



A Laughing Matter



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A Laughing Matter

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Make sure to check out www.thecomedylab.org for corresponding video lessons and additional material!

FORWARD

Before we begin, I want to note that we should always try to be conscious comedians.

"With great power comes great responsibility" - **Spiderman**
Comedy is a powerful force for good or evil. By turning this page, you are making a commitment to only use it for good.

Comedy should never be about putting down others or make fun of another person or causing people to feel belittled or targeted for their race, status, or sexual orientation. The purpose of comedy is ultimately to create a greater sense of community, and that means cultivating an atmosphere where everyone feels included.

So, before you tell a joke, always think to yourself, would this hurt anyone's feelings? Remember that the goal of comedy is to always spread positivity and inclusivity!

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS COMEDY?

Let's start off with an activity...

Think of the last time that you laughed the hardest. What were you laughing about? Where were you? Who were you with?

Comedy is anything that is intended to cause laughter or amusement. If you think it's funny, then it can be called comedy. Unlike a math problem, when there's an exact right answer, comedy cannot be defined by any specific data point or number. Comedy is always personal - what one person thinks is funny might not be to someone else. One of the best parts about

comedy is that we can treat it like a science project - we can test new jokes, analyze different types of comedy, and experiment with our comedic performances.

Comedy exists in a variety of ways:

Daily life

Picture a time where you started cracking up at school, playing with your friends, or even eating at your dinner table.

Televised Entertainment and Film

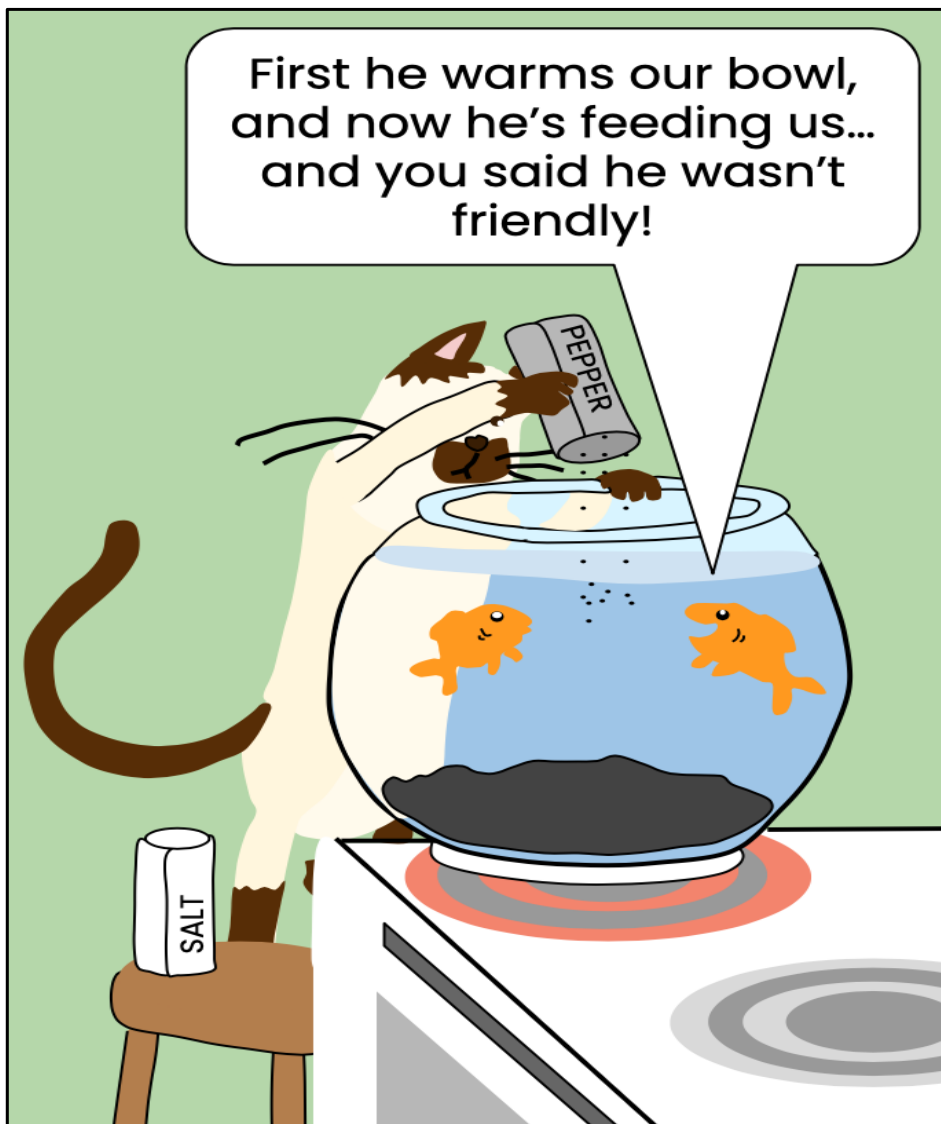
Movies, TV shows, and even commercials utilize comedy to entertain audiences and make their material memorable. You may have seen something that made you laugh in shows like *Spongebob Squarepants* or *iCarly*. Some funny movies you may have seen are *Despicable Me* or *Monsters Inc*. Even insurance commercials from Progressive and State Farm are funny!

