

Teacher's Guide

COMEDY

-MORE THAN A LAUGH



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Comedy - More Than a Laugh Teacher's Guide

<u>Suggested Lesson Plan</u>	1
<u>Preview Questions</u>	2
<u>Key Terms</u>	3
<u>Viewing Guide</u>	4
<u>Viewing Guide Answer Key</u>	5
<u>Discussion Questions</u>	6
<u>Activity: Who Chooses? Who Benefits? Who Pays? What's Fair?</u>	7
<u>Comprehension Quiz</u>	8
<u>Quiz Answer Key</u>	10
<u>Enrichment and Integration Activities</u>	11
<u>What Laughter Is This?</u>	12
<u>Agree to Disagree: The Role of Civil Discourse in Society</u>	17

Comedy - More Than a Laugh

Suggested Lesson Plan

These materials may be used in a variety of ways. For maximum benefit, we suggest the following lesson plan:

- As a class, discuss the [Preview Questions](#) and [Key Terms](#).
- Distribute copies of the [Viewing Guide](#) for students to use as a note-taking tool during the video.
- Play the video, pausing if needed to facilitate understanding and note-taking.
- Review and discuss the answers to the Viewing Guide using [Answer Key](#) as a guide.
- Use [Discussion Questions](#) to spark class discussion or assign these questions as homework.
- As a class or in small groups, complete the [Who Chooses](#) Activity.
- Replay the video as preparation for the Quiz.
- Administer and grade the [Quiz](#) using the [Answer Key](#) as a guide.
- Optional: Assign one or more [Enrichment Activities](#) as homework.

For a list of additional resources for use with this video, see www.izzit.org/products.

Comedy - More Than a Laugh

Preview Questions

(These are meant to be read aloud by the teacher prior to viewing the video)

1. What is comedy?
2. Who decides what's considered funny or not?
3. Should the government censor what people say on stage? Why or why not? Should anyone else censor what people say on stage? Why or why not? If yes, who?
4. How are issues and controversial topics discussed in society?

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Key Terms

Allusion - a brief reference to a person, event, or work of art that is well-known and recognized by the audience

Boundaries - a limit of a subject or topic that is considered acceptable by society

Comedy - a form of entertainment that consists of jokes, and satirical sketches, intended to make an audience laugh.

Comedian - a professional entertainer who uses any of various physical or verbal means to be amusing and make people laugh

Commentary - an expression of opinions or explanations about an event, situation, or topic

Constraints - limitations, restrictions or avoidance to perform an action

Discourse - written or spoken communication or conversation on a particular topic; a formal discussion or exchange of ideas

Distasteful - unpleasant or offensive; not pleasing to the senses or in line with one's personal preferences

Joke - something said or done to provoke laughter

Obscene - something that is considered to be taboo to discuss or use in everyday conversation

Offensive - something that causes displeasure or resentment

Hostile - having or showing unfriendly feelings, openly opposed or resisting

Political Correctness – the idea that people should be careful to not use language or behave in a way that could offend a particular group of people

Satire - a literary or artistic work that uses irony, sarcasm, humor, or exaggeration to criticize or ridicule human vices, follies, or societal issues

Sense of Humor - the ability to say funny things and see the funny side of things

Subjective - based on personal opinions, interpretations, or experiences rather than objective facts; influenced by individual feelings or perspectives

Tolerance - willingness to accept, respect, or endure the opinions, beliefs, or actions of others that differ from one's own

Comedy - More Than a Laugh Viewing Guide

Student Name: _____

1. The earliest comedic plays were written and performed in _____ in the _____ century B.C..
2. The most famous comedic playwright was _____.
3. _____ allows people to say things they could not otherwise say by using other things to create references that the audience will understand.
4. The only way to _____ is to _____.
5. _____ is the only art form that the audience sees as a work in progress.
6. Comedian _____ was popular in the 1960s and was arrested several times for being obscene.
7. Some comedians view college campuses as _____.
8. _____ has become an argument for saying _____.
9. _____ started as an awareness of how prejudices are entrenched in our language and images.
10. Any society has _____ that limit the topics that should be talked about.
11. Comedy fosters _____.
12. _____ was a sitcom that pushed societal beliefs.
13. The producer, _____, wanted to write a show that reflected life.
14. A _____ is a buildup of tension and then a release.

