverent		
laughable		
light-hearted		
ludicrous		
mocking		
sarcastic		
satirical		
witty		

Words to Describe Response Humor	Denotation	Connotations
chuckle		
giggle		
groan		
guffaw		
snort		
scoff		
smile		
smirk		
snicker		
titter		

My Notes

Language and Writer's Craft: Verbals

A **verbal** is a word (or words) that functions as a verb. Verbals include participles, infinitives, and gerunds.

Each of the verbs above has a **participial** form in both the present and the past tense:

- Present participle: *smirking, smiling, guffawing*
- Past participle: *smirked, smiled, guffawed*

Each verb also has an **infinitive** form, or “to” form:

- Infinitive: *to smirk, to smile, to guffaw*

Understanding the Complexity of Humor

My Notes

As you know, verbs may be used simply to **show action** in sentences.

John **smirked** at the joke; Doris was **giggling**.

Verb forms may also be used as **nouns**, **adjectives**, and **adverbs**. When used this way, they are called verbals because they look like verbs but are used as other parts of speech. Look at the examples below. Is each of the boldfaced verbals used as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb?

Example: **Smirking**, John handed the **wrapped** gift to Ted, who wanted **to open** it right away.

Smirking is an adjective describing John, **wrapped** is an adjective describing the gift, and **to open** is a noun used as the object of the verb “wanted.”

Identify the verbals in the following sentences and tell whether they are used as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs.

- Giggling and snorting, the crowd of students watched the comic video.
- To laugh is my greatest pleasure.
- Hiding his snickering behind a raised hand, Henry bent forward with a side-splitting outburst of laughter.
- Scoffing at the attempted joke, Mark refused to look at the giggling child.

Writing Prompt: Return to the quickwrite you wrote at the beginning of this activity. Revise it to create a detailed paragraph that uses precise diction to explain your sense of humor. Use at least two words from each chart to explain what does and does not make you laugh and how you typically respond to humorous texts. Be sure to:

- Use precise diction to describe humor.
- Begin with a clear thesis statement.
- Include details and examples.
- Include at least two verbals.

Learning Targets

- Categorize humorous texts into levels of comedy.
- Write an analysis of how an artist creates humor.

Understanding Levels of Comedy

Comedy occurs in different ways.

Low comedy refers to the type of humor that is focused primarily on the situation or series of events. It includes such things as physical mishaps, humor concerning the human body and its functions, coincidences, and humorous situations. With low comedy, the humor is straightforward and generally easy to follow and understand.

Since the primary purpose of most low comedy is to entertain, the action is frequently seen as hilarious or hysterical and the effect is often side-splitting laughter and guffaws. Many times, the characters are exaggerated caricatures rather than fully-developed characters. These caricatures are often caught in unlikely situations or they become victims of circumstances seemingly beyond their control. Thus, the plot takes priority over the characters. Examples of low comedy might include *Madea's Family Reunion*, *Meet the Parents*, and *America's Funniest Home Videos*. Shakespeare's comedies, such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night*, are full of low comedy.

High comedy refers to the type of humor that is focused primarily on characters, dialogue, or ideas. It includes such things as clever wordplay, wit, and pointed remarks regarding larger issues. Many times, high comedy takes an irreverent or unconventional look at serious issues.

Sometimes the humor of high comedy is not immediately obvious; it can take a bit of reflection in order to realize the humorous intent. Frequently, the purpose of high comedy is to express an opinion, to persuade, or to promote deeper consideration of an idea. Often described as amusing, clever, or witty, high comedy typically results in chuckles, grins, and smiles rather than loud laughter. Clever use of language and interesting characters receive more attention than the circumstances that surround them. Examples of high comedy include *Modern Family*, *The Middle*, and, at times, *The Simpsons*. Shakespeare's tragedies, such as *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, also include instances of high comedy.

1. Why do we distinguish between different kinds of comedy?
2. With a partner, take notes to complete each chart on the next page. Brainstorm a strong example at each level of comedy.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Marking the Text, Graphic Organizer, Note-taking, Discussion Groups, Brainstorming, RAFT, Drafting

My Notes

WORD CONNECTIONS

Analogies

An analogy can show a relationship of function or purpose. What word would complete the following analogy? Think about the purpose of each descriptor.
slapstick : guffaws ::
wit : _____

Classifying Comedy

Low Comedy

Purpose	Common Subjects	Emphasis	Descriptions	Intended Responses

High Comedy

Purpose	Common Subjects	Emphasis	Descriptions	Intended Responses

Check Your Understanding

- Write a concise statement that shows you understand the difference between the two levels of comedy.

Analyzing Humorous Texts

4. Brainstorm what you already know about comic strips and political cartoons. Think about format, audience, topics, descriptions of humor, intended effects, etc.

Comic Strips:

Political Cartoons:

5. Read and mark the text of the following definitions for information that is new to you:

Comic strips are meant primarily to entertain. They have a beginning and middle that lead to a humorous ending. They tend to be a low-level comedy that is easily understood by a wide audience.

Political cartoons deal with larger issues and are often meant to communicate a particular political or social message. They often have a single panel with a powerful statement to reinforce humor displayed through a picture (characters or symbols). They tend to be high-level comedy, appealing to a smaller population that is well-informed about a specific topic.

Introducing the Strategy: RAFT

RAFT is an acronym that stands for role, audience, format, and topic. RAFT is a strategy that can be used for responding to and analyzing text by identifying and examining the role, audience, format, and topic of a text you are studying.

6. Use the graphic organizer and the RAFT strategy on the next page to analyze the humor in comics and political cartoons based on the previous definitions.

My Notes

Classifying Comedy

Title _____

Role Who is the author? Where is this cartoon or political cartoon found? What is the attitude (tone) of the author toward the topic? How can you tell?	Comics:	Political Cartoon:
Audience Who does this comic or political cartoon target? How do you know?		
Format Describe the use of print and non-print techniques (dialogue, narration frames, and angles) used for effect.		
Topic What is this comic/cartoon about? Who are the characters? What is happening? How would you describe the humor? What is the intended effect?		

My Notes

Check Your Understanding

Expository Writing Prompt: Think about your selected cartoon or comic. How does the artist create humor? Draft a response that describes the humor and explains the intended effect. Be sure to:

- Establish a controlling idea that describes the humor and intended effect.
- Organize ideas into broader categories.
- Use precise diction to describe humor.

Learning Targets

- Analyze how authors convey humor in speech and writing.
- Write and present an oral reading of an original anecdote.
- Analyze the effect of verbals in a humorous text.

Humorous Anecdotes

1. What do you know about anecdotes?

2. Read the following information to see how the use of anecdotes applies to a study of humor.

An **anecdote** is a brief, entertaining account of an incident or event. Often, anecdotes are shared because of their humorous nature, but anecdotes can also help illustrate larger ideas and concepts. Families sometimes share anecdotes about the humorous things family members have done. Frequently, the stories become more and more absurd as the details are exaggerated with each retelling.

3. Do you or your family have a humorous anecdote that is shared over and over? What is it? Why is it retold? Who tells it? How does it change over time?

Viewing a Humorous Monologue

The following monologue provides humorous accounts of somewhat ordinary events. Finding and describing the humor in the people, places, and events you encounter can enrich your conversations as well as your writing.

4. As you watch the clip for the first time, listen for different topics in the monologue and take notes.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Graphic Organizer, Discussion Groups, Rereading, Close Reading, Marking the Text, Brainstorming, TWIST, Oral Reading



WORD CONNECTIONS

Roots and Affixes

The word *anecdote* comes from the Greek word *anekdota*, meaning “things unpublished.” The roots are the prefix *an-*, meaning “not,” and *-ekdotos*, meaning “published.”

My Notes

Humorous Anecdotes

Comedian's Persona	People	Places	Events

5. The second time you view the clip, pay attention to *how* the comedian delivers the anecdote. Take notes on your assigned section.

<p>1. Describe the comedian's delivery. What is the effect on the audience?</p> <p>Tone:</p> <p>Facial Expressions:</p> <p>Gestures:</p> <p>Volume:</p> <p>Pacing:</p> <p>Inflection (emphasis):</p> <p>Effect:</p>	<p>2. Record the comedian's transitions between topics within his anecdote. What words or phrasing does he use?</p>
<p>3. Describe the imagery the comedian uses. List details that describe a person, place, or event. Why does the comedian include these specific details?</p> <p>Topic:</p> <p>Descriptive Details:</p> <p>Figurative Language:</p>	<p>4. Does the speaker's tone shift? Record his attitude about the topic at the beginning of the monologue and if his attitude changes. How does he communicate this shift?</p>

Check Your Understanding

6. **Quickwrite:** How is the comedian able to create laughter in the audience by telling such simple anecdotes?

7. Discuss how you would describe the humor the comedian uses. What do you think is the intended response? During your discussion, be sure to:

- Use precise diction to describe the humor.
- Provide examples from the text to support your analysis.

Before Reading

8. Do you have any funny memories related to a road trip or riding in a car? Think about the people, places, and events associated with the memory.

During Reading

9. You will next read a humorous essay. As you read, make connections between what you are reading and your own experiences. Also think about other humorous texts you have read and how this text connects to those texts. Finally, make connections between the text and the world around you. Use the following symbols to mark the text.

T/S = Text to Self

T/T = Text to Text

T/W =Text to World

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jon Scieszka (b. 1954) is the oldest of six brothers in his family. He became an elementary school teacher and found that his students liked the funny stories that he enjoyed telling. He has since published a number of children's books, which are illustrated by his friend Lane Smith. In 2008, the Librarian of Congress named him National Ambassador for Young People's Literature.

My Notes

Humorous Anecdotes

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Note the uses of dashes and parentheses to give information. How does the author use these elements for comic effect?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

How does the author use repetition for comic effect?

Essay

from **Brothers**

by Jon Scieszka

Brothers are the guys you stick with and stick up for.

The Scieszka brothers are scattered all over the country now, but we still get together once a year to play a family golf tournament.

We named it after our dad, Lou, and his favorite car—his old Cadillac Coupe de Ville. It is the Coupe de Lou Classic. We all grew up playing golf, because Dad Lou, an elementary school principal, taught Junior Golf and gave us lessons during summers off. And I'm sure my brothers would want me to point out the amazing fact that I am the winner of both the very first Coupe de Lou 1983 and the latest Coupe de Lou 2004.

But of all the Scieszka brother memories, I believe it was a family car trip that gave us our finest moment of brotherhood. We were driving cross-country from Michigan to Florida, all of us, including the family cat (a guy cat, naturally), in the family station wagon. Somewhere mid-trip we stopped at one of those Stuckey's rest-stop restaurants to eat and load up on Stuckey's candy.

We ate lunch, ran around like maniacs in the warm sun, then packed back into the station wagon—Mom and Dad up front, Jim, Jon, Tom, Gregg, Brian, Jeff, and the cat in back. Somebody dropped his Stuckey's Pecan Log Roll® on the floor. The cat found it and must have scarfed every bit of it, because two minutes later we heard that awful ack ack ack sound of a cat getting ready to barf.

The cat puked up the pecan nut log. Jeff, the youngest and smallest (and closest to the floor) was the first to go. He got one look and whiff of the pecan nut cat yack and blew his own sticky lunch all over the cat. The puke-covered cat jumped on Brian, Brian barfed on Gregg. Gregg upchucked on Tom. Tom burped a bit of Stuckey lunch back on Gregg. Jim and I rolled down the windows and hung out as far as we could, yelling in group puke horror.

Dad Lou didn't know what had hit the back of the car. No time to ask questions. He just pulled off to the side of the road. All of the brothers—Jim, Jon, Tom, Gregg, Brian, and Jeff—spilled out of the puke wagon and fell in the grass, gagging and yelling and laughing until we couldn't laugh anymore.

What does it all mean? What essential guy wisdom did I learn from this?

Stick with your brothers. Stick up for your brothers. And if you ever drop a pecan nut log in a car with your five brothers and your cat ... you will probably stick to your brothers.



After Reading

Introducing the Strategy: TWIST

TWIST is an acronym for tone, word choice, imagery, style, and theme. This writing strategy helps a writer analyze each of these elements in a text in order to write a response to an analytical writing prompt about the text.