Think of something you watched that made you laugh. Was it a movie, television show, or a commercial? What was it called? Why was it funny to you?

Satirical Writing

Comedy is often used to make a point or draw attention to an important issue in society. Satire can address a range of topics, from popular culture to politics to sports.

Some popular outlets for satirical writing are news websites, like *The Onion*, talk-shows, like *The Stephen Colbert Show*, and political cartoons.



Look at the image shown above. What makes it funny?

Comedy Club

Comedy clubs have been around for over a hundred years. Comedy clubs are meant to showcase comedians, who present their comedy material in a stand-up show. These comedians are called stand-up comedians.

We will learn about some famous stand-up comedians later on!

So, why use comedy? Why does comedy matter?

1. It's a meaningful way to connect with people.

Comedy can help us relate to others and make friends!

2. Laughter is the best medicine!

It is scientifically proven that laughter relieves stress, boosts the immune system, and releases endorphins (chemicals that make us happy!)

3. Comedy can help us shift perspectives.

Comedy doesn't need to be silly; comedy can be insightful and perceptive. Comedy can be about real problems in the world and address them in a meaningful way. Comedy is a powerful tool that can change people's minds!

4. It feels good to laugh!

Have you laughed so hard that your stomach hurts? Or made a joke that made someone erupt into laughter? Personally, I don't know a better feeling! And I know many others that agree with me!

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORY OF COMEDY

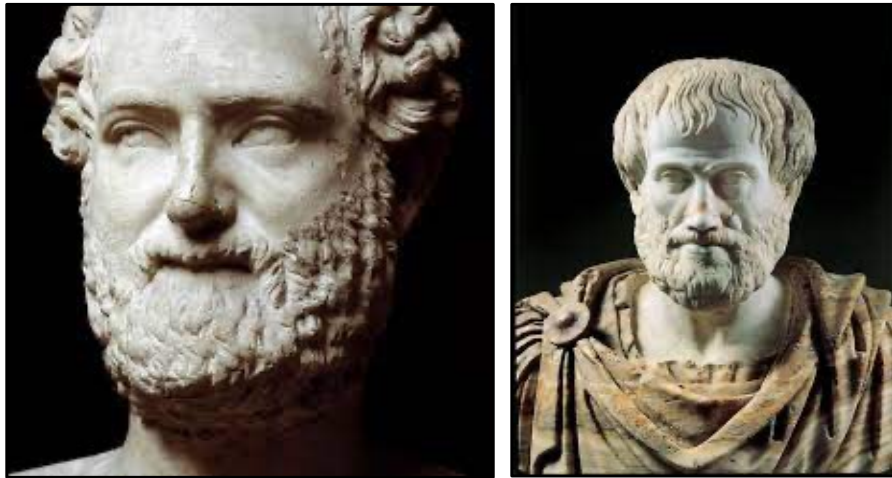
The word comedy stems from the ancient Greek word komoidia, which can be broken down into komos (a group enjoying themselves) and idia (song). Comedies were officially presented in Ancient Greece around 486 B.C. In some of the earliest versions of stand up comedy, comic poets would perform in Greek theaters, using political satire to share their opinion of politicians or leaders, especially when they were corrupt.

Just like in sports, the world of comedy has its all-stars. Let's get to know them!

Aristophanes and Aristotle

In Ancient Greece, over 2,000 years ago, Old Comedy was developed. Aristotle defined comedy as something that came from improvisation and was the opposite of tragedy. Back then, most comedy took the shape of a theater performance in which

characters used satire, parody, and physical comedy to point out something funny in a certain situation. Aristophanes was well known for his comedies.



Charlie Chaplin

Let's go back to the time of silent movies, when one of the greatest comedians was Sir Charles Chaplin. He was an English comic actor, who was even knighted by the British crown! He grew up very poor in an orphanage in South London, but he turned the image of baggy pants, a fake mustache, and a bowler hat into a Hollywood icon. You'll see him in his oversized boxing shorts as he prepares for a fake fight in the boxing ring, or even tripping down the stairs as he runs away from a bad guy.



Robin Williams

Robin Williams is an American stand-up comedian and actor. Williams is an improv all-star. Rising to fame in the 1970s, Williams began his comedy career in the comedy clubs of Los Angeles and San Francisco. Even though he is known for his comedic performance, he has also won an Academy Award for his more serious role in the movie *Good Will Hunting*. You may have seen him in the family classics *Mrs. Doubtfire*, *Jumanji*, or *Patch Adams*. You may have even heard his voice as the genie in *Aladdin*!



Steve Martin

In the 1970s and 1980s, a new comedic icon emerged, and his name was Steve Martin. Steve Martin is an American stand-up performer, television writer, and actor. He attended UCLA, but learned some of his stage tricks during his first job at Disney's FantasyLand. You'll see Steve Martin folding comically bad balloon animals in his comedy sketches, perfecting his physical comedy in movies like *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, or playing the banjo.



