



LESSON PLAN

Level: Grades 3-4

About the Author: This unit was created by Peter Oakes as part of a Media Education course taught by John Pungente at the Faculty of Education, University of Toronto, 1993.

Humour on Television

Overview

In this lesson, students compare humour on television to humour in their own lives. In small groups, students will tape humorous television programs and discuss the elements that make these shows funny and entertaining. Students will compare and contrast these programs to their own families and lives and discuss what might happen if these were real, and not fictional situations. As a final activity, students will storyboard and develop their own productions.

Objectives

Students will:

- compare the reality of television humour with humour in their own lives
- view television humour as a construction with specific purposes
- understand that each member of the audience brings a different meaning to the term "humour" engage in co-operative activities
- Pictures

Materials

- TV and VCR at school
- Student TVs and VCRs at home
- TV shows brought in by students
- TV show brought in by teacher
- Art supplies
- Video camera
- Photocopy student *Self-Evaluation Worksheet*

The Lesson

The following activities will involve surveys, graphs, viewings at home and school.



Day One

- As a class, have students list the different kinds of humorous shows they watch
- In small groups, have students discuss what they like about these shows, characters, actions, etc.
- Ask students to do a drawing of their favourite show
- Have each group select a humorous television show (preferably one they know will be on after school or that evening)
- **Home assignment:** have a student from each group tape, and then bring to class, a five-minute video from the humorous show the group has selected

Day Two

- As a class, screen all the student-selected videos
- In small groups, have students work on the show they have chosen. Ask them to list characters by name, identify relationships, whether they are humorous or non-humorous characters, etc.
- In the same small groups, have them do cartoon art (with word balloons) of characters from their show. (They may need examples.)
- Using cartoon art again, have students depict a funny situation at home

Day Three

- Return the cartoons from Day Two to the same small groups. Ask them to role play a humorous scene from the selected TV show and their humorous incident from home.
- After the role playing, have them discuss and record in their groups answers to the following:
- Is there a difference between humour at home and humour on TV?
- What do TV characters do when something funny is said about them? What do you do at home when something funny is said about you?
- **Home assignment:** as a class, discuss the following sequence of activities:
- Select a TV show for everyone to watch that night. While watching, each student will:
 - note how long the show is
 - tally the number of jokes or humorous things that happen in the show
 - after the show, watch members of their family for the same amount of time and tally them for humorous statements, looks, incidents etc.
 - *(Assign three students to tally the number of commercials, the time allotted to commercials, and the products being sold during this program -- give them time to compare notes before the class discussion on Day Four).*



Day Four

- As a class, make a graph of the tallies for the show and for the students' families
- Discuss why the tallies are different for each person in each situation
- Have the students who tallied the commercials and products being sold make a report to the class. Judging by the products that were advertised, what kind of audience is this show trying to attract? How did the time given to commercials compare to the time given to the program?
- In small groups, discuss and record:
 - Which has the most humour, the TV show or your family? Why?
 - What kind of humorous action occurs in the TV show? What makes it funny?
 - Does the TV show let us know when to laugh or when to be serious? How? (i.e. laugh track/ audience vs. silence)
 - How does your family let you know when something is funny or serious?
 - Are funny and serious things different on TV than at home? How are they the same or different?
 - Why would the TV program makers want us to laugh at their show?
 - Have each student complete a Self-Evaluation Worksheet

Day Five (optional)

- Have students work in groups to create their own humorous TV show, complete with commercials
- Have them use a storyboard. They will need a title for their show, characters, a funny situation and things to sell on the commercials
- Videotape the shows.

Evaluation

- Self-Evaluation Worksheet
- Contribution to discussions
- Art
- Storyboards

Bibliography

Harpley, Avril. *Bright Ideas: Media Education*. Leamington, Spa, England: Scholastic, 1990



Humour on Television: Self-Evaluation Worksheet

NAME: _____

Brought in 5-min. video? (check the right answer) **Yes No**

Did tally of humour at home? (check the right answer) **Yes No**

- 1) How is the humour on TV different from humour in real life?

- 2) Why do TV shows want us to laugh at them?

- 3) Why do some people find TV shows funny while others don't?

- 4) How was your group's TV show like real TV? How was it different?



- 5) Draw a picture of your favourite scene from your group's TV show or another group's show.