10. Reread the excerpt from “Brothers,” and use the TWIST strategy to guide your analysis of the text.

Acronym	Text: “Brothers” by Jon Scieszka
Tone <i>What is the author’s attitude about the topic?</i>	
Word choice <i>What specific diction does the author use for effect?</i>	
Imagery <i>What specific descriptive details and figurative language does the author use for effect?</i>	
Style <i>How does the author use language to create humor?</i> <i>What is the intended response the author hopes to achieve?</i>	
Theme <i>What is the central idea of this text?</i> <i>What idea about life is the author trying to convey through humor?</i>	

My Notes

Humorous Anecdotes

My Notes

11. Once you have found textual evidence from the text “Brothers,” and made an inference about the theme, you are ready to write an analytical topic sentence. State the title, author, and genre (TAG) in your thesis or topic sentence. For example:

Jon Scieszka’s anecdote “Brothers” is a low-level comedy that uses a comic situation, exaggeration, and comic diction to reveal a universal truth about how brothers who laugh together stick together.

Practice writing a topic sentence about the stand-up comedy using the TAG format.

Writing and Presenting Your Own Anecdote

12. Use the TWIST graphic organizer below to plan your own anecdote.

Subject of Humorous Memory:

People/Place/Events:

Tone:

What is your attitude about the topic? How will you convey that attitude?

Word Choice:

What specific diction can you use for effect?

Imagery:

What specific descriptive and figurative language can you use for effect?

Style:

*How can you use language (diction and syntax) to create humor?
What is the intended response you hope to achieve?*

Theme:

What idea about life are you trying to convey through humor?

Finding Truth in Comedy

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Think-Pair-Share, Marking the Text, Metacognitive Markers, Questioning the Text, Rereading, Close Reading, Discussion Groups, Socratic Seminar, Drafting

My Notes

Learning Targets

- Collaborate to analyze a humorous essay in a Socratic Seminar.
- Write to explain how an author conveys universal truths through humor.

Before Reading

1. Read and respond to the following quote.

Quote by George Bernard Shaw	Interpretation	Personal Commentary
“The power of comedy is to make people laugh, and when they have their mouths open and they least expect it—you slip in the truth.”		

2. Why might people use comedy to discuss serious or important topics?

During Reading

3. Use these metacognitive markers to mark the text while reading the essay. You will use your marked text to actively participate in a class discussion.

***** text you want to comment on

? text you are questioning

! text intended to be humorous

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dave Barry (b. 1947) was a humor columnist for the *Miami Herald* until 2005. His work there won him the Pulitzer Prize for Commentary in 1988. He has also written novels and children’s books and continues to write articles for a variety of magazines. Much of Barry’s work provides humorous commentary on current social issues.

Essay

i’ve got a few pet peeves
about sea creatures

by Dave Barry

Chunk 1

- 1 Pets are good, because they teach children important lessons about life, the main one being that, sooner or later, life kicks the bucket.
- 2 With me, it was sooner. When I was a boy, my dad, who worked in New York City, would periodically bring home a turtle in a little plastic tank that had a little plastic island with a little plastic palm tree, as is so often found in natural turtle habitats. I was excited about having a pet, and I’d give the turtle a fun pet name like Scooter. But my excitement was not shared by Scooter, who, despite residing in a tropical paradise, never did anything except mope around.
- 3 Actually, he didn’t even mope “around”: He moped in one place without moving, or even blinking, for days on end, displaying basically the same vital signs as an ashtray. Eventually I would realize—it wasn’t easy to tell—that Scooter had passed on to that Big Pond in the Sky, and I’d bury him in the garden, where he’d decompose and become food for the zucchini, which in turn would be eaten by my dad, who would in turn go to New York City, where, compelled by powerful instincts that even he did not understand, he would buy me another moping death turtle. And so the cycle of life would repeat.

Chunk 2

- 4 I say all this to explain why I recently bought fish for my 4-year-old daughter, Sophie. My wife and I realized how badly she wanted an animal when she found a beetle on the patio and declared that it was a pet, named Marvin. She put Marvin into a Tupperware container, where, under Sophie’s loving care and feeding, he thrived for maybe nine seconds before expiring like a little six-legged parking meter. Fortunately, we have a beetle-intensive patio, so, unbeknownst to Sophie, we were able to replace Marvin with a parade of stand-ins of various sizes (“Look! Marvin has grown bigger!” “Wow! Today Marvin has grown smaller!”). But it gets to be tedious, going out early every morning to wrangle patio beetles. So we decided to go with fish.

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

What is the effect of the repetition of “a little plastic”?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

What is the effect of the juxtaposed ideas: “grown bigger” and “grown smaller”?

Finding Truth in Comedy

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

What specific details does the author include in order to have a comic effect?

5 I had fish of my own, years ago, and it did not go well. They got some disease like Mongolian Fin Rot, which left them basically just little pooping torsos. But I figured that today, with all the technological advances we have such as cellular phones and “digital” things and carbohydrate-free toothpaste, modern fish would be more reliable.

6 So we got an aquarium and prepared it with special water and special gravel and special fake plants and a special scenic rock so the fish would be intellectually stimulated and get into a decent college. When everything was ready I went to the aquarium store to buy fish, my only criteria being that they should be 1) hardy digital fish; and 2) fish that looked a LOT like other fish, in case God forbid we had to Marvinize them. This is when I discovered how complex fish society is. I’d point to some colorful fish and say, “What about these?” And the aquarium guy would say, “Those are great fish but they do get aggressive when they mate.” And I’d say, “Like, how aggressive?” And he’d say, “They’ll kill all the other fish.”

7 This was a recurring theme. I’d point to some fish, and the aquarium guy would inform me that these fish could become aggressive if there were fewer than four of them, or an odd number of them, or it was a month containing the letter “R,” or they heard the song “Who Let the Dogs Out.” It turns out that an aquarium is a powder keg that can explode in deadly violence at any moment, just like the Middle East, or junior high school.

Chunk 3

8 TRUE STORY: A friend of mine named David Shor told me that his kids had an aquarium containing a kind of fish called African cichlids, and one of them died. So David went to the aquarium store and picked out a replacement African cichlid, but the aquarium guy said he couldn’t buy that one, and David asked why, and the guy said: “Because that one is from a different lake.”

9 But getting back to my daughter’s fish: After much thought, the aquarium guy was able to find me three totally pacifist fish-Barney Fife fish, fish so nonviolent that, in the wild, worms routinely beat them up and steal their lunch money. I brought these home, and so far they have not killed each other or died in any way. Plus, Sophie LOVES them. So everything is working out beautifully. I hope it stays that way, because I hate zucchini.

After Reading

4. How would you classify this essay (high or low comedy)? Explain.
5. How would you describe the humor? What is the author’s intended response?
Use precise diction in your response
6. How does the author use language (diction, syntax, imagery) to create a humorous tone?

7. How does the author appeal to the audience's emotions, interests, values, and/or beliefs?
8. What is the universal truth (theme) of the text? How does the author develop the idea through humorous characters and plot?
9. Develop Levels of Questions based on your analysis to prepare for a Socratic Seminar discussion. Remember to maintain a formal style in your speaking during the Socratic Seminar. Be sure to:
- Use precise verbs such as: *communicates*, *creates*, *emphasizes*, or *illustrates* when discussing the author's purpose.
 - Use the author's last name: "Barry creates humor by ..."
 - Cite textual evidence to support your opinion.

Levels of Questioning	"I've got a few pet peeves about sea creatures"
Level 1: Literal	
Level 2: Interpretive	
Level 3: Universal (thematic)	

My Notes

Finding Truth in Comedy

My Notes

10. Brainstorm other precise verbs that will help in your discussion. Do you have any other tips for using formal language?

11. Use your analysis and questions to engage in a Socratic Seminar discussion.

Check Your Understanding

Expository Writing Prompt: How does Barry use humor to convey a truth about life? Be sure to:

- Establish a clear controlling idea about conveying a truth.
- Use transitions to create cohesion and clarify relationships among ideas and concepts.
- Use precise diction to describe humorous effects.



INDEPENDENT READING LINK

For independent practice, explain the theme of your text using specific evidence for support. Write several Levels of Questions for a specific section of reading. Use the Level 3 questions to have a discussion about themes with your peers.

Learning Targets

- Analyze satire in print and non-print texts.
- Use transitional strategies in an analytical paragraph.

Before Reading

1. Work collaboratively to diffuse and paraphrase the definition of satire.

Satire, a form of high comedy, is the use of irony, sarcasm, and/or ridicule in exposing, denouncing, and/or deriding human vice and folly.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Marking the Text, Discussion Groups, Rereading, Revisiting, Adding, Substituting

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

Satiric comedy is not always funny. Sometimes it mocks or derides the subject. This kind of **derision** allows a satirist to **denounce** or express strong disapproval of an attitude or topic.

Paraphrase:

2. You will next view a film clip your teacher shows and take notes on the satire you observe.

This clip is from:

TOPIC (vice or folly exposed)

SATIRE- Examples of irony, sarcasm, or ridicule used:

During Reading

3. First listen to the text read aloud, and mark the text any time you recognize humor by highlighting it or putting a smiley face on the text or in the margin.
4. As you reread the text, annotate by circling the highly connotative diction that stands out to you and noting the effect of those words in the My Notes space.

My Notes

Satirical Humor

GRAMMAR & USAGE Verb Tenses

Read these examples of verb tenses:

Past: I **delivered** the mail.

Past perfect: I **had delivered** the mail by that time.

Past progressive/past continuous: I **was delivering** packages all day yesterday.

Past perfect progressive: I **had been delivering** for an hour when I got sick.

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

How do quotes from specific people add to the development of ideas in the article?

Article

Underfunded Schools Forced To Cut Past Tense From Language Programs

from *The Onion*

1 WASHINGTON—Faced with ongoing budget crises, underfunded schools nationwide are increasingly left with no option but to cut the past tense—a grammatical construction traditionally used to relate all actions and states that have transpired at an earlier point in time—from their standard English and language arts programs.

2 A part of American school curricula for more than 200 years, the past tense was deemed by school administrators to be too expensive to keep in primary and secondary education.

3 “This was by no means an easy decision, but teaching our students how to conjugate verbs in a way that would allow them to describe events that have already occurred is a luxury that we can no longer afford,” Phoenix-area high school principal Sam Pennock said.

4 “With our current budget, the past tense must unfortunately become a thing of the past.”

5 In the most dramatic display of the new trend yet, the Tennessee Department of Education decided Monday to remove “-ed” endings from all of the state’s English classrooms, saving struggling schools an estimated \$3 million each year. Officials say they plan to slowly phase out the tense by first eliminating the past perfect; once students have adjusted to the change, the past progressive, the past continuous, the past perfect progressive, and the simple past will be cut. Hundreds of school districts across the country are expected to follow suit.

6 “This is the end of an era,” said Alicia Reynolds, a school district director in Tuscaloosa, AL. “For some, reading and writing about things not immediately taking place was almost as much a part of school as history class and social studies.”

7 “That is, until we were forced to drop history class and social studies a couple of months ago,” Reynolds added.

8 Nevertheless, a number of educators are coming out against the cuts, claiming that the embattled verb tense, while outmoded, still plays an important role in the development of today’s youth.

9 “Much like art and music, the past tense provides students with a unique and consistent outlet for self-expression,” South Boston English teacher David Floen said. “Without it I fear many of our students will lack a number of important creative skills. Like being able to describe anything that happened earlier in the day.”

10 Despite concerns that cutting the past tense will prevent graduates from communicating effectively in the workplace, the home, the grocery store, church, and various other public spaces, a number of lawmakers, such as Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch, have welcomed the cuts as proof that the American school system is taking a more

forward-thinking approach to education. “Our tax dollars should be spent preparing our children for the future, not for what has already happened,” Hatch said at a recent press conference. “It’s about time we stopped wasting everyone’s time with who ‘did’ what or ‘went’ where. The past tense is, by definition, outdated.” Said Hatch, “I can’t even remember the last time I had to use it.”