Eddie Murphy

In the 1980s, during the times of tube socks and big hair, another comedy all star made his debut - Eddie Murphy. Murphy is an American stand-up comedian, actor, producer, and writer. He made his comedy debut in the early 1980s, but still has a wildly successful career. You may have heard him as a voice actor

in popular movies like *Mulan* (where he played Mushu) or *Shrek* (where he played the donkey). You may also have seen him on *Saturday Night Live*, where he was a cast member from 1980-1984.



Jerry Seinfeld

During this same tubular decade, Jerry Seinfeld joined the list of comedic legends. Jerry Seinfeld is another American comedian, known for his stand-up, comedy writing, acting, and producing. Seinfeld made his comedic debut in the 1980s. He co-wrote and starred in one of the most famous sitcoms of all time - *Seinfeld*. *Seinfeld* was once the most watched sitcom in television history. You may have heard his voice in *The Bee Movie* or heard some of his unparalleled observational comedy!



Tina Fey

Another highly notable comedian is Tina Fey. Tina Fey is an American actress, writer, producer, and playwright. Fey started her career in Chicago in the 1990s, where she performed improv. From there, she went to work as a writer and performer on the show *Saturday Night Live*, where she became the show's first female head writer. Tina Fey is also known for her role in the television show *30 Rock* and for writing *Mean Girls* and *Mean Girls the Musical*.



Dave Chappelle

Dave Chappelle made his comedic debut in 1990. Dave Chapelle is an American stand-up comedian and actor. Chapelle grew up in Maryland, but moved to New York later in his life to participate in the NYC stand-up circuit. Widely known for his sketch comedy show on comedy central, *Chappelle's Show*, Chappelle has also appeared in many Netflix comedy specials and movies, like *The Nutty Professor*. Chapelle even won the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor!



Ali Wong

In modern times, there are many comedic superstars. However, one stand out is Ali Wong. Wong is an American stand-up comedian, actress, producer, and writer. Wong grew up in San Francisco in the 1980s and 1990s. Wong got her comedic start at UCLA in a comedy group. Since then, Wong has had multiple

comedy specials, written and produced *Always Be My Maybe*, written on the show *Fresh Off the Boat*, and more! You'll see Wong on stage mastering the art of self-focused humor and comedic storytelling.



Now that we've met some world-famous comedy all-stars, let's look at some of the hilarious people in your life!

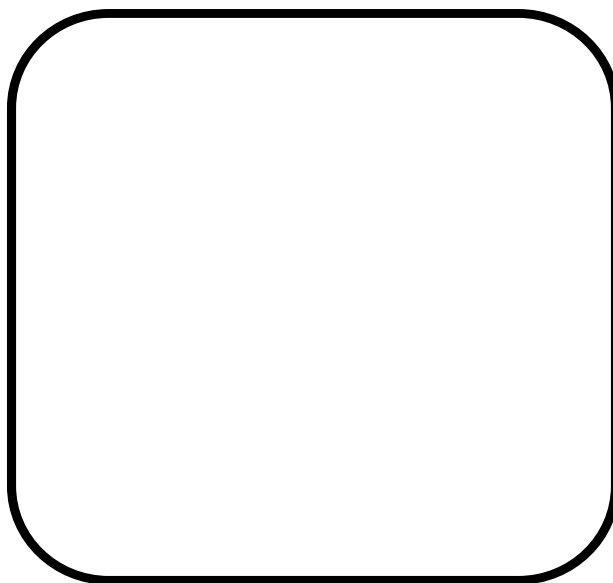
Fill in the blanks to describe some of the funniest people you know!

Name:

Qualities:

Are they outgoing? Always laughing? Do they make goofy faces?

A Memory of Something Funny they Did?



Draw a picture of them doing something funny!

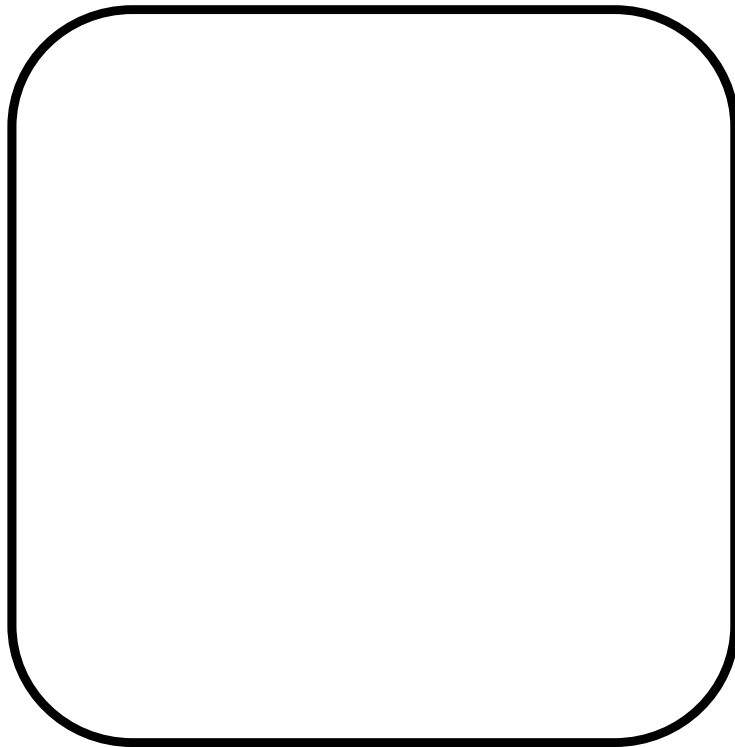
A LAUGHING MATTER

Name:

Qualities:

Are they outgoing? Always laughing? Do they make goofy faces?