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Viewing Guide Answer Key

1. Athens, 5th
2. Aristophanes
3. Satire
4. Fail, try
5. Comedy
6. Lenny Bruce
7. hostile
8. "I'm offended" ... "shut up"
9. Political Correctness
10. boundaries
11. discourse
12. "All in the Family"
13. Norman Lear
14. joke

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Discussion Questions

1. What is comedy?
2. Why is comedy important to society?
3. Who decides what's funny and why does this matter?
4. What were some of the issues that Aristophanes addressed through his comedic plays? Why was this important?
5. How did the Athenian government respond to Aristophanes? Do you think that the government was right? Why or why not?
6. Why is it important to provide space for discussion of topics, particularly controversial ones?
7. How much should comedians consider the audience when they are writing and performing materials? Why?
8. What are the potential benefits and drawbacks of pushing the boundaries of comedy? How does this relate to freedom of expression?
9. What limitations should be imposed on comedy? Why?
10. What is appropriate? Who should decide what is appropriate? Why?
11. In what ways can comedy foster discourse and create meaningful conversations about important social issues? Share examples from the video or your own observations.
12. How does censorship affect freedom of expression and the ability of comedians to address societal issues?
13. Why do some comedians view college audiences as hostile? How should colleges react to comedians and other speakers with viewpoints that may differ from the mainstream?
14. Is political correctness important? Why or why not? Can it benefit society? Can it limit society? Explain your answers.
15. Why was "All in the Family" so controversial?
16. What do you think? Should anything be off-limits in comedy?

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Activity: Who Chooses? Who Benefits? Who Pays? What's Fair?

The four questions above can be a useful tool for evaluating any policy or system. Posing the questions is a great way to stimulate critical thinking. As a class, or in small groups, discuss the following:

(For each question, think broadly about all the possible people or groups of people who may be affected, and remember there may be non-monetary costs and benefits.)

1. Who decides what's funny and why does this matter?
2. Who benefits from raising awareness around controversial topics? Why is this important?
3. What is the cost of restricting what is considered appropriate to discuss or present to an audience?
4. Should some groups be able to censor what is performed in public? If so, how should it be decided? Who would decide? What would be the impact and consequences of limiting what can be performed?

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Comprehension Quiz

Name _____

1. What makes something funny?
 - a. Someone tells you it is.
 - b. It makes you laugh.
 - c. It is subjective.
 - d. Both B and C

2. Who was one of the most influential playwrights of comedy in 5th-century Athens?
 - a. Aristophanes
 - b. Socrates
 - c. Alexander
 - d. Plato

3. Lysistrata used comedy to criticize the _____ .
 - a. rulers of Rome
 - b. use of slavery
 - c. Peloponnesian War
 - d. Spartan wars

4. Comedy is the only art form where the audience sees _____ .
 - a. Nothing
 - b. a work in progress
 - c. ridiculous costumes
 - d. scripted lines

5. Who is Lenny Bruce?
 - a. an art critic
 - b. an artist
 - c. a comedian
 - d. a playwright

6. What is the main concern surrounding political correctness in comedy?
- The infringement of freedom of speech
 - The loss of audience interest
 - The decline in comedy standards
 - The lack of diversity in comedy
7. Comedy fosters _____.
- prejudice
 - dishonesty
 - controversy
 - discourse
8. The producer of "All in the Family" wanted to create a sitcom that reflected _____.
- real life
 - ridiculous situations in the workplace
 - issues in society
 - Both A and C
9. Who was the producer of "All in the Family"?
- Lenny Bruce
 - Judy Gold
 - Norman Lear
 - Ian Fidanca
10. According to Judy Gold, the best comedy _____.
- is where no one is offended
 - is on the edge of what is acceptable
 - is based on an accepted view of what is funny
 - is predictable

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Quiz Answer Key

1. D
2. A
3. C
4. B
5. C
6. A
7. D
8. D
9. C
10. B

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Enrichment and Integration Activities

Research Projects: Work independently or in small groups. Choose one or more of the topics below to learn more about. Gather information from multiple sources to help answer the questions. Create a report that includes both written and visual elements such as pictures, charts, and graphs. Be sure to cite your sources. Share your findings with the class in a presentation.