11 Past-tense instruction is only the latest school program to face the chopping block. School districts in California have been forced to cut addition and subtraction from their math departments, while nearly all high schools have reduced foreign language courses to only the most basic phrases, including “May I please use the bathroom?” and “No, I do not want to go to the beach with Maria and Juan.” Some legislators are even calling for an end to teaching grammar itself, saying that in many inner-city school districts, where funding is most lacking, students rarely use grammar at all.

12 Regardless of the recent upheaval, students throughout the country are learning to accept, and even embrace, the change to their curriculum.

13 “At first I think the decision to drop the past tense from class is ridiculous, and I feel very upset by it,” said David Keller, a seventh-grade student at Hampstead School in Fort Meyers, FL. “But now, it’s almost like it never happens.”

After Reading

5. Circle and explain your response to this text. I think this text is:

hilarious funny clever ridiculous because ...

Discuss the parts of the text that made you laugh, and describe how the connotative words help create the humor.

6. Collaboratively, use the graphic organizer to explore the satire.

The vice or folly exposed in the text:	Textual Evidence:
	Irony:
	Sarcasm:
	Ridicule:

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

How does the use of present tense in the last quote emphasize the satire?

Satirical Humor

My Notes

Writing an Analytical Paragraph

When writing about texts, use the “literary present.” (e.g., “The article *states* . . .,” not “The article *stated* . . .”)

Also, remember to maintain coherence in your writing. Using a well-chosen transition word or phrase can help show the relationship (connection) between the ideas in your writing. Following is a list of commonly used transitional words and phrases.

Purpose	Example
Add	<i>and, again, and then, besides, equally important, finally, further, furthermore, nor, too, next, lastly, what’s more, moreover, in addition, first (second, etc.)</i>
Compare	<i>whereas, but, yet, on the other hand, however, nevertheless, on the contrary, by comparison, where, compared to, up against, balanced against, but, although, conversely, meanwhile, after all, in contrast, although this may be true</i>
Prove	<i>because, for, since, for the same reason, obviously, evidently, furthermore, moreover, besides, indeed, in fact, in addition, in any case, that is</i>
Show Exception	<i>yet, still, however, nevertheless, in spite of, despite, of course, once in a while, sometimes</i>
Show Time	<i>immediately, thereafter, soon, after a few hours, finally, then, later, previously, formerly, first (second, etc.), next, and then</i>
Repeat	<i>in brief, as I have said, as I have noted, as has been noted, to reiterate</i>
Emphasize	<i>definitely, extremely, obviously, in fact, indeed, in any case, absolutely, positively, naturally, surprisingly, always, forever, perennially, eternally, never, emphatically, unquestionably, without a doubt, certainly, undeniably, without reservation</i>
Show Sequence	<i>first, second, third, next, then, following this, at this time, now, at this point, after, afterward, subsequently, finally, consequently, previously, before this, simultaneously, concurrently, thus, therefore, hence, next, and then, soon</i>
Give an Example	<i>for example, for instance, in this case, in another case, on this occasion, in this situation, take the case of, to demonstrate, to illustrate, as an illustration, to illustrate</i>
Summarize or Conclude	<i>in brief, on the whole, summing up, to conclude, in conclusion, as I have shown, as I have said, hence, therefore, accordingly, thus, as a result, consequently</i>

Expository Writing Prompt: Analyze how the text about underfunded schools uses satirical humor to expose human vice or folly. Be sure to:

- Establish and support a controlling idea.
- Use transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
- Use precise diction and maintain a formal style.

Elements of Humor: Comic Characters and Caricatures

ACTIVITY
4.7

Learning Targets

- Define and recognize comic characters and caricatures.
- Collaborate to analyze characters and caricatures in a literary text.

Comic Caricatures and Characters

Characterization is the way a writer reveals a character's personality through what the character says, thinks, and feels or through how the character looks, acts, or interacts with others.

A **caricature** is a pictorial, written, and/or acted representation of a person who exaggerates characteristics or traits for comic effect. Caricatures are often used in cartoon versions of people's faces and usually exaggerate features for comic effect.

1. You will next view some comic scenes. As you view the opening sequence, take notes in the graphic organizer.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Graphic Organizer, Note Taking, Diffusing, Marking the Text, Visualizing, Discussion Groups, Rehearsal

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

To use a **caricature** or to **caricaturize** someone is to exaggerate or imitate certain characteristics to create a comic or distorted idea of a person.

Characters Sketch the caricature.	Details Describe the characterization.	Interpretation What idea is conveyed through the characterization?
Bart	Bart is repetitively writing sentences on the board that say ...	He is the stereotype of the bad kid in the classroom.
Homer		
Marge		
Lisa		
Family		

My Notes

Elements of Humor: Comic Characters and Caricatures

My Notes

2. With your discussion group, discuss what truth about life the author is conveying through humor. Cite specific examples from the graphic organizer.

Before Reading

3. Diffuse the short story by skimming and scanning for unfamiliar words, attempting to determine their meaning in context. Write a synonym above the words.

During Reading

4. Your teacher will assign you one of the following characters: Framton Nuttel, Mrs. Sappleton, or the niece. Mark the text by highlighting evidence that reveals your character's personality. Also, use inferencing to note specific character traits for your character (e.g., gullible, intelligent, honest) in the My Notes space.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hector Hugh Munro (1870–1916), better known by the pen name Saki, was a British writer and satirist known for his masterful short stories poking fun at Edwardian society. His witty and intelligent stories are considered among the best the genre has to offer.

Short Story

The Open Window



by Saki (H. H. Munro)

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Why is it significant that Framton Nuttel is described as undergoing a “nerve cure”? Predict how this detail could be used for humorous effect.

1 “My aunt will be down presently, Mr. Nuttel,” said a very self-possessed young lady of fifteen; “in the meantime you must try and put up with me.”

2 Framton Nuttel endeavoured to say the correct something which should duly¹ flatter the niece of the moment without unduly discounting the aunt that was to come. Privately he doubted more than ever whether these formal visits on a succession of total strangers would do much towards helping the nerve cure which he was supposed to be undergoing.

3 “I know how it will be,” his sister had said when he was preparing to migrate to this rural² retreat; “you will bury yourself down there and not speak to a living soul, and your nerves will be worse than ever from moping.³ I shall just give you letters of introduction to all the people I know there. Some of them, as far as I can remember, were quite nice.”

¹ **duly:** properly or fittingly

² **rural:** country as opposed to city

³ **moping:** becoming listless or dejected

4 Framton wondered whether Mrs. Sappleton, the lady to whom he was presenting one of the letters of introduction, came into the nice division.

5 “Do you know many of the people round here?” asked the niece, when she judged that they had had sufficient silent communion.

6 “Hardly a soul,” said Framton. “My sister was staying here, at the rectory, you know, some four years ago, and she gave me letters of introduction to some of the people here.”

7 He made the last statement in a tone of distinct regret.

8 “Then you know practically nothing about my aunt?” pursued the self-possessed young lady.

9 “Only her name and address,” admitted the caller. He was wondering whether Mrs. Sappleton was in the married or widowed state. An undefinable something about the room seemed to suggest masculine habitation.⁴

10 “Her great tragedy happened just three years ago,” said the child; “that would be since your sister’s time.”

11 “Her tragedy?” asked Framton; somehow in this restful country spot tragedies seemed out of place.

12 “You may wonder why we keep that window wide open on an October afternoon,” said the niece, indicating a large French window that opened on to a lawn.

13 “It is quite warm for the time of the year,” said Framton; “but has that window got anything to do with the tragedy?”

14 “Out through that window, three years ago to a day, her husband and her two young brothers went off for their day’s shooting. They never came back. In crossing the moor⁵ to their favourite snipe-shooting ground they were all three engulfed in a treacherous piece of bog.⁶ It had been that dreadful wet summer, you know, and places that were safe in other years gave way suddenly without warning. Their bodies were never recovered. That was the dreadful part of it.” Here the child’s voice lost its self-possessed note and became falteringly human. “Poor aunt always thinks that they will come back some day, they and the little brown spaniel that was lost with them, and walk in at that window just as they used to do. That is why the window is kept open every evening till it is quite dusk. Poor dear aunt, she has often told me how they went out, her husband with his white waterproof coat over his arm, and Ronnie, her youngest brother, singing ‘Bertie, why do you bound?’ as he always did to tease her, because she said it got on her nerves. Do you know, sometimes on still, quiet evenings like this, I almost get a creepy feeling that they will all walk in through that window—”

15 She broke off with a little shudder. It was a relief to Framton when the aunt bustled into the room with a whirl of apologies for being late in making her appearance.

16 “I hope Vera has been amusing you?” she said.

17 “She has been very interesting,” said Framton.

⁴ **habitation:** living area; occupancy

⁵ **moor:** boggy grassland

⁶ **bog:** wet, spongy ground

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

What tone does the niece convey with her description of the “tragedy”? What effect might this precise detail have on her guest?

Elements of Humor: Comic Characters and Caricatures

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Why is it “horrible” for Framton to listen to Mrs. Sappleton?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

What does the author tell the reader in his narration that makes Framton Nuttel appear silly and pathetic? Why?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Why is Nuttel’s reaction to the return of the men comic rather than appropriate?

18 “I hope you don’t mind the open window,” said Mrs. Sappleton briskly; “my husband and brothers will be home directly from shooting, and they always come in this way. They’ve been out for snipe in the marshes to-day, so they’ll make a fine mess over my poor carpets. So like you men-folk, isn’t it?”

19 She rattled on cheerfully about the shooting and the scarcity of birds, and the prospects for duck in the winter. To Framton it was all purely horrible. He made a desperate but only partially successful effort to turn the talk on to a less ghastly topic; he was conscious that his hostess was giving him only a fragment of her attention, and her eyes were constantly straying past him to the open window and the lawn beyond. It was certainly an unfortunate coincidence that he should have paid his visit on this tragic anniversary.

20 “The doctors agree in ordering me complete rest, an absence of mental excitement, and avoidance of anything in the nature of violent physical exercise,” announced Framton, who laboured⁷ under the tolerably wide-spread delusion⁸ that total strangers and chance acquaintances are hungry for the least detail of one’s ailments⁹ and infirmities, their cause and cure. “On the matter of diet they are not so much in agreement,” he continued.

21 “No?” said Mrs. Sappleton, in a voice which only replaced a yawn at the last moment. Then she suddenly brightened into alert attention—but not to what Framton was saying.

22 “Here they are at last!” she cried. “Just in time for tea, and don’t they look as if they were muddy up to the eyes!”

23 Framton shivered slightly and turned towards the niece with a look intended to convey sympathetic comprehension. The child was staring out through the open window with dazed horror in her eyes. In a chill shock of nameless fear Framton swung round in his seat and looked in the same direction.

24 In the deepening twilight three figures were walking across the lawn towards the window; they all carried guns under their arms, and one of them was additionally burdened with a white coat hung over his shoulders. A tired brown spaniel kept close at their heels. Noiselessly they neared the house, and then a hoarse young voice chanted out of the dusk: “I said, Bertie, why do you bound?”

25 Framton grabbed wildly at his stick and hat; the hall-door, the gravel-drive, and the front gate were dimly-noted stages in his headlong retreat. A cyclist coming along the road had to run into the hedge to avoid an imminent collision.

26 “Here we are, my dear,” said the bearer of the white mackintosh,¹⁰ coming in through the window; “fairly muddy, but most of it’s dry. Who was that who bolted out as we came up?”

⁷ **laboured under:** be misled by a mistaken belief

⁸ **delusion:** a persistent false belief

⁹ **ailments:** diseases, sicknesses

¹⁰ **mackintosh:** raincoat

27 “A most extraordinary man, a Mr. Nuttel,” said Mrs. Sappleton; “could only talk about his illnesses, and dashed off without a word of good-bye or apology when you arrived. One would think he had seen a ghost.”

28 “I expect it was the spaniel,” said the niece calmly; “he told me he had a horror of dogs. He was once hunted into a cemetery somewhere on the banks of the Ganges by a pack of pariah dogs, and had to spend the night in a newly dug grave with the creatures snarling and grinning and foaming just above him. Enough to make anyone lose their nerve.”