A Memory of Something Funny they Did?



Draw a picture of them doing something funny!

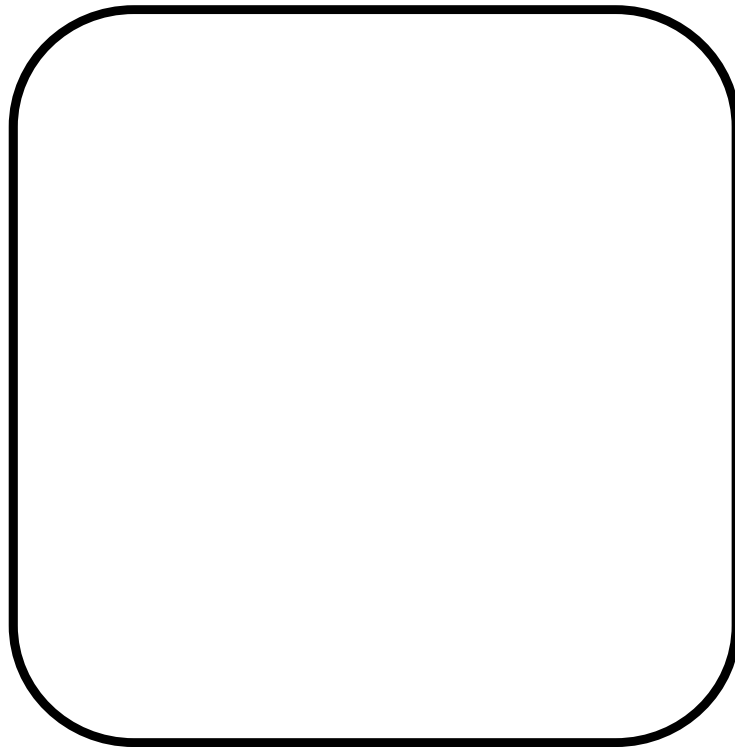
A LAUGHING MATTER

Name:

Qualities:

Are they outgoing? Always laughing? Do they make goofy faces?

A Memory of Something Funny they Did?



Draw a picture of them doing something funny!

A LAUGHING MATTER

Now, think of some funny TV shows and movies you watch! Here are characters from some of the most popular comedic cartoons! Can you match the character to the exaggerated trait that makes them funny?

Character

Funny Trait



Lazy



Grumpy



Scared



Silly

CHAPTER 3

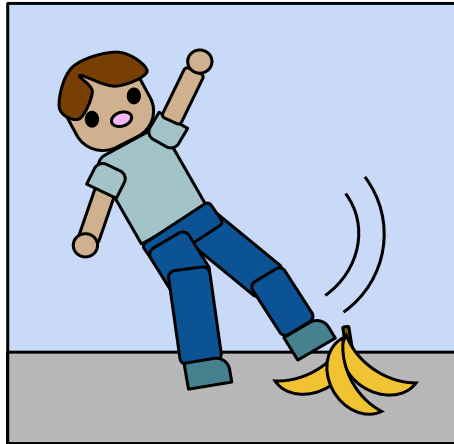
TYPES OF COMEDY

Think of times where you made others laugh. What did you do?
Was it something you said? Or a funny face you made?

1. Physical Comedy

This type of comedy is often referred to as slap-stick comedy. Big gestures, funny faces, props, and exaggerated reactions characterize this type of comedy.

When you think of physical comedy, picture a comedian slipping on a banana, stepping on a rake and hitting themselves in the head, or getting a pie smashed in their face.



2. Self-focused Humor

Self-focused humor turns the comedy on the comedian. The comedian will point out funny things about themselves that the audience may notice. Comedians will also use self-focused humor to exaggerate things about themselves.

When you think of self-focused humor, picture a comedian telling an embarrassing/funny story, laughing at their own experiences, or sharing a relatable fact about themselves.

Let's try it! Introduce yourself in a funny way. (Hint: Try pointing out your interesting hobbies and unique things about yourself!)

Example: Hi. My name is Emma and many people call me the 16 year old grandma because I love to crochet, and I am always in bed by 9:00 PM.

3. Parodies and Satire

Satire is the art of using comedy to address an issue or situation in society. A parody is a type of comedy that imitates an event or person to point out problems or issues. Parodies often use satire.

When you think of a parody, think of a comedian imitating something in our society, like a TV show, in a skit, image, or comedy sketch show. When you think of satire, think of writing, images, or speeches that have some elements of truth, but have heavy exaggeration.

4. Irony and Sarcasm

Irony is a type of comedy where the comedian says something that's the opposite of what you expect. Sarcasm is when someone says something that they don't really mean (like when someone hears bad news and says "Great!")

When you think of irony and sarcasm, think of a comedian who says something that shocks you or seems completely opposite of what you think!

