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
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 poodle on the floor.
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?**
* Watch this episode of Scrubs and list examples of the types of humor used in the sitcom.