29 Romance¹¹ at short notice was her speciality.

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

What is the effect of the niece’s last words to her family? What does the last line of the story mean?

After Reading

5. **Quickwrite** using a 3–2–1 reflection.

- 3 – Describe three things you notice about the author’s use of humor in the story.
- 2 – Describe two characters you can picture most vividly.
- 1 – Share one question you have.

6. Use the graphic organizer to express ideas you have about the characters and humor in this text.

My Notes

Details How does the author develop the character? (actions, words, thoughts)	Characters Describe the character using precise adjectives. Would any of them be considered a caricature?	Interpretation What truth about life is revealed through the comic character?
Framton Nuttel		
Mrs. Sappleton		
The niece		

¹¹ **romance**: an extravagant story without basis in fact

Elements of Humor: Comic Characters and Caricatures

My Notes

Elements of Humor

Explaining why something is funny can be a challenge, but there are some common things authors do that usually make people laugh. Writers create humor by focusing on descriptions and actions that make characters funny, comic situations, and comic language. Humor often depends on some combination of these three elements.

7. Preview the Elements of Humor graphic organizer in Activity 4.11 and add notes about the comic characters and caricatures you explored in this activity. After you explore each new element of humor in the upcoming activities, return to this graphic organizer to add notes about new learning.

Check Your Understanding

Explain whether you think the story by Saki is low or high comedy and why. Was any part of the story unexpected? Explain.

Learning Targets

- Identify how humor is created by comic situations.
- Collaborate to analyze comic situations in a literary text.

Comic situations can be created in many different ways:

- by placing a character in an unlikely situation in which he or she obviously does not belong
- by portraying characters as victims of circumstances who are surprised by unusual events and react in a comical way
- by creating **situational irony** where there is contrast between what characters or readers might reasonably expect to happen and what actually happens

1. While you watch a film clip, think about how the situation contributes to the humor.
2. As you view the clip a second time, take notes using the graphic organizer below.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Graphic Organizer, Note-taking, Think-Pair-Share, Marking the Text, Discussion Groups

Literary Terms

Irony is a literary device that plays on readers' expectations by portraying events in a way that is actually different from reality.

Clip:		Director:
Comic Character	Comic Situation	Film Techniques That Help Create Humor
Appearance/Facial Expressions:	Setting:	Framing:
Actions:	Humorous Events:	Angles:
Words:		Sound:

Elements of Humor: Comic Situations

My Notes

Literary Terms

Dialect is a regional or social variety of a language distinguished by pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary. This section of the story includes a depiction of Tom's and Jim's dialects.

Before Reading

3. How might the following quote help you make predictions about the author's sense of humor?

"Work is a necessary evil to be avoided." — Mark Twain

4. Look at the definition of **dialect**. Skim the following story and find examples of dialect. Try paraphrasing some of the dialogue.

During Reading

5. Pause during your group reading to discuss and annotate your comments in the My Notes space. Use the following menu to guide your collaborative discussion and annotation:

- "I would like to **paraphrase**" (retell what is happening in the plot in your own words)
- "I would like to **clarify**" (discuss a word/idea you are confused about)
- "I would like to **analyze**" (share an inference, assumption, prediction based on the text)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born Samuel Langhorne Clemens, Mark Twain (1835–1910) was an American author and humorist. He is noted for his novels *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), called "the Great American Novel," and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876). He has been lauded as the "greatest American humorist of his age," and William Faulkner called Twain "the father of American literature."

Novel

FROM The Adventures of TOM SAWYER

by Mark Twain

"A DAY'S WORK"

Chunk 1

1 SATURDAY morning was come, and all the summer world was bright and fresh, and brimming with life. There was a song in every heart; and if the heart was young the music issued at the lips. There was cheer in every face and a spring in every step. The locust-trees were in bloom and the fragrance of the blossoms filled the air. Cardiff Hill, beyond the village and above it, was green with vegetation and it lay just far enough away to seem a Delectable Land, dreamy, reposeful, and inviting.



WORD CONNECTIONS

Word Origins

The word *whitewash* has come to have a second meaning. In this story, *whitewash* means "a whitening mixture used on fences and walls." The word has also come to mean "to conceal or cover up crimes, scandals, flaws, or failures." You can see how this usage comes from the idea of using whitewash to cover up something bad.

Chunk 2

2 Tom appeared on the sidewalk with a bucket of whitewash¹ and a long-handled brush. He surveyed the fence, and all gladness left him and a deep melancholy² settled down upon his spirit. Thirty yards of board fence nine feet high. Life to him seemed hollow, and existence but a burden. Sighing, he dipped his brush and passed it along the topmost plank; repeated the operation; did it again; compared the insignificant whitewashed streak with the far-reaching continent of unwhitewashed fence, and sat down on a tree-box discouraged. Jim came skipping out at the gate with a tin pail, and singing Buffalo Gals. Bringing water from the town pump had always been hateful work in Tom's eyes, before, but now it did not strike him so. He remembered that there was company at the pump. White, mulatto, and negro boys and girls were always there waiting their turns, resting, trading playthings, quarrelling, fighting, skylarking. And he remembered that although the pump was only a hundred and fifty yards off, Jim never got back with a bucket of water under an hour—and even then somebody generally had to go after him. Tom said:

Chunk 3

3 “Say, Jim, I’ll fetch the water if you’ll whitewash some.”

4 Jim shook his head and said:

5 “Can’t, Mars Tom. Ole missis, she tole me I got to go an’ git dis water an’ not stop foolin’ roun’ wid anybody. She say she spec’ Mars Tom gwine to ax me to whitewash, an’ so she tole me go ’long an’ ’tend to my own business—she ’lowed SHE’D ’tend to de whitewashin’.”

6 “Oh, never you mind what she said, Jim. That’s the way she always talks. Gimme the bucket—I won’t be gone only a a minute. SHE won’t ever know.”

7 “Oh, I dasn’t, Mars Tom. Ole missis she’d take an’ tar de head off’n me. ’Deed she would.”

8 “SHE! She never licks anybody—whacks ’em over the head with her thimble—and who cares for that, I’d like to know. She talks awful, but talk don’t hurt—anyways it don’t if she don’t cry. Jim, I’ll give you a marvel. I’ll give you a white alley³!”

9 Jim began to waver.

10 “White alley, Jim! And it’s a bully taw.”

11 “My! Dat’s a mighty gay marvel, I tell you! But Mars Tom I’s powerful ’fraid ole missis—”

12 “And besides, if you will I’ll show you my sore toe.”

13 Jim was only human—this attraction was too much for him. He put down his pail, took the white alley, and bent over the toe with absorbing interest while the bandage was being unwound. In another moment he was flying down the street with his pail and a tingling rear, Tom was whitewashing with vigor, and Aunt Polly was retiring from the field with a slipper in her hand and triumph in her eye.

14 But Tom’s energy did not last. He began to think of the fun he had planned for this day, and his sorrows multiplied. Soon the free boys would come tripping along on all sorts of delicious expeditions, and they would make a world of fun of him for having

¹ **whitewash**: a mixture used to whiten

² **melancholy**: sadness

³ **“white alley”**: a kind of marble

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

One of the notable characteristics of Twain’s style is his use of verbals. Examine paragraph 2 and highlight all the verbals in the passage. Do not confuse them with the verbs. Remember, verbals are usually *-ing* (or *-ed*) forms of verbs being used as adjectives, nouns, or adverbs.

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Which words and phrases capture the dialect of these characters?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

How does Tom try to get Jim to help him? Why does he fail?

Elements of Humor: Comic Situations



WORD CONNECTIONS

Word Meanings

Jargon is the specialized or technical language of a trade, profession, or similar group. Paragraphs 15–20 include examples of steamboat piloting jargon. At one time, Mark Twain was a steamboat pilot on the Mississippi River.

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

How does Twain use jargon for effect?

to work—the very thought of it burnt him like fire. He got out his worldly wealth and examined it—bits of toys, marbles, and trash; enough to buy an exchange of WORK, maybe, but not half enough to buy so much as half an hour of pure freedom. So he returned his straitened means to his pocket, and gave up the idea of trying to buy the boys. At this dark and hopeless moment an inspiration burst upon him! Nothing less than a great, magnificent inspiration.

Chunk 4

15 He took up his brush and went tranquilly to work. Ben Rogers hove in sight presently—the very boy, of all boys, whose ridicule he had been dreading. Ben’s gait was the hop-skip-and-jump—proof enough that his heart was light and his anticipations high. He was eating an apple, and giving a long, melodious whoop, at intervals, followed by a deep-toned ding-dong-dong, ding-dong-dong, for he was personating a steamboat. As he drew near, he slackened speed, took the middle of the street, leaned far over to starboard and rounded to ponderously and with laborious pomp and circumstance—for he was personating the Big Missouri, and considered himself to be drawing nine feet of water. He was boat and captain and engine-bells combined, so he had to imagine himself standing on his own hurricane-deck giving the orders and executing them:

16 “Stop her, sir! Ting-a-ling-ling!” The headway ran almost out, and he drew up slowly toward the sidewalk.

17 “Ship up to back! Ting-a-ling-ling!” His arms straightened and stiffened down his sides.

18 “Set her back on the stabboard! Ting-a-ling-ling! Chow! ch-chow-wow! Chow!” His right hand, mean-time, describing stately circles—for it was representing a forty-foot wheel.

19 “Let her go back on the labboard! Ting-a-ling-ling! Chow-ch-chow-chow!” The left hand began to describe circles.

20 “Stop the stabboard! Ting-a-ling-ling! Stop the labboard! Come ahead on the stabboard! Stop her! Let your outside turn over slow! Ting-a-ling-ling! Chow-ow-ow! Get out that head-line! LIVELY now! Come—out with your spring-line—what’re you about there! Take a turn round that stump with the bight of it! Stand by that stage, now—let her go! Done with the engines, sir! Ting-a-ling-ling! SH’T! S’H’T! SH’T!” (trying the gauge-cocks).

21 Tom went on whitewashing—paid no attention to the steamboat. Ben stared a moment and then said: “Hi-YI! YOU’RE up a stump, ain’t you!”

Chunk 5

22 No answer. Tom surveyed his last touch with the eye of an artist, then he gave his brush another gentle sweep and surveyed the result, as before. Ben ranged up alongside of him. Tom’s mouth watered for the apple, but he stuck to his work. Ben said:

23 “Hello, old chap, you got to work, hey?”

24 Tom wheeled suddenly and said:

25 “Why, it’s you, Ben! I warn’t noticing.”

26 “Say—I’m going in a-swimming, I am. Don’t you wish you could? But of course you’d druther WORK—wouldn’t you? Course you would!”

27 Tom contemplated the boy a bit, and said:

28 “What do you call work?”

- 29 “Why, ain’t THAT work?”
- 30 Tom resumed his whitewashing, and answered carelessly:
- 31 “Well, maybe it is, and maybe it ain’t. All I know, is, it suits Tom Sawyer.”
- 32 “Oh come, now, you don’t mean to let on that you LIKE it?”
- 33 The brush continued to move.
- 34 “Like it? Well, I don’t see why I oughtn’t to like it. Does a boy get a chance to whitewash a fence every day?”
- 35 That put the thing in a new light. Ben stopped nibbling his apple. Tom swept his brush daintily back and forth—stepped back to note the effect—added a touch here and there—criticized the effect again—Ben watching every move and getting more and more interested, more and more absorbed. Presently he said:
- 36 “Say, Tom, let ME whitewash a little.”
- 37 Tom considered, was about to consent; but he altered his mind:
- 38 “No—no—I reckon it wouldn’t hardly do, Ben. You see, Aunt Polly’s awful particular about this fence—right here on the street, you know—but if it was the back fence I wouldn’t mind and SHE wouldn’t. Yes, she’s awful particular about this fence; it’s got to be done very careful; I reckon there ain’t one boy in a thousand, maybe two thousand, that can do it the way it’s got to be done.”
- 39 “No—is that so? Oh come, now—lemme just try. Only just a little—I’d let YOU, if you was me, Tom.”
- 40 “Ben, I’d like to, honest injun; but Aunt Polly—well, Jim wanted to do it, but she wouldn’t let him; Sid wanted to do it, and she wouldn’t let Sid. Now don’t you see how I’m fixed? If you was to tackle this fence and anything was to happen to it—”
- 41 “Oh, shucks, I’ll be just as careful. Now lemme try. Say—I’ll give you the core of my apple.”
- 42 “Well, here—No, Ben, now don’t. I’m afeard—”
- 43 “I’ll give you ALL of it!”