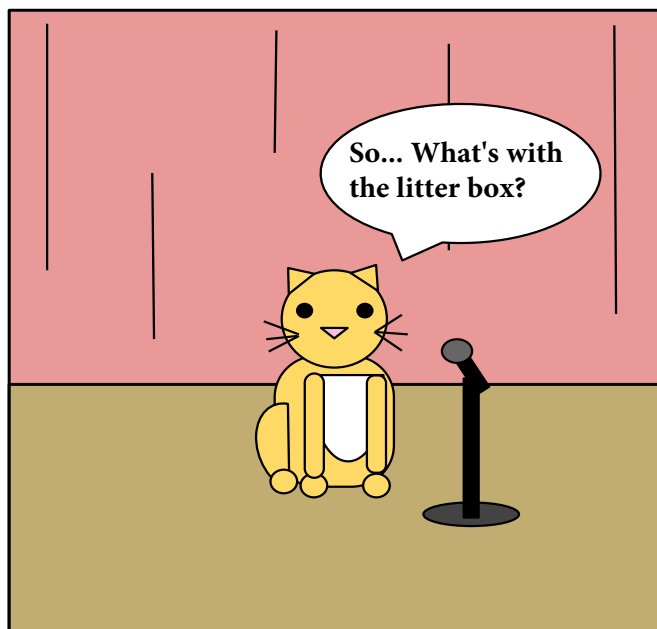


5. Observational

Observational comedy is comedy that uses observations from real life to fuel the material. The observations can be taken from previous experience or what a person notices in the moment they deliver the joke. Observational comedy is often used in improv, where a comedian makes jokes on the spot.

When you think of observational comedy, picture a comedian onstage, pointing out problems or relatable experiences we

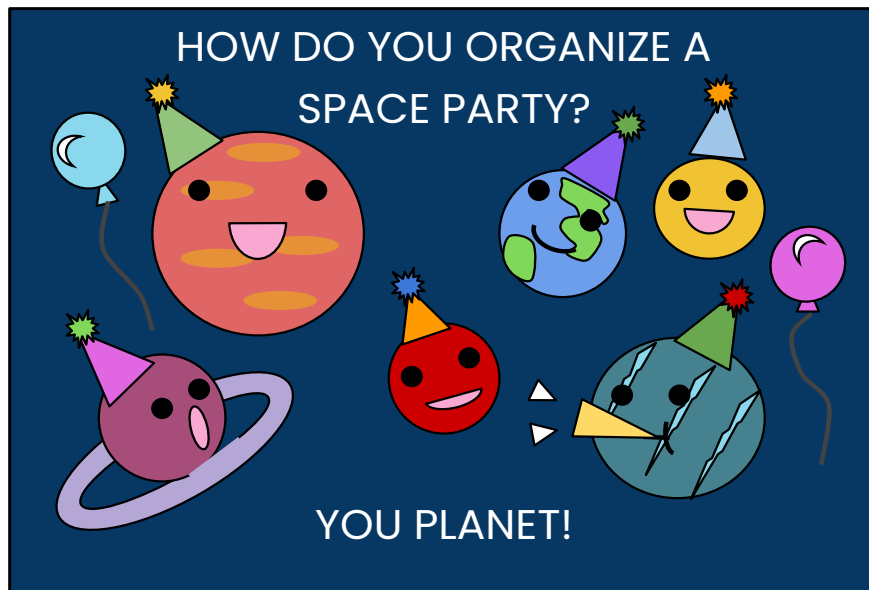
share. The comedian could talk about the airport, librarians, eating at restaurants, or some other shared experience!



6. Puns and Wordplay

Puns and wordplay are some of the most commonly seen types of comedy. Puns are jokes that utilize a word with a double meaning to be funny. Wordplay is a fun use of words! Wordplay often uses puns, purposeful misspellings, and rhymes.

When you think of puns and wordplay, think of your classic dad jokes and silly word jokes!



Here is your own wordplay joke you can experiment with!

First, ask your audience this question.