- A. Show students appropriate sketches from online sources like The Onion, video clips from SNL, clips from Dry Bar Comedy, or other such resources. Have students vote for the funniest sketches, talking about what makes them “work” and about the topics and themes. Do they provide social commentary? What technical aspects like delivery, comedic timing, costumes, chemistry, and pacing make it work? Using one sketch as a model, have students create their own that addresses an issue with the school or community that they would like to see addressed.
- B. Students work in small groups to consider the questions: What makes something we read, watch, or encounter funny? How and where does humor influence and affect your life? Students will create a chart such as a Cause and Effect chart, Idea web, or Venn diagram to illustrate their conclusions.
- C. Students gather political cartoons from newspapers, magazines, or the internet. They will analyze these in preparation for a discussion about the purpose of political cartoons. Use the following questions as a guide for their analysis: What is the purpose of the political cartoon? It is to make people laugh, editorialize, summarize complicated issues, reflect what people are thinking, or something else? Students will create a gallery walk that displays examples of political cartoons that support their ideas. Additionally, you can have them try to create their own political cartoon.
- D. Students research the lives of famous comedians who hail from a notable time period, location, or background and give presentations to the class in the “role” of the comedian they studied. Why did you pick this comedian? What impact did this individual have on society?

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What Laughter Is This?

<p>Time to Complete:</p> <p>Materials/ Technology/ Resources:</p>	<p>Will vary, depending on the desired duration</p> <p>Video <i>Comedy - More Than a Laugh</i></p> <p>Handout of video guide</p> <p>“What’s Your Humor Style” article</p> <p>“What Laughter is This” Handout</p>
<p>Standards:</p>	<p>Use our free and easy-to-use Standard Alignment tool to align this lesson with the standards in your school district.</p>
<p>Learning Objectives:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.</i> • <i>Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.</i> • <i>Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events</i>
<p>Topics:</p>	<p>Comedy, Language, History of Humor, Humor in Literature, Satire, Pop Culture, Creative writing</p>
<p>Absorb: (11:08 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students to think about the last thing they read or saw on television or social media that they found funny. • Have students write about it for five minutes. What made it funny? Give specific examples. • Divide students into small groups and ask them to share their lol moment, noticing and noting similarities of each. • Share as a whole group, listing similarities on the board.

Overall guiding question(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What makes something we read, watch or encounter funny? ● How and where does humor influence and affect your life? ● What are the different types of humor?
Lesson Procedures: (50 Minutes)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hand out the viewing guide to students and watch Comedy - More Than a Laugh. 2. After watching the video, select 5 of the discussion questions (from this guide) and have a class discussion to ensure understanding of the video. 3. Hand out a copy of the article from Psych today. 4. Class discussion - What type of humor do you relate to best? Why do you think this is? 5. Hand out the worksheet "What Laughter is This" 6. Give the students time to read the article. Utilize a reading strategy such as "Marking the Text" to help students understand the article. 7. Put students into small groups and have them answer the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What type of humor is being used in the excerpt? b. What is the goal or purpose of the excerpt? c. What methods/techniques does the author employ to create the excerpt? d. How effective are the author's methods?
Summary & Assessment: (15 Minutes)	<p>Students will work in small groups. They are an editorial board of a new website called <i>The Onion Teen</i> that will focus on satirizing issues that would be entertaining to a teenage audience. Students will create a draft article in Google Docs (collaboratively shared between all members in the small group and the teacher) on a satirical subject for the new website.</p> <p>Students will present their article to the class and receive feedback from the group on the effectiveness of their use of satire and comedy to highlight a concern or issue.</p>
Reflection: (5 minutes)	<p>After concluding presentations, students reflect on what they have learned regarding satire and comedy as a tool to encourage discourse. Have them do a 5-minute free write answering the following question:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Are satire and comedy effective tools to address societal issues?</p>

ARTICLE FROM PSYCHOLOGY TODAY

What's Your Humor Style?

Are you a joker? A teaser? A clown?

By LOUISE DOBSON PUBLISHED JULY 1, 2006 - LAST REVIEWED ON NOVEMBER 7, 2019

In today's personality stakes, nothing is more highly valued than a sense of humor. We seek it out in others and are proud to claim it in ourselves, perhaps even more than good looks or intelligence. If someone has a great sense of humor, we reason, it means that they are happy, socially confident and have a healthy perspective on life.

This attitude would have surprised the ancient Greeks, who believed humor to be essentially aggressive. And in fact, our admiration for the comedically gifted is relatively new, and not very well-founded, says Rod Martin, a psychologist at the University of Western Ontario who studies the way people use humor. Being funny isn't necessarily an indicator of good social skills and well-being, his research has shown—it may just as likely be a sign of personality flaws.