Chunk 6

44 Tom gave up the brush with reluctance in his face, but alacrity⁴ in his heart. And while the late steamer Big Missouri worked and sweated in the sun, the retired artist sat on a barrel in the shade close by, dangled his legs, munched his apple, and planned the slaughter of more innocents. There was no lack of material; boys happened along every little while; they came to jeer, but remained to whitewash. By the time Ben was fagged out, Tom had traded the next chance to Billy Fisher for a kite, in good repair; and when he played out, Johnny Miller bought in for a dead rat and a string to swing it with—and so on, and so on, hour after hour. And when the middle of the afternoon came, from being a poor poverty-stricken boy in the morning, Tom was literally rolling in wealth. He had besides the things before mentioned, twelve marbles, part of a jews-harp, a piece of blue bottle-glass to look through, a spool cannon, a key that wouldn’t unlock anything, a fragment of chalk, a glass stopper of a decanter, a tin soldier, a couple of tadpoles, six fire-crackers, a kitten with only one eye, a brass door-knob, a dog-collar—but no dog—the handle of a knife, four pieces of orange-peel, and a dilapidated old window sash.

⁴ **alacrity**: cheerful readiness [per Merriam-Webster]

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Tom tries to manipulate his friends into doing whitewashing for him. How does he change his plan after Jim’s refusal to help?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

What is the effect of listing Tom’s “treasures” in such great detail?

Elements of Humor: Comic Situations

My Notes

After Reading

6. On a separate piece of paper or in your Reader/Writer Notebook, create a graphic organizer like the one below to answer comprehension questions about the story.

Tom is like a ... (create a simile)	It is ironic that ...
The part of the story that stands out in my head is ... (draw a picture)	I wonder ...
This is a comedic situation because ...	

7. What is the level of comedy of this text? What is a universal truth, or theme, of this text? Write a thematic statement. Be sure to support your ideas with textual evidence.

Twain – “All in a Day’s Work”

Level of Comedy:

Theme subject(s):

Theme statement:

Check Your Understanding

Expository Writing Prompt: Explain how Mark Twain uses comic characters and situations to convey a universal truth through humor. Be sure to:

- Establish a controlling idea and support it with textual evidence and commentary.
- Use transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
- Use precise diction and maintain a formal style.
- Use verbals.

Elements of Humor

Add your notes about comic situations to the Elements of Humor graphic organizer in Activity 4.11.

GRAMMAR & USAGE

Point of View

When writing an analysis of literature, avoid using the first-person pronouns *I*, *me*, *my*, and *we*. Instead, present your analysis in the third-person point of view, using *he*, *she*, *they*, or *it*.

My Notes

[illegible]

Elements of Humor: Hyperbole

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Note-taking, Marking the Text,
Skimming/Scanning,
Discussion Groups

Literary Terms

Hyperbole describes the literary technique of extreme exaggeration for emphasis, often used for comic effect.

My Notes

Literary Terms

A **yarn** is a long, often involved story, usually telling of incredible or fantastic events; an entertaining tale; a tall tale.

Learning Targets

- Analyze the effect of hyperbole in poetry.
- Identify hyperbole in previously studied print and non-print texts.

Understanding Hyperbole

1. Finish the lines using hyperbolic language. The first line is shown as an example.
 - My dog is so big, he beeps when he backs up.
 - I'm so hungry, I could eat a _____.
 - My cat is so smart that _____.
 - She was so funny that _____.

Before Reading

2. How might a **yarn** relate to hyperbole?

During Reading

3. Use metacognitive markers to closely read the text: * for a line using hyperbole, ? for a line you are questioning, or ! for a line you find humorous or strange.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carl Sandburg (1878–1967) was a journalist who also wrote poetry, novels, and historical books. He is perhaps best known as a poet, although his biography *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years* won a Pulitzer Prize.

Poetry

“They Have Yarns”

by Carl Sandburg

They have yarns

Of a skyscraper so tall they had to put hinges

On the two top stories so to let the moon go by,

Of one corn crop in Missouri when the roots

5 Went so deep and drew off so much water

The Mississippi riverbed that year was dry,

Of pancakes so thin they had only one side,

Of “a fog so thick we shingled the barn and six feet out on the fog,”

Of Pecos Pete straddling a cyclone in Texas and riding it to the west coast where

“it rained out under him,”

- 10 Of the man who drove a swarm of bees across the Rocky Mountains and the Desert
“and didn’t lose a bee,”
Of a mountain railroad curve where the engineer in his cab can touch the caboose
and spit in the conductor’s eye,
Of the boy who climbed a cornstalk growing so fast he would have starved to death
if they hadn’t shot biscuits up to him,
Of the old man’s whiskers: “When the wind was with him his whiskers
arrived a day before he did,”
Of the hen laying a square egg and cackling, “Ouch!” and of hens laying eggs with
the dates printed on them,
- 15 Of the ship captain’s shadow: it froze to the deck one cold winter night,
Of mutineers on that same ship put to chipping rust with rubber hammers,
Of the sheep counter who was fast and accurate: “I just count their feet and divide
by four,”
Of the man so tall he must climb a ladder to shave himself,
Of the runt so teeny-weeny it takes two men and a boy to see him,
- 20 Of mosquitoes: one can kill a dog, two of them a man,
Of a cyclone that sucked cookstoves out of the kitchen, up the chimney flue, and on
to the next town,
Of the same cyclone picking up wagon-tracks in Nebraska and dropping them over
in the Dakotas,
Of the hook-and-eye snake unlocking itself into forty pieces, each piece two inches
long, then in nine seconds flat snapping itself together again,
Of the watch swallowed by the cow—when they butchered her a year later the
watch was running and had the correct time,
- 25 Of horned snakes, hoop snakes that roll themselves where they want to go, and
rattlesnakes carrying bells instead of rattles on their tails,
Of the herd of cattle in California getting lost in a giant redwood tree that had
hollowed out,
Of the man who killed a snake by putting its tail in its mouth so it swallowed itself,
Of railroad trains whizzing along so fast they reach the station before the whistle,
Of pigs so thin the farmer had to tie knots in their tails to keep them from crawling
through the cracks in their pen,
- 30 Of Paul Bunyan’s big blue ox, Babe, measuring between the eyes forty- two
ax-handles and a plug of Star tobacco exactly,
Of John Henry’s hammer and the curve of its swing and his singing of it as
“a rainbow round my shoulder.”



WORD CONNECTIONS

Literary Allusions

Pecos Pete, Paul Bunyan, and John Henry are figures out of American legends and tall tales.

GRAMMAR & USAGE Participial Phrases

A **participial phrase** is a group of words beginning with a participle and used as an adjective. For example:
“laying a square egg”
“growing so fast”
“chipping rust with rubber hammers”

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

What allusions does the author use? How might this add to the humor?

Elements of Humor: Hyperbole

My Notes

After Reading

4. In a collaborative discussion, share your comments and questions and the lines you found most interesting, strange, or humorous.
5. Add a line or two to Sandburg's poem, using hyperbolic language and a participial adjective phrase. Consider using an allusion for humorous effect. Note how each line of hyperbole begins the same way.

During Reading

6. Mark the text to indicate evidence of hyperbole and use of verbals.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ted Hughes (1930–1998) is considered to be one of the twentieth century's greatest poets. He wrote almost 90 books during his long career and won numerous prizes and fellowships. In 1984, he was appointed England's poet laureate.

Poetry

“Moosees”

by Ted Hughes

The goofy Moose, the walking house frame,
Is lost
In the forest. He bumps, he blunders, he stands.

With massy bony thoughts sticking out near his ears—

- 5 Reaching out palm upwards, to catch whatever might be
falling from heaven—
He tries to think,
Leaning their huge weight
On the lectern of his front legs.



KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Look for examples of parallel structure and repetition in the poem. How do these stylistic choices make the moose appear “goofy”?

He can't find the world!

- 10** Where did it go? What does a world look like?

The Moose

Crashes on, and crashes into a lake, and stares at the mountain and cries:

‘Where do I belong? This is no place!’

He turns dragging half the lake out after him

- 15** And charges the crackling underbrush

He meets another Moose

He stares, he thinks: 'It's only a mirror!'

Where is the world?' he groans. 'O my lost world!

And why am I so ugly?

- 20** ‘And why am I so far away from my feet?’

He weeps.

Hopeless drops drip from his droopy lips.

The other Moose just stands there doing the same.

Two dopes of the deep woods.

After Reading

7. How does the author use hyperbole for effect?

8. What is the speaker's tone? Does it shift throughout the poem?

9. How does Hughes's use of verbals, especially participial phrases, contribute to the hyperbole in the poem? Quote specific lines and analyze the use of verbals and hyperbole.

My Notes

Literary Terms

Alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginnings of words that are close together.

Elements of Humor: Hyperbole

My Notes

Check Your Understanding

Most of the texts you have read so far depend on exaggeration and hyperbole to make readers smile, chuckle, and laugh. Return to the humorous print texts you have read in this unit and identify examples of hyperbole. In a collaborative discussion, share the examples you locate and discuss how hyperbole creates a humorous effect. Use precise diction in your discussion. Record examples shared by your peers in the graphic organizer.

<p>Title:</p> <p>Example:</p>	<p>Title:</p> <p>Example:</p>
<p>Hyperbole</p>	
<p>Title:</p> <p>Example:</p>	<p>Title:</p> <p>Example:</p>

Learning Targets

- Analyze the use of wordplay in poetry and drama.
- Collaborate to explore wordplay in previously studied texts.

Before Reading

1. What is a pun? What are some examples?

2. What is a one-liner? What are some examples?

During Reading

3. Mark the text by highlighting at least three humorous puns that you can visualize.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jack Prelutsky (b. 1940) says that he has always enjoyed playing with language, although he did not always like poetry. He rediscovered poetry in his twenties, when he began writing humorous verse for children. Since then, he has written more than fifty poetry collections. His poems are sometimes silly, sometimes playful, sometimes frightening, but always entertaining. In 2006, the Poetry Foundation named him the first-ever Children's Poet Laureate. Prelutsky also studied music, and he has set several of his poems to music for the audio versions of his poetry anthologies.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:
Marking the Text, Discussion
Groups, RAFT

My Notes

Elements of Humor: Comic Wordplay



WORD CONNECTIONS

Roots and Affixes

The word **clamor** comes from a Latin word meaning “to call out.” The root *-clam-*, also spelled *-claim-*, appears in *exclaim* and *exclamation*, *proclaim* and *proclamation*, and *acclaim* and *acclamation*.

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Puns depend on an audience’s understanding of both possible meanings of a word or phrase. Why might someone older be more likely to understand what a “tape deck” or “brake shoes” are? What does this indicate about the level of comedy involved in puns?

Poetry

Is Traffic Jam Delectable?

by Jack Prelutsky

Is traffic jam delectable,
does jelly fish in lakes,
does tree bark make a racket,
does the clamor rattle snakes?

5 Can salmon scale a mountain,
does a belly laugh a lot,
do carpets nap in flower beds
or on an apricot?
Around my handsome bottleneck,

10 I wear a railroad tie,
my treasure chest puffs up a bit,
I blink my private eye.
I like to use piano keys
to open locks of hair,

15 then put a pair of brake shoes on
and dance on debonair.
I hold up my electric shorts
with my banana belt,
then sit upon a toadstool

20 and watch a tuna melt.
I dive into a car pool,
where I take an onion dip,
then stand aboard the tape deck
and sail my penmanship.

25 I put my dimes in riverbanks
and take a quarterback,
and when I fix a nothing flat
I use a lumberjack.
I often wave my second hand

30 to tell the overtime,
before I take my bull pen up
to write a silly rhyme.