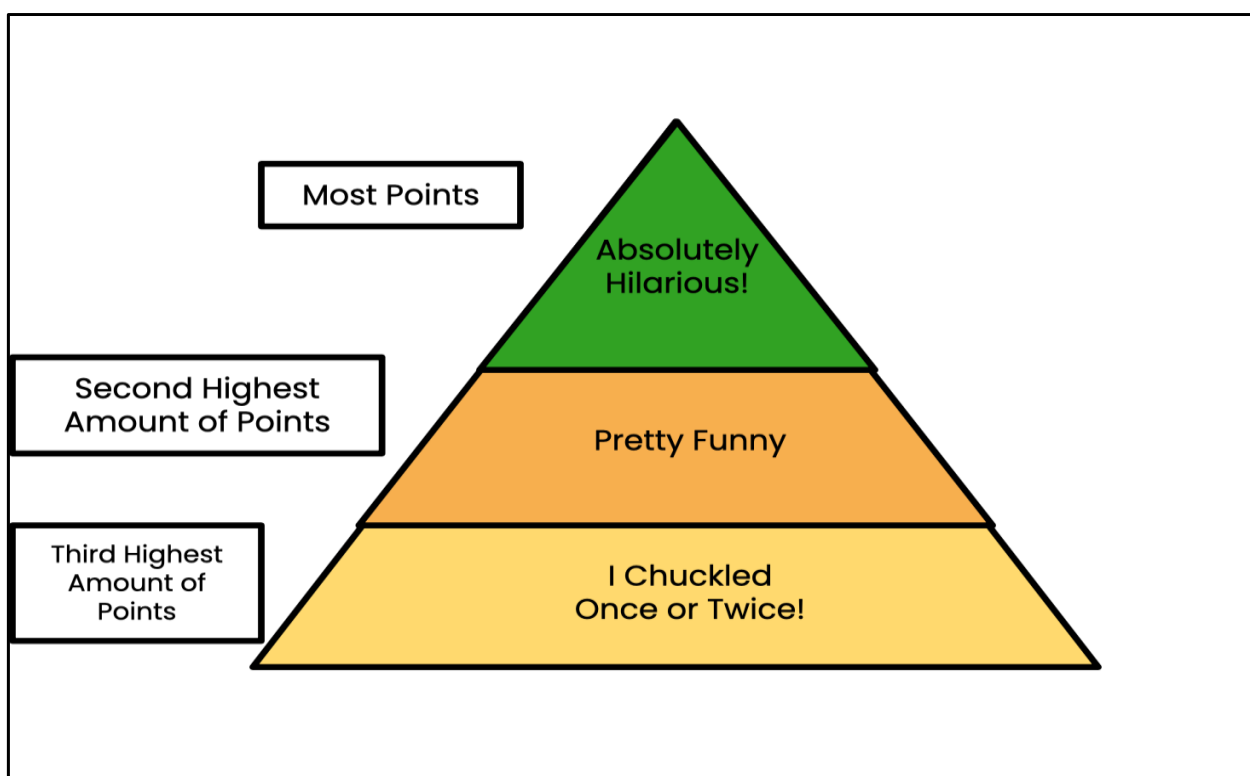
- Why was the basketball court floor so wet?

Then, answer with this.

- Because all the players were dribbling!

Comedy Check:

Rate each of the types of comedy on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the funniest. Add up your points for each type of comedy to create your personalized comedy pyramid! This will show what types of comedy you find the funniest, and which types you might want to try out.



**Here are a few fun activities to remember which
comedy types are which!**

(Answers are in the back of the workbook!)

Word Search

U G Y J D W P U N K I P I R F
I W O L I B O X A T M H J T U
F M U B A W G R F D B Y T W N
Y O T C S Y L Y D E E S B X N
S H F H M E X V D P D I H H Y
Y U H K S X R K Z X L C B P M
I M K Q W S L V S H X A T N H
R O P M O L A S A V G L Y L Q
O R H Y O A U A S T H B N S V
N A C C P P G R A N I T U P Q
Y H M F A S H C T P D O Y Y S
W F K V R T T A I J G W N N N
Y M Y U O I E S R X O Q J A F
W P I T D C R M E F H K O U L
D N D K Y K V P I O S A W G R

observational
laughter
humor
satire

physical
slap stick
parody
funny

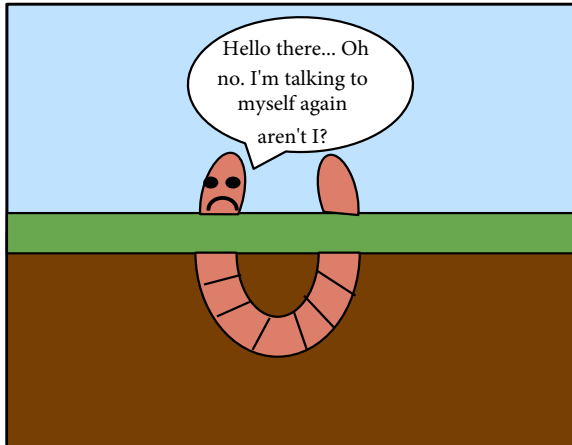
wordplay
irony
sarcasm

pun

Let's practice identifying types of comedy. Read the situation description and choose which type of comedy it represents.

1. A comedian places a banana on the stage and purposely slips. As they fall, they purposely knock over the stool and the microphone to exaggerate their clumsiness.

- a. Observational
- b. Physical Comedy
- c. Puns/Wordplay



2.

- a. Physical comedy
- b. Puns/Wordplay
- c. Self-Focused Comedy

3. "What do you call someone who wears a belt with a watch attached to it?"

"A waist of time."

a. Puns/Wordplay

b. Self-focused comedy

c. Observational

CHAPTER 4

COMEDY CONTENT

Comedy can be about anything. Comedians often focus on their personal experiences, but comedy can also come from the imagination. The most important part of comedy is making people laugh, so write about whatever you think will make people laugh the hardest!

Stand up is more than just knock-knock jokes or wordplay. It's about good storytelling and how you can work jokes into your stories.

By stories, I don't mean that you need to tell a crazy long fairytale. Your story can be about a funny experience, a personal detail, or a hypothetical situation. (Hint: It can be very helpful to use ideas from your comedy journal!)

Comedy journal

A lot of your best material will come from your personal experiences. The best comedians always write down funny moments so that they can use them in their sketch or performance.