He has found that humor is a double-edged sword. It can forge better relationships and help you cope with life, or it can be corrosive, eating away at self-esteem and antagonizing others. "It's a form of communication, like speech, and we all use it differently," says Martin. We use bonding humor to enhance our social connections—but we also may wield it as a way of excluding or rejecting an outsider. Likewise, put-down humor can at times be an adaptive, healthy response: employees suffering under a vindictive boss will often make the office more bearable by secretly ridiculing their tyrant.

Though humor is essentially social, how you use it says a lot about your sense of self. Those who use self-defeating humor, making fun of themselves for the enjoyment of others, tend to maintain that hostility toward themselves even when alone. Similarly, those who are able to view the world with amused tolerance are often equally forgiving of their own shortcomings.

Put-Down Humor

This aggressive type of humor is used to criticize and manipulate others through teasing, sarcasm, and ridicule. When it's aimed against politicians by the likes of Ann Coulter, it's hilarious and mostly harmless. But in the real world, it has a sharper impact. Put-down humor, such as telling friends an embarrassing story about another friend, is a socially acceptable way to deploy aggression and make others look bad so you look good.

When challenged on their teasing, the put-down joker often turns to the "just kidding" defense, allowing the aggressor to avoid responsibility even as the barb bites. Martin has found no evidence that those who rely on this type of humor are any less well-adjusted. But it does take a toll on personal relationships.

Bonding Humor

People who use bonding humor are fun to have around; they say amusing things, tell jokes, engage in witty banter, and generally lighten the mood. These are the people who give humor a good name. They're perceived as warm, down-to-earth and kind, good at reducing the tension in uncomfortable situations and able to laugh at their own faults.

Talk show host and comedian Ellen DeGeneres embraces her audience by sharing good-natured, relatable humor. Her basic message: we're alike, we find the same things funny, and we're all in this together.

Nonetheless, bonding humor can have a dark side. After all, a feeling of inclusion can be made sweeter by knowing that someone else is on the outs. J.F.K. and his brothers would often invite a hated acquaintance to vacation with them; they'd be polite to his face, but behind his back, the brothers would unite in deriding the hapless guest.

Hate-Me Humor

In this style of humor, you are the butt of the joke for the amusement of others. Often deployed by people eager to ingratiate themselves, it's the familiar clown or "fat guy" playfulness that we loved in John Belushi and Chris Farley—both of whom suffered for their success. A small dose of it is charming, but a little goes a long way: routinely offering yourself up to be humiliated erodes your self-respect, fostering depression and anxiety. It also can backfire by making other people feel uncomfortable, finds Nicholas Kuiper of the University of Western Ontario. He proposes that it may remind others of their own tendency toward self-criticism.

Farley, who died at age 33 from an overdose, had a streak of self-loathing. "Chris chose the immediate pleasure he got in pleasing others over the long-term cost to himself," his brother wrote after his death. The bottom line: excelling at this style of humor may lead to party invitations but can ultimately exact a high price.

Laughing At Life

When we admire someone who "doesn't take himself too seriously," this is the temperament we're talking about. More than just a way of relating to other people, it's a prism that colors the world in rosier shades. Someone with this outlook deploys humor to cope with challenges, taking a step back and laughing at the absurdities of everyday life. The Onion is a repository of this benign good humor. The columnist Dave Barry has perfected it with quips like this: "Fishing is boring, unless you catch an actual fish, and then it is disgusting."

Studies that link a sense of humor to good health are probably measuring this phenomenon; when you have a wry perspective, it's hard to remain anxious or hostile for long. Martin calls it "self-enhancing humor," because you don't need other people to entertain you—if something peculiar or annoying happens, you're perfectly capable of laughing at it on your own.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/articles/200607/whats-your-humor-style> Retrieved 7/7/23.

Name: _____

Class/Period: _____

For each question below, answer alone or in a small group as the teacher directs.

1. How does Wells establish *ethos*, or credibility, in this introduction to her subject?

2. Who is her intended audience? What values does she anticipate in them?

3. What emotions does Wells seek to inspire in her audience? How effectively does she do that?

4. What is the effect of the frequent references to phrases like “land of the free” and “distinctive American institutions?” Why does she reference such ideas?