After Reading

4. Sketch at least one of the puns in the margin of the poem or on a separate piece of paper.
5. In your discussion groups, share your sketches and read aloud the corresponding pun. Explain the two meanings of the word or phrase that creates the pun. Be sure to use precise diction and discuss how the author uses puns for humorous effect.
6. As a group, review the poem to look for puns that you didn't understand. Try to collaborate to make meaning of these.

Analyzing a Humorous Skit

You will next read and/or listen to the skit "Who's on First?" by Abbott and Costello.

Before Reading

7. Based on the title of the skit, what do you think is the subject?

During Reading

8. Sketch a baseball diamond on a separate piece of paper. As you read the skit, try to fill in the names of each of the players mentioned.

After Reading

9. Write answers to the following questions about "Who's on First?" and compare them with a peer.
 - Why are Abbott and Costello having difficulty understanding each other?
 - How does the wordplay create humor at a high level of comedy?

10. Add your notes about comic language (hyperbole and wordplay) to the Elements of Humor graphic organizer in Activity 4.11.

Check Your Understanding

Expository Writing Prompt: Choose one of the texts from this or the previous activity. Explain how the writer uses comic language (hyperbole and/or wordplay) to convey a universal truth. Be sure to:

- Establish a controlling idea and support it with textual evidence (quotes from the text) and commentary explaining the humor.
- Use transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
- Use verbals and precise diction, including the correct use of humorous elements.

My Notes

Planning and Revising an Analysis of a Humorous Text

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Graphic Organizer, Marking the Text, Note-taking, Drafting, Discussion Groups

Learning Targets

- Draft and revise an essay analyzing a humorous short story.
- Evaluate a sample student essay.

Before Reading

1. Review the Elements of Humor graphic organizer below and rank how comfortable you are at understanding the elements (#1 being most comfortable, #2 being second most, etc.).

Elements of Humor			
Humorous Element	Definition	Level of Comedy	Examples from Texts
Comic Characters and Caricatures	A caricature is a pictorial, written, or acted representation of a person that exaggerates characteristics or traits for comic effect.		
Comic Situations and Situational Irony	Comic situations are when characters are in an unlikely situation or are victims of circumstances and react in a comical way. Situational irony involves a contrast between what characters or readers might reasonably expect to happen and what actually happens.		
Comic Language: Hyperbole	Hyperbole is extreme exaggeration used for emphasis, often used for comic effect.		
Comic Language: Wordplay • One-liners • Puns	A one-liner is a short joke or witticism expressed in a single sentence. A pun is the humorous use of a word or words to suggest another word with the same sound or different meaning.		

During Reading

2. Your teacher will assign a text for you to analyze.

- Closely read (or reread) the text.
- Mark the text by highlighting evidence of humorous elements.
- Annotate the text using precise diction to describe the intended humor and humorous effect.

After Reading

3. Collaborate with your group to complete the graphic organizer below and on the next pages.

Title: _____ Author: _____

Humorous Element	Examples from Text	Comedic Effect
Comic Characters and Caricatures		
Comic Situations and Situational Irony		
Comic Language: Hyperbole		
Comic Language: Wordplay <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-liners • Puns 		

Planning and Revising an Analysis of a Humorous Text

Level of Comedy	Explanation	Evidence

Description of Humor and Intended Effect	Examples from Text	Explanation (Commentary)

Universal Truth (Theme)	Evidence from Text

Planning and Revising an Analysis of a Humorous Text

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

In the second paragraph (body paragraph), identify and label the topic sentence, supporting detail, commentary, and transitions.

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

In the third paragraph, identify and label the topic sentence, supporting detail, commentary, and transitions.

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

In the concluding paragraph, identify and label the universal truth.

To point out the often ridiculous experiences parents go through for their children, Barry uses hyperbole to emphasize how complicated getting a pet fish can be. For example, he explains first how a “pet” beetle under his daughter’s “loving care and feeding ... thrived for maybe nine seconds before expiring like a little six legged parking meter” (1). The additional use of simile and the exaggerated amount of time adds to the humor, as in any case, one’s “loving care and feeding” should not cause the death of anything so quickly, no matter how terrible the “care” could actually be. The explanation of the parents replacing each beetle with another shows how willing parents are to support their children no matter how ridiculous the circumstances. Furthermore, Barry calls the fish he bought “so nonviolent that in the wild, worms routinely beat them up and steal their lunch money” (2). As known to all people, it is fish that eat worms and not the other way around. This is hyperbolic because worms are not known for “beating fish up” and animals do not have money, lunch money included. This also ties back to a metaphor/analogy Barry made that “an aquarium is a powder keg that can explode in deadly violence at any moment just like ... junior high” (2). Both of these situations are highly exaggerated. Through the use of hyperbole, Barry is able to convey how parents often feel about their struggle even in simple situations, to which a child might react to them as being overdramatic.

Also, Barry uses verbal irony/sarcasm to vent and display his frustration, which proves furthermore the lengths he is going to help his daughter. For instance, when complaining about the aggressive nature of fish, he says they could become aggressive if “it was a month containing the letter ‘R’, or if they hear the song “Who Let the Dogs Out”” (2). Months and songs are all aspects of human life, it is unlikely that fish will ever have fish months or fish songs. This adds to the sarcastic tone of the writer, which shows that even through his frustrations, he is struggling to find the right choice for his daughter, no matter how much of a nuisance it is to make it. Also, Barry uses sarcasm when explaining the variety of needs for a fish tank so that “the fish would be intellectually stimulated and get into a decent college” (1). The author, as with most intellectual people, knows that fish do not have colleges, and seeing that their intelligence capacity is smaller than a human’s, they cannot be “intellectually stimulated.” The author uses this verbal irony to point out that even though the needs of a fish are not as significant as the needs of a human, caring for them still requires a lot of effort. Clearly, the author chooses to go through this effort for his daughter. The usage of verbal irony in this piece further points out the “struggles” of a father to appease his child.

Even in the most trivial instances, the parent will go through many obstacles to help his child, often in the hope that the child will learn something along the way. Whether or not the child actually learns this is questionable, yet the parent’s effort should not go unnoticed.

After Reading

5. Work with your writing group to revise the student essay. You may want to review the roles and responsibilities of writing group members in Activity 1.8, page 36. Select one or more of the following:
- Write a new introduction.
 - Write a third support paragraph.
 - Write a new conclusion.

Check Your Understanding

Analyze the effectiveness of this essay by evaluating each element: introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion.

GRAMMAR & USAGE

Pronoun Antecedents

A pronoun usually refers to a noun or pronoun earlier in the text (its antecedent). The pronoun must agree in number (singular or plural) and gender (male or female) with the person or thing to which it refers. For example: “. . . the **author** chooses to go through this effort for **his** daughter.”

The “author” is a reference to Dave Barry, so the correct pronoun is “his.” In your own writing, be sure to make your antecedents clear to your reader and use appropriate pronouns for agreement.

My Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Writing an Analysis of a Humorous Text

My Notes

Assignment

Write an essay that explains how an author creates humor for effect and uses it to communicate a universal truth.

Planning and Prewriting: Take time to make a plan for your essay.

- What reading strategies (such as marking or diffusing the text) will help you take notes on the author's use of humor as you read the text?
- How can you correctly identify the level of comedy, elements of humor, and intended comedic effect on the reader?
- What prewriting strategies (such as outlining or graphic organizers) could help you explore, focus, and organize your ideas?

Drafting: Write a multi-paragraph essay that effectively organizes your ideas.

- What are the elements of an effective introductory paragraph you will write?
- How will you develop support paragraphs with well-chosen examples (evidence) and thoughtful analysis (commentary) about at least two elements of humor?
- How will you use transitions to create cohesion?
- How will your conclusion support your ideas, identify and analyze the level(s) of comedy, and evaluate the author's effectiveness at communicating a universal truth?

Evaluating and Revising the Draft: Create opportunities to review and revise your work.

- During the process of writing, when can you pause to share and respond with others in order to elicit suggestions and ideas for revision?
- How can the Scoring Guide help you evaluate how well your draft meets the requirements of the assignment?
- How can you use a precise vocabulary of humor to enhance your critical analysis?

Checking and Editing for Publication: Confirm your final draft is ready for publication.

- How will you proofread and edit your draft to demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, spelling, grammar, and usage?
- Did you effectively use verbals?
- Did you establish and maintain a formal style?

Reflection

After completing this Embedded Assessment, think about how you went about accomplishing this task, and respond to the following:

- How has your understanding of how humor is created developed during this unit?
- Do you think your sense of humor will change as you mature? Explain.

Technology TIP:

Consider using an approved social media channel such as Edmodo or Wikispaces to collaboratively discuss your text online before drafting your essay.

SCORING GUIDE

Scoring Criteria	Exemplary	Proficient	Emerging	Incomplete
Ideas	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishes and fully maintains a clearly focused controlling idea about the use of humor to convey a universal truth develops the topic with relevant details, examples, and textual evidence uses insightful commentary to analyze the effect of humorous elements. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishes and maintains a controlling idea about the use of humor to convey a universal truth develops the topic with adequate details, examples, and textual evidence uses sufficient commentary to analyze the effect of humorous elements. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishes and unevenly maintains a controlling idea that may be unclear or unrelated to the use of humor to convey a universal truth develops the topic with inadequate details, examples, and textual evidence uses insufficient commentary to analyze the humor. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> lacks a controlling idea fails to develop the topic with details, examples, and textual evidence does not provide commentary or analysis.
Structure	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> introduces the topic and context in an engaging manner uses a well-chosen organizational structure that progresses smoothly to connect ideas uses a variety of effective transitional strategies. provides a satisfying conclusion. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> introduces the topic and context clearly uses an organizational structure that progresses logically to connect ideas uses appropriate transitions to create cohesion and link ideas provides a logical conclusion. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides a weak or partial introduction uses a flawed or inconsistent organizational structure uses inappropriate, repetitive, or basic transitions provides a weak or disconnected conclusion. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> lacks an introduction has little or no obvious organizational structure uses few or no transitions lacks a conclusion.
Use of Language	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses precise diction and language to maintain an academic voice and formal style demonstrates command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, spelling, grammar, and usage. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses some precise diction to maintain a generally appropriate voice and style demonstrates adequate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, spelling, grammar, and usage. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses diction that creates an inappropriate voice and style demonstrates partial or inconsistent command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, spelling, grammar, and usage. 	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses vague or confusing language lacks command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, spelling, grammar, and usage.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

QHT, Close Reading,
Paraphrasing, Graphic Organizer

My Notes

Learning Targets

- Reflect on learning and make connections.
- Identify the knowledge and skills needed to complete Embedded Assessment 2 successfully.

Making Connections

You have written an analysis of a humorous text, which required you to know and understand how a writer uses words, characters, and situations to create a humorous effect. Now you will have an opportunity to understand humor from a different perspective—that of a performer.

Essential Questions

1. Reflect on your understanding of the first Essential Question: How do writers and speakers use humor to convey a truth? How has your understanding of humor changed over the course of this unit?
2. Think about the Essential Question of the second half of this unit and respond to it: What makes an effective performance of a Shakespearean comedy?

Developing Vocabulary

3. Reflect on and list all the new humor-related vocabulary you have learned.
4. Re-sort the unit Academic Vocabulary and Literary Terms using the QHT strategy.

Q (unfamiliar)	H (familiar)	T (very familiar)

5. Compare this sort with your original sort. How has your understanding changed?

6. Select a word from the chart and write a **concise** statement about your learning. How has your understanding changed over the course of this unit?

Unpacking Embedded Assessment 2

Closely read the Embedded Assessment 2 assignment:

Present your assigned scene in front of your peers to demonstrate your understanding of Shakespeare's text, elements of comedy, and performance.

Then, using the Scoring Guide on page 314, work with your class to paraphrase the expectations and create a graphic organizer to use as a visual reminder of the required concepts and skills. Copy the graphic organizer for future reference.

After each activity, use this graphic to guide reflection about what you have learned and what you still need to learn in order to be successful in completing the Embedded Assessment.

Selecting a text for Independent Reading

To support your learning in the second half of the unit, you might choose another Shakespearean comedy to read on your own. This will help you become more familiar with Shakespeare's language and the sources of his comedy. Suggestions include *The Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labours Lost*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*.

