

Elements of Humor

Comedy Archetype

Elements of Humor

- * Incongruity
- * Surprise
- * Repetition
- * Inversion
- * Establishment of Superiority
- * Exaggeration
- * Slapstick Violence

Incongruity

- * The idea is that we laugh at things that surprise us because they seem out of place.
- * Jim Gaffigan- Camping

Surprise

- * A mundane set-up followed by an unexpected conclusion.

EX: My spaniel likes licking himself—lick, lick, lick—as if he were a popsicle. One day he stopped and melted. Left a puddle on the floor.

Repetition

- * A running gag where the audiences' recognition of formula gains laughs

Inversion

- * Takes a recognizable character type or situation
- * Gives the audience just enough to set up expectations
- * Violates those expectations with a contradictory conclusion.

EX: *“I told my psychiatrist that everyone hates me. He said I was being ridiculous—everyone hasn’t met me yet.”*
—Rodney Dangerfield

EX: *I gave my cat a bath the other day. They love it. He just sat there and enjoyed it. It was fun for me. The fur kept sticking to my tongue, but other than that . . . (49)*

Establishment of Superiority

- * Situations in which the audience feel superior to other people.
- * Jokes at others' expense, pranks, accidents
- * [America's Funniest Videos](#)

Exaggeration

Humor that intensifies some aspect of a character or a condition...

- * **Physical quality:** “I was skinny. I’d turn sideways and disappear.”— Sherman Alexie
- * **Ability:** I was such a bad student that in middle school I flunked lunch.
- * **Condition:** “There were thirteen kids in my family. We were so poor we had to eat cereal with a fork, so we could pass the milk to the next kid. --Bernie Mac

Slapstick Violence

- * Physical humor. Lots of pratfalls, falling, being hit on the head, etc.
- * [The Three Stooges](#)

Small Group Activity

Review your cartoons and explain the elements of humor present.

Answer the question: **Why is this funny?**

Scrubs

- * Watch this episode of Scrubs and list examples of the types of humor used in the sitcom.