Here is some space to write down notes, funny moments, and ideas. Try to keep this journal with you everywhere so you never forget things that make you laugh!

A LAUGHING MATTER

COMEDY JOURNAL

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal 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.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal 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.

A LAUGHING MATTER

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal 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.

Let's practice our comedy writing! Write a funny caption for these pictures. This is a reminder that you can always find humor in any situation!



Caption:



Caption:

A LAUGHING MATTER



Caption:



Caption:



Caption:



Caption:

CHAPTER 5

AUDIENCE

One of the most important parts of comedy is your audience! Your audience is the people you are sharing your jokes with. Your goal is to make them laugh, but just because you find something funny doesn't always mean your audience will. Jokes about certain topics will be funnier to certain groups.

For example, jokes about your pet dog will only make sense to people who understand what it is like to have a dog. Jokes about where you live will only be funny to people who are familiar with your town.

Make sure your audience understands what you are talking about, and that the joke is at the right maturity level (adults may not always laugh at a basic knock-knock joke!). If you want to make people laugh, you have to pay attention to who you are talking to!

Let's do an activity to practice understanding our audience!

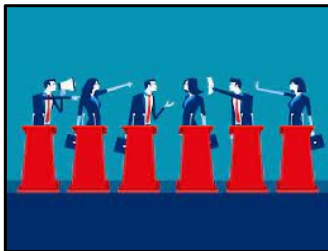
Joke Content



Peek-a-Boo



Knock Knock Jokes



Politics



School

Target Audience



Adults



Students



Babies



Kids

CHAPTER 6

PERFORMANCE

If you want to make people laugh, you have to have good delivery. This isn't about delivering packages. It's about how you deliver or tell your jokes.

The first part of good delivery is projecting your voice. Remember to speak loudly and clearly so that your audience can easily understand what you say. This means speaking slowly so that you don't rush through your words, and fast enough where you don't lose your audience's attention.

Think about some of the best speeches or talks you have heard. Maybe you heard it at school, on TV, or even from your parents. Think about some of the worst speeches or talks you have heard. What was the difference? You might be thinking about tone of voice. The best speakers don't talk like robots; they add emotion behind their words. Remember this when you tell your jokes!

Here are some tips to improve your comedy performance:

1. Look for places to add pauses. Don't add them everywhere, but an occasional pause for effect can really make your jokes shine!
2. Try changing the tone of your voice. This can add a lot of emotion behind your words. (Hint: If you are telling a funny story about where you got excited, make your voice a little bit higher!)
3. Use facial expressions. Make sure to smile, frown, laugh, raise your eyebrows or anything else that fits your joke.
4. Don't stand still. You can use your hands to wave, act things out, or walk around the stage/where you are performing.
5. If your joke doesn't work, don't let it get you down. Instead, try to learn from it. Tell new jokes, note what works, and keep trying! No one gets better if they are perfect all the time!
6. Confidence is key. And, the more you practice, the more confident you will be! I know you will be hilarious!

Activity: Practice Make Perfect!

Here are some simple jokes. Circle, underline, or annotate where you think you should add a pause, change your pace, or emphasize a word!

- What do you call a fake noodle an impasta.
- Why did the mushroom get invited to the party. . . because he was a fun-guy.
- I'd never tell you a pizza joke. It's too cheesy.

Activity: Comedy Word Fill In

Have a friend give you words to fill in the blanks, but don't read them the story. After, read the whole story back to them, with their added words. Practice your delivery by changing up your pace, putting emphasis on certain words, or changing your facial expressions!

A LAUGHING MATTER

An Unforgettable Beach Day

Yesterday _____ went to the beach. The _____ was shining
[name of someone you know] [noun]
and there wasn't a _____ in the sky. _____ loved going
[different noun] [same name]
to the beach because **he/she/they** enjoyed the sound of _____
[plural animal name]
and the feeling of dipping **his/her/their** _____ in the cool water.
[body part]
That day, as _____ walked into the water, **he/she/they** noticed
[same name]
a _____ floating in the water. _____ paused to make
[animal name] [same name]
sure the _____ was okay and noticed that it had _____
[same animal] [plural noun]
caught on its _____. _____ pulled away the _____
[body part] [same name] [same plural noun]
and the _____ swam away. As _____ looked into the
[same animal] [same name]
distance, **he/she/they** saw the _____ _____ in
[same animal] [verb+ing]
appreciation of its newfound freedom. It was a _____ day that
[adjective]
_____ would never forget.
[same name]

COLORING ACTIVITY!

Color in these funny images. Once you are finished,
add a funny caption!



Caption:



Caption:

CONCLUSION

I hope you've enjoyed this comedy course - which is just the beginning of a lifelong journey of laughter and fun!

Of course, not everything in life will be funny. But, comedy is a reminder that, in every situation, there can be a silver lining, and that, when we find that our situation feels hopeless, comedy is a way to step back, to gain a new sense of perspective, and to connect with others when there is a less than perfect outcome.









Comedy is a different way of thinking about the world around us. It challenges us and pushes our boundaries. Comedy fuels progress when we use it to point out aspects of our lives that we can improve. Ultimately, it allows us to understand ourselves and those around us better. And, it reminds us that if we feel like we are taking everything too seriously, we can always find a way to come together and laugh.