My Notes

Creating Context for Shakespearean Comedy

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Note-taking, Marking the Text,
Skimming/Scanning,
Discussion Groups

Learning Targets

- Research to build background knowledge about Shakespeare.
- Collaborate to research, discuss, and share prior and new knowledge.
- Make connections to establish context for the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Before Reading

1. Complete the sentence starters about William Shakespeare in the first column below. Support your responses to the statements, and note any questions you have about him.

Who Is Shakespeare?	How Do I Know This?	Questions I Have
Shakespeare was an author of plays and poetry.	I have seen a movie based on one of his plays, called <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> .	How many of his other works have been made into movies?
Shakespeare lived ...		
Shakespeare accomplished ...		
Shakespeare ...		

2. Paraphrase this line spoken by Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Do you agree or disagree? Explain.

“The course of true love never did run smooth.”

Understanding Plot

3. Read these scenarios to determine how you would respond. Make notes about your reactions in the My Notes space.

Scenario One

The person you are in love with has invited you to your high school dance. Your parents, who disapprove of this person, lay down the law, saying, “You are absolutely not allowed to attend the dance with this person. If you wish to attend, you may go with X. Your choices are to go to the dance with X or not go at all.” You are now faced with a dilemma. You are forbidden to go to the dance with the person you love, but you are permitted to attend with X, who has been in love with you forever and whom your parents adore.

Consider this: Would you still go to the dance under these conditions? Why or why not?

Scenario Two

Since you were forbidden by your parents to attend the dance with the person you love, the two of you devise a plan to sneak out and attend the dance anyway. All of a sudden you notice that your love is nowhere in sight. You begin to search the room for her/him. Eventually, you find her/him in the corner of the room talking with your best friend. You happily interrupt the conversation only to be horrified to discover that your love is confessing her/his love to your best friend.

Consider this: What would you do if you saw your girlfriend/boyfriend confessing her/his love to your best friend? How would you feel?

Scenario Three

You confront your love after seeing her/him kiss your best friend. Your girlfriend/boyfriend loudly announces that she/he is no longer interested in you and no longer wants anything to do with you. Your best friend seems confused about the situation as she/he has always been in love with your boyfriend or girlfriend, but the feeling was never shared.

Consider this: What would you do if your girlfriend/boyfriend treated you this way? Would you be mad at your best friend?

My Notes

Creating Context for Shakespearean Comedy

Literary Terms

A **comedy** is a dramatic work that is light and often humorous or satirical in tone and that usually contains a happy resolution of the thematic conflict.

Connection to the Play

In Shakespeare's **comedy** *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, four characters—Lysander, Hermia, Helena, and Demetrius—are entangled in a very complicated love relationship that leaves them open to all sorts of comical mishaps.

4. Using the following information about the key characters from the play, create a visual that shows the relationship among the characters listed below. Practice pronouncing the characters' names. Study the pronunciation of the names, noting the long and short vowel sounds and silent letters as a guide to facilitate your oral pronunciation.

Character's Name	Pronunciation	I am ...	I love ...
Hermia	Hér-me-uh	The daughter of a wealthy nobleman	Lysander
Lysander	Lie-sánd-er	A prominent businessman	Hermia
Demetrius	De-mé-tree-us	Hermia's father's choice for her husband	Hermia too!
Helena	Héll-en-uh	Hermia's best friend	Demetrius

Visual Representation of Characters' Relationships

Check Your Understanding

Writing Prompt: Using the information from the three scenarios, write your own scenario for the four key characters described above. Be sure to:

- Incorporate an element of comedy examined earlier in this unit.
- Provide detail about the situation.
- Use precise diction.

Learning Targets

- Read closely to understand the meaning of Shakespeare's language.
- Prepare a dramatic text with proper inflection, tone, gestures, and movement.

Decoding Shakespeare's Language

Note that punctuation marks signal tone of voice, a crucial element of performance.

"Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! Vile thing, let loose,
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent."

1. Use close reading to understand the meaning of each line below. Then, write a paraphrase of your interpretation.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Brainstorming, Close Reading, Marking the Text, Rehearsal, Role Playing

Character	Quote/Insult	Paraphrase (Modern English)
Lysander says to Hermia ...	"Get you gone, you <i>dwarf</i> , You <i>minimus</i> of <i>hind'ring</i> <i>knotgrass</i> made ..."	
Helena says to Hermia ...	"I will not trust you, Nor longer stay in your <i>curs't</i> company."	
Lysander says to Hermia ...	"Out, <i>tawny Tartar</i> , out! Out, <i>loathed medicine</i> ! O, <i>hated, potion</i> , hence!"	
Hermia says to Helena ...	"You <i>juggler</i> , you <i>canker-blossom</i> ! You <i>thief of love</i> ! What, have you come by night And stol'n my love's heart from him?"	
Helena says to Hermia ...	"Fie, fie! You <i>counterfeit</i> , you <i>puppet</i> , you!"	

Insulting Language

Literary Terms

Performance is acting a role or telling a story or other piece for an audience.

2. Once you have determined the meaning of the lines, select one and complete the chart below. Rehearse your line in preparation for a **performance**. Then, role play by becoming that character and feeling that emotion. Move throughout the room and deliver your insult with flair. Be sure to allow time for peers to react to your delivery.

Write the insult you have chosen below.	What inflection will you use? What words will you stress when you speak your lines?	How will you alter your tone when you deliver your line?	What gestures/ movements will you use to enhance your line?

GRAMMAR & USAGE Punctuation

Punctuation gives clear clues as to how lines should be performed, particularly in poetry and plays.

An *exclamation point* shows surprise or extreme happiness or anger.

A *question mark* shows confusion on the part of the speaker or shows that the speaker is questioning another character's actions.

A *comma* marks a pause, usually for dramatic effect.

A *semicolon* marks a pause, usually one that is longer than a comma pause, without the finality of a period.

3. What tone of voice do people usually use when delivering an insult? What emotions might someone be feeling when they insult another person, and why?

Check Your Understanding

Reflect on the process of reading Shakespeare's language and understanding of the text. Respond to the following questions:

- What resources might you use to help interpret his language?
- Was your preparation to perform Shakespeare's lines effective?
- Did you deliver your lines as effectively as you planned? Explain.
- What might you do next time to improve your delivery?

Close Reading of a Scene

ACTIVITY
4.15

Learning Targets

- Collaborate to make meaning of a scene.
- Summarize and visualize the text to demonstrate understanding.

Before Reading

1. Work collaboratively as a class to practice close reading of a scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Skim and scan to diffuse the text. Circle unfamiliar words, and then use reference books or online reference sources to define the words in context. Write synonyms for unfamiliar words and paraphrase more difficult phrases into modern English.

During Reading

2. As you read the text, use close reading to understand the text. Also note the use of punctuation, especially the apostrophe to indicate missing letters in words.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Little is known about the early life of William Shakespeare (1564–1616) except that he was born and grew up in Stratford-on-Avon in England. What is known is that he went to London as a young man and became an actor and playwright. He wrote thirty-seven plays (comedies, tragedies, and histories) and is considered one of the greatest playwrights who ever lived. Performances of his plays occur regularly in theaters around the world.

Drama

from a midsummer night's dream

Act 3, Scene 2, Lines 282–305

by William Shakespeare

HERMIA

Oh me! you juggler! you canker-blossom!
You thief of love! What, have you come by night
And stolen my love's heart from him?

HELENA

285

Fine, i'faith!
Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,
No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear
Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?
Fie, fie! you counterfeit, you puppet, you!

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Skimming/Scanning,
Diffusing, Paraphrasing,
Close Reading, Summarizing,
Rereading, Visualizing

My Notes

GRAMMAR & USAGE Apostrophe

Just as an **apostrophe** is used in modern English to mark the absence of a letter, so it was used in Shakespeare's time.

Example: "Fine, i'faith!"

Translation: "Fine, **in** faith!"

Close Reading of a Scene

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

How does Shakespeare provide clues in the text about what a director should consider when casting Helena and Hermia?

HERMIA

290

Puppet? Why so? Ay, that way goes the game.
Now, I perceive that she hath made compare
Between our statures; she hath urged her height;
And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him.
And are you grown so high in his esteem;

295

Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
How low am I, thou painted maypole? speak;
How low am I? I am not yet so low
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

HELENA

300

I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,
Let her not hurt me: I was never curst;
I have no gift at all in shrewishness;
I am a right maid for my cowardice:
Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,
Because she is something lower than myself,
That I can match her.

305

HERMIA

Lower! hark, again.

After Reading

3. Write a summary of this scene.
4. Reread the text orally with your group.
5. As you listen to the text being read a third time, visualize how the characters would be moving, gesturing, and speaking. Write comments, draw pictures, or stand to act what you are visualizing.

Check Your Understanding

Explain how this scene is intended to be comical on stage. What elements of comedy are represented?

Acting Companies and Collaborative Close Reading

ACTIVITY
4.16

Learning Targets

- Establish and follow collaborative norms.
- Collaborate to analyze and rehearse a dramatic scene.

Before Reading

1. **Quickwrite:** Describe the attitudes and behaviors (norms) of a positive and productive member of an acting group.

2. In the spaces below, write the names of the members of your acting company for the roles they will play. Write the scene you will perform, the names of the characters, and who will play each character.

Acting Company Members

Director:

Actors:

Scene:

Characters:

During Reading

3. You will next be assigned a scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that your acting group will perform. Work collaboratively in your acting group to make meaning of the text. Follow these steps to guide your close reading and annotation of the text. You will be responsible for taking notes on your script and for using this script and notes as you plan and rehearse your scene.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Close Reading, Skimming/
Scanning, Rereading,
Paraphrasing, Summarizing,
Marking the Text, Rehearsing

My Notes

Acting Companies and Collaborative Close Reading

My Notes

- Skim/scan the text and circle unfamiliar words. Use a dictionary or thesaurus to replace each unfamiliar word with a synonym.
- Reread the scene and paraphrase the lines in modern English.
- Summarize the action. What is happening in the scene?
- Reread the scene and mark the text to indicate elements of humor (caricature, situation, irony, wordplay, hyperbole).
- Mark the punctuation, and determine how the punctuation affects the spoken lines. Discuss tone of voice and inflection.
- Analyze the movement in your scene:
What is each character doing?
When should characters enter and exit?
How should characters enter and exit?
What could you do to exaggerate the humor or create a humorous spin?
- Analyze the blocking in your scene, that is, the movement and placement of characters as they speak:
Where is each character standing?
To whom is each spoken line addressed?

After Reading

4. Divide lines equally between group members. You may have to be more than one character. One person in your group will be both a player (actor) and the director.

Player (student's name)	Acting As (character's name)
Director:	

- ## Check Your Understanding

- What went well? What will you want to replicate in future rehearsals and in your performance?
- What is a revision or something new you plan to do as you continue to rehearse?

[illegible]

LEARNING STRATEGIES:
Marking the Text, Discussion
Groups, Note-taking, Rehearsal

My Notes

Learning Targets

- Read and respond to an informational text about performance challenges.
- Memorize and rehearse lines for performance.

Before Reading

1. **Quickwrite:** What is the biggest challenge you face when it comes to performing your comic scene?

During Reading

2. Following is a text with pointers on how to overcome stage fright. As you read, write your personal response to each tip in the My Notes space as a guide for a collaborative discussion.

Informational Text

Adapted from **Fear Busters** 10 Tips to Overcome Stage Fright!

by Gary Guwe

F – Focus on your most powerful Experience

Think about your most memorable and powerful experience when you accomplished a goal—maybe a time you worked extremely hard on a project or did well on a test. Reflect on your most powerful experience and remember the feeling of confidence; think about everything you did to create that feeling and how proud you felt after doing something challenging.

E – Energize Yourself

You have adrenaline pumping through your veins. Your heart is racing and your muscles are all tensed up. Your eyes are shifty and you are unsettled. You are ready to bolt for the door ... or are you?

An adrenaline rush is a built-in defense mechanism for human beings. It is a natural response mechanism that allows us to fight or take flight in the event of danger. That explains the heightened sensitivity we have when we are nervous and excited.