5. What more do we learn about her goals in establishing a newspaper?

6. Why do you think she was so successful in increasing the paper’s circulation?

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Agree to Disagree: The Role of Civil Discourse in Society

Time to Complete:	Will vary, depending on the desired duration
Materials/ Technology/ Resources:	Video <i>Comedy - More Than a Laugh</i> Handout of video viewing guide Agree to Disagree activity handout (follows this lesson plan)
Standards:	Use our free and easy-to-use Standard Alignment tool to align this lesson with the standards in your school district.
Learning Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Students will define and explain the concept of civil discourse, identifying its importance in democratic societies and the characteristics that promote effective and respectful discussions</i> • <i>Students will demonstrate their understanding of civil discourse by actively engaging in a discussion, employing active listening skills, respecting diverse perspectives, and supporting their own viewpoints with evidence and reasons.</i>
Topics:	Language, Civil Discourse, Respectful Discussion and Debate, free speech, listening skills
Absorb: (11:08 minutes)	Engage students in a brief discussion by asking them to share their thoughts on the following question: "What does it mean to have a good discussion?"

Overall guiding question(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How can we engage in civil discourse to foster understanding, promote diverse perspectives, and maintain a healthy democratic society? ● What are the key characteristics and strategies of civil discourse that enable individuals to respectfully express their opinions, engage with differing viewpoints, and work towards productive outcomes?
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Lesson Procedures:	<p>Hand out the viewer’s guide to <i>Comedy - More Than a Laugh</i> and have students watch the video. After the video, select 3-5 of the discussion questions to ensure students understand the video.</p> <p>Give each student a copy of the quotes on civil discourse and its importance. The questions are included on that handout.</p> <p>Divide the class into groups. Instruct each group to read the quotes together and discuss their thoughts on the questions.</p> <p>Encourage them to use the quotes to support their answers. Have each group come up with rules/norms that will allow for civil discourse.</p> <p>Bring the class back together and review the rules they’ve come up with. Create a class chart of 5-8 rules that will promote civil discourse in your classroom. Leave it posted in the classroom.</p>
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Summary & Assessment:	<p>Reflective writing - Instruct students to individually reflect on and respond to the following prompt: "Think about a recent discussion or debate you were part of. Did it embody the characteristics of civil discourse we discussed today? Why or why not? How could it have been improved?"</p> <p>Encourage students to think critically and provide specific examples or suggestions for improvement.</p>
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Reflection:	<p>Students will do a quick write/exit ticket answering the following: Why is civil discourse so important to a democratic society?</p>
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Name: _____ Date: _____ Class Period: _____

Characteristics of a Good Discussion How to agree to disagree

Begin by reading the quotes below. Use these to provide evidence and support as your group works to answer the questions.

Quote #1 - *Toward a Civil Discourse by Sharon Crowley*

“Inability or unwillingness to disagree openly can pose a problem for the maintenance of democracy...When citizens fear that dissenting opinions cannot be heard, they may lose their desire to participate in democratic processes, or...they may replace their allegiance to 3 democracy with other sorts of collective identifications that blur or obscure their responsibilities as citizens.”

Quote #2 - “The Health of Our Nation” by Jim Leach

“Civility is not simply or principally about manners. It doesn’t mean that spirited advocacy is to be avoided. Indeed, argumentation is a social good. Without argumentation, there is a tendency to dogmatism, even tyranny. What civility does require is a willingness to consider respectfully the views of others, with an understanding that we are all connected and rely on each other.”

Quote #3 - *Choosing Civility by P.M. Forni*

“Civility means a great deal more than just being nice to one another. It is complex and encompasses learning how to connect successfully and live well with others, developing thoughtfulness, and fostering effective self-expression and communication. Civility includes courtesy, politeness, mutual respect, fairness, good manners, as well as a matter of good health.”

Quote #4 - Leah Ward Sears

We need to in this country begin again to raise civil discourse to another level. I mean, we shout and scream and yell and get very little accomplished, but you can disagree very much with the next guy and still be friends and acquaintances.

Quote #5 - Mike Pompeo

We must protect the very things that make America so special - most certainly including our civil liberties. But we cannot do so without strong national security and a thoughtful and informed discourse.

Quote #6 - Keegan Michael Key

“The Comic has become the truth teller . . . the person who pulls back the curtain . . . [and while] some people can be moved by a wonderful piece of rhetoric, some people can be moved by a stirring speech. But everybody can be moved by something that makes them laugh. Everybody.”

1. What's the difference between discussing and fighting?
2. Is it a good or a bad discussion when people yell? Why or why not?
3. Should we interrupt each other when we discuss? Why not?
4. Are discussions better when people have reasons and evidence to support their ideas?
5. When do you feel the most comfortable about expressing your opinions? When do you feel uncomfortable?
6. How can people show that they respect each other in discussions?"

Use your answers as a group to brainstorm what characteristics make a good discussion. Write these characteristics below:

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