So, thank you for taking the time to learn and improve your comedic skills. I hope you've enjoyed your journey through this

workbook and plan to use your newfound skills to spread some positivity.

Most importantly, I hope you're sitting down, because I'm here to tell you that you will be a great stand-up comic!

ANSWER KEY

<u>Character</u>	<u>Funny Trait</u>
	
	
	
	

Word Search

U G Y J D W P U N K I P I R F
 I W O L I B O X A T M H J T U
 F M U B A W G R F D B Y T W N
 Y O T C S Y L Y D E E S B X N
 S H F H M E X V D P D I H H Y
 Y U H K S X R K Z X L C B P M
 I M K Q W S L V S H X A T N H
 R O P M O L A S A V G L Y L Q
 O R H Y O A U A S T H B N S V
 N A C C P P G R A N I T U P Q
 Y H M F A S H C T P D O Y Y S
 W F K V R T T A I J G W N N N
 Y M Y U O I E S R X O Q J A F
 W P I T D C R M E F H K O U L
 D N D K Y K V P I O S A W G R

observational

physical

wordplay

pun

laughter

slap stick

irony

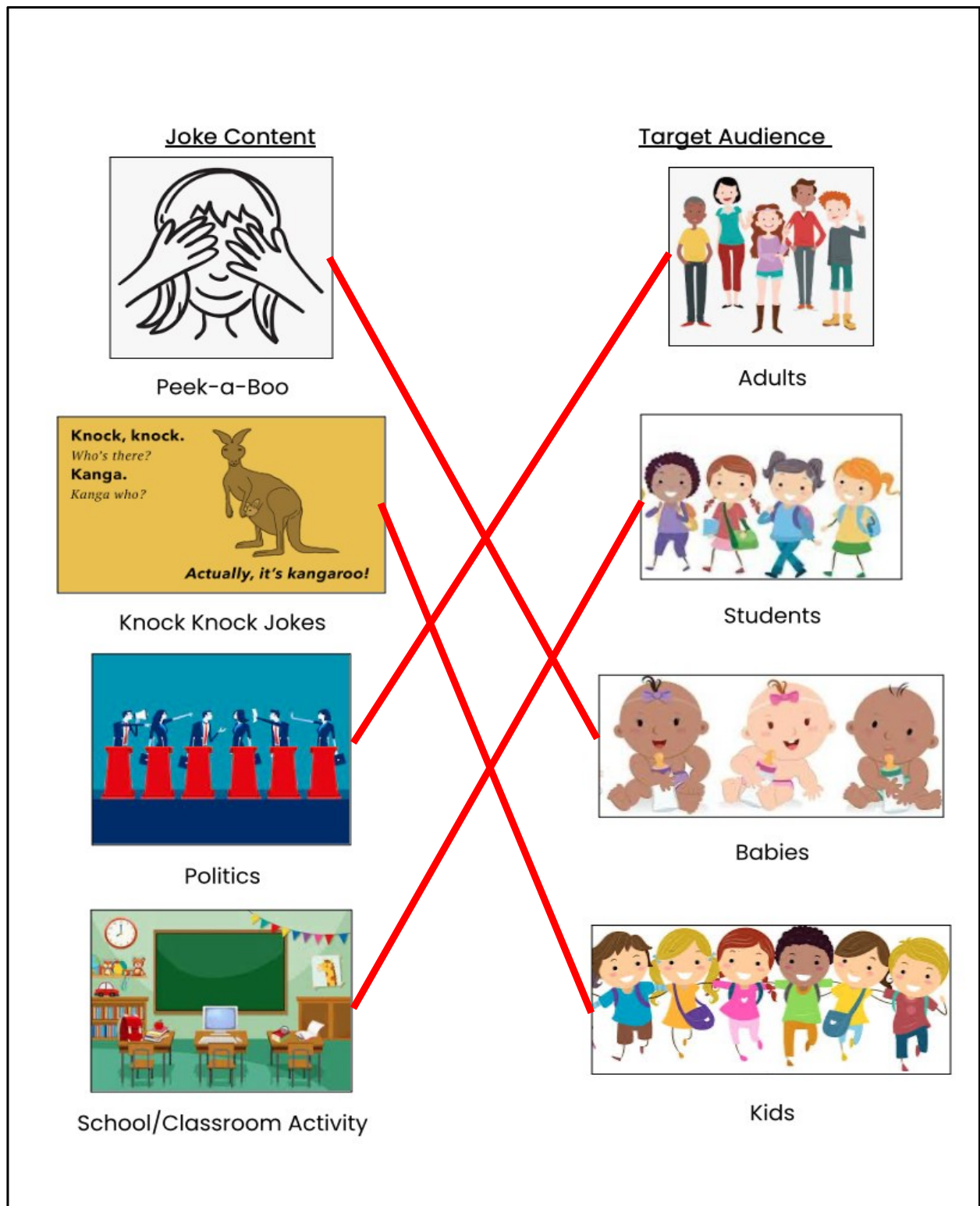
humor

parody

sarcasm

satire

funny



Multiple Choice Activity

B

C

A