Harness this nervous energy and make it work for you! One way we harness this nervous energy is to move around. Your character will at some point move and gesture. Use the times when your character can move and react as opportunities to dissipate your nervous energy.

A – Acknowledge Your Fears

It is said that fear is here to protect us, not paralyze us. Don't run away from being afraid. Acknowledge it as being part of you ... use it to identify the possible pitfalls, then work to think about how you can avoid the pitfalls or how you can adjust or adapt if something goes wrong during your performance.

R – Relax ... breathe!

Take deep breaths and regulate your breathing. Let the breathing regulate and calm your heart rate. Practice breathing when you rehearse.

B – Believe in Yourself

Know that your performance has the potential for being a powerful and memorable moment in your life. You will feel a huge sense of accomplishment and pride when you successfully perform your scene. Be knowledgeable about your part and prepared with your lines, and you will be ready to execute with confidence.

U – Understand the Audience

Understand that the audience is here to see you succeed. They know how it feels to perform, and they're not here to sabotage you, or poke fun at you ... they're here to learn from you, to laugh, and to be entertained.

S – Smile!

Changing one's physiology can impact one's mental state.

Before your performance, when your character allows, and immediately afterwards—smile. Soon enough, your body will tell your brain that you're happy ... and before you know it, any fear you have will melt away.

T – Talk to Yourself

Many people will begin telling themselves various reasons why they will not be able to perform well. Counter that.

Tell yourself that you will be able to do a good job and remind yourself of the reasons why you can ("I am prepared." "I will have fun." "I know my peers will laugh when ...").

E – Enjoy yourself

Get out on the stage and seek to have fun!

R – Rejoice!

Many people begin visualizing their worst case scenario as they ready themselves to perform.

Visualize yourself victorious at the end of the performance. Think of the amount of effort you will have put into preparing and think about the smiles and laughter which you will create and the skills and concepts you will have practiced and mastered.

After Reading

3. Discuss the ten tips with your acting group. Which tips do you think most apply to you? How will you use this advice?

My Notes

Facing the Challenge of Performance

My Notes

Memorization Tips

Memorizing lines is a key part of delivering a good performance. Think about school plays you may have seen. Characters who deliver their lines clearly and without hesitation perform well.

Tip 1: Repeat, Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

Say the line over and over, but do it one word at time, returning to the beginning of the line each time.

Example: Line 108 from Scene 5 : “If we offend, it is with our good will.”
“If.” “If we.” “If we offend.” “If we offend, it.” “If we offend, it is.” “If we offend, it is with.” “If we offend, it is with our.” “If we offend, it is with our good.” “If we offend, it is with our good will.”

Tip 2: Recite and Erase

Write your line(s) on a whiteboard, and then practice the words.

- Recite the line.
- Erase a word or phrase, and recite the missing piece from memory.
- Repeat the process until all the words have disappeared and you are saying the line(s) from memory.

4. Discuss other tips your peers may have for memorizing lines. Then, select your hardest line to memorize and use the memorization tips to work on it.

Check Your Understanding

Describe at least three strategies you can use to overcome stage fright. How will you remind yourself of those strategies on the day of the performance?

Working with Acting Companies and Focus Groups

ACTIVITY
4.18

Learning Targets

- Analyze a dramatic character to inform a performance.
- Collaborate to draft and implement a performance plan.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Rereading, Close reading,
Note-taking, Discussion
Groups, Rehearsal

Character Focus Groups

1. **Players:** Reread your lines, using the graphic organizer to guide a close reading and analysis of your character.

Meet in a focus group, whose members are all acting as the same character, to work collaboratively to interpret what the lines reveal about your character. Take turns sharing your individual analysis and add new insights to the graphic organizer.

I am playing:

Aspects of Characterization	Detail from Text	Interpretation <i>What does this reveal about the character?</i>
Appearance		
Actions		
Words		
Thoughts/Feelings		

Working with Acting Companies and Focus Groups

Others' Reactions		
Comedic Actions/Words		

2. Take turns reading your character's lines. Practice making the analysis of your character come to life through your tone, inflection, facial expression, and gestures.
3. **Directors:** Select key action sequences and consider possible stage directions to determine how these scenes might be performed on stage.

Key Action Sequences	Stage Directions and Movement on Stage	What This Reveals About the Overall Scene (Comedic Effect)

Acting Groups

4. Return to your acting group and share your analysis in the order that your character speaks during your scene. Discuss the implications of each character's words and actions.
5. Develop a detailed performance plan by consulting the Scoring Guide. After reviewing the Scoring Guide criteria, I need to ...
6. Work with your acting company to complete the chart below and outline your performance plan.

Performance Plan				
Character	Played By	Contribution to Set Design	Prop(s)	Costume

Working with Acting Companies and Focus Groups

7. Individually, synthesize all the details of your performance plan.

Element of Performance	Ideas for Character	Explanation
Blocking		
Movements Enter/Exit		
Gestures		
Facial Expression(s)		
Emotion		
Comedic Emphasis		

My Notes

8. Complete this section if you are the director. Share your plan with the members of your acting company.

We want to create a _____ mood. To accomplish this goal, we will ...

I will introduce the acting company and scene by ...

The scene will end when _____ so the audience will be left with a feeling of ...

We will focus on the comic effects listed below to ensure that ...

9. Use your performance plan to rehearse your scene to accurately portray your character and achieve your intended comic effect. Be sure to focus on the following:

- tone and inflection
- correct pronunciation of words
- gestures and movement

Check Your Understanding

Reflect on the process of planning for and rehearsing your scene.

- What went well? What will you want to replicate in future rehearsals and in your performance?
- What part of your performance do you need to work on?
- What part of the performance does the group need to work on?

Learning Targets

- Analyze film and text in order to compare/contrast and evaluate the director's choices.
- Generate and evaluate performance choices.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Discussion Groups,
Note-taking, Brainstorming,
Rehearsal

Viewing Shakespeare on Film

1. Unlike comparing novels to film versions, turning a play script into a movie allows the viewer to make a close comparison. Think about the extent to which the film scripts adhere to or stray from the original Shakespeare scene and how the actors make the lines come alive through their voices, expressions, and movements.
2. As you view the film or a scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, take notes on what you observe. Use the graphic organizer for either "Actors" or "Directors."

Actors:

Version of <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> (Director/Year)	Physical Gestures and Movements	Costume and Makeup	Interpretive Choices in the Delivery of Lines
Film 1:			
Film 2:			

Same Text, Different Text

My Notes

Actors' Questions:

3. To what extent do these films stay faithful to or depart from the original script? Why might these particular choices have been made, and what effect do these choices have on the viewers' understanding of the scene?
4. How do your character's gestures, movements, and language achieve a comical effect? What elements of humor did you see?

Directors:

Version of <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> (Director/Year)	Placement of Actors in Relationship to Props, Scenery, Each Other	Music or Other Sound Effects	Set Design, Lighting, Props
Film 1:			
Film 2:			

Directors' Questions

5. How has the director stayed faithful to or departed from the scene as written by Shakespeare? What effects do certain staging and technical choices have on the viewers' understanding of the scene?
6. How do the staging, set design, lighting, sound, and props achieve a comical effect? What elements of humor did you see?

Check Your Understanding

Why would a film director choose to portray a scene differently than the way the author wrote it? What effects might the director be trying to achieve?

My Notes

[illegible]

Dress Rehearsal

LEARNING STRATEGIES: Rehearsal

My Notes

Learning Targets

- Participate in a dress rehearsal of a dramatic scene.
- Reflect on strengths and challenges as a performer.

Dress Rehearsal

1. Participate in a dress rehearsal in which you perform your scene in front of another group. This rehearsal will help you determine what works well in your performance and what does not.
2. When you are in the role of a small group audience, use the Scoring Guide criteria to provide constructive feedback to enable the acting company to adjust its performance.
3. Consider using these questions to start your feedback conversation:
 - What elements of humor do you think you were most successful at using? Least successful?
 - Can you explain why you made the choice to ...
 - When did you feel the audience was most with you?
 - When did you feel the audience was least connected to your performance?
 - Did you ever have to adapt or adjust differently than you had planned? Explain. How did it work out?

Dress Rehearsal Reflection

4. What went well? What will you want to replicate in your performance?
5. What is the most significant thing you are going to do differently? How will you prepare?

Assignment

Present your assigned scene in front of your peers to demonstrate your understanding of Shakespeare's text, elements of comedy, and performance.

Planning: As an acting company, prepare to perform your scene.

- How will you collaborate as a group on a performance plan that demonstrates an understanding of Shakespeare's humor?
- Does each member of the acting company understand the scene's meaning as well as his or her role?
- What elements of humor will your company focus on in performance?
- How will you emphasize these elements through the delivery of lines, characterization, gestures, movements, props, and/or setting?
- How will you mark your script to help you pronounce words correctly, emphasize words appropriately, and remember your lines and deliver them smoothly?
- How will you use blocking and movement to interact onstage and emphasize elements of humor?

Rehearsing: Rehearse and revise your performance with your acting company.

- How will you show how characters, conflicts, and events contribute to a universal idea?
- How will you introduce and conclude the scene?
- How can the Scoring Guide help you evaluate how well your performance meets the requirements of the assignment?
- How can you give and receive feedback about your use of eye contact, volume, and inflection in order to improve your own and others' performances?

Performing and Listening: Perform your scene and participate as an audience member:

- How will you convey ideas and emotions through your performance?
- How will you take notes on the elements of humor emphasized in other performances?

Reflection

After completing this Embedded Assessment, think about how you went about accomplishing this task, and respond to the following:

- How did different performers emphasize the elements of humor in their scenes?
- Which performances were successful in eliciting a humorous response from the audience, and what made them effective?

My Notes

Technology TIP:

As part of the rehearsal process, consider video recording your performance. Also, consider using a musical recording to introduce and/or conclude your performance.

Performing Shakespearean Comedy

SCORING GUIDE

Scoring Criteria	Exemplary	Proficient	Emerging	Incomplete
Ideas	<p>The performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates a deep understanding of Shakespeare's intended humor uses a variety of effective performance elements (staging, set design, lighting, sound, props) for comic effect shows evidence of extensive planning, rehearsal, and reflection. 	<p>The performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates an adequate understanding of Shakespeare's intended humor uses some performance elements (staging, set design, lighting, sound, props) for comic effect shows evidence of sufficient planning, rehearsal, and reflection. 	<p>The performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates a partial or uneven understanding of Shakespeare's intended humor uses disconnected or basic performance elements (staging, set design, lighting, sound, props) shows evidence of ineffective or insufficient planning, rehearsal, and reflection. 	<p>The performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates little or no understanding of Shakespeare's intended humor lacks performance elements does not show evidence of planning, rehearsal, and reflection.
Structure	<p>The performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates extensive evidence of collaboration provides context in an engaging introduction communicates a satisfying ending to the audience. 	<p>The performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates adequate evidence of collaboration provides context in an appropriate introduction communicates an ending to the audience. 	<p>The performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates uneven or ineffective collaboration provides a partial or weak introduction communicates an abrupt or illogical ending to the audience. 	<p>The performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates a failure to collaborate provides no introduction does not communicate an ending to the audience.
Use of Language	<p>The performer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> makes effective interpretive choices to deliver lines for comic effect and to convey meaning (including tone, pronunciation, inflection, facial expressions, gestures, movement, and blocking) uses punctuation cues consistently and naturally to inform vocal delivery memorizes lines fully and accurately. 	<p>The performer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> makes appropriate interpretive choices to deliver lines for comic effect and to convey meaning (including tone, pronunciation, inflection, facial expressions, gestures, movement, and blocking) uses some punctuation cues to inform vocal delivery demonstrates an adequate ability to memorize lines. 	<p>The performer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> makes undeveloped or inappropriate interpretive choices to deliver lines (including tone, pronunciation, inflection, facial expressions, gestures, movement, and blocking) uses punctuation cues unevenly or inconsistently demonstrates insufficient ability to memorize lines. 	<p>The performer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> makes undeveloped or inappropriate interpretive choices to deliver lines does not recognize punctuation cues or use them incorrectly does not have any lines memorized.