

# Humour

## Secondary Lesson Plan

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### Source

*Inside Out Student Guide*

### Learning area

English

### Level

Middle secondary

### Description

This activity uses the *Inside Out* program on humour and a humorous short story to explore forms of humour. It is part of a unit that examines the purposes and forms of humour in written and visual material and in performance.

### Purpose

To identify the way humour is created in a comedy video extract.

To identify examples of four techniques for creating humour in a written text.

### Duration

Two sessions

### Possible outcomes

In relation to *English — a curriculum profile for Australian schools*, work on this activity could lead to the achievement of outcomes in the following strands:

- **Reading and viewing**

Texts

Contextual understanding

Linguistic structures and features

Links to other learning areas, such as Creating, making and presenting in the Arts, are also possible.

### Materials required

Video: 'Humour', *Inside out*, program 5.

A humorous short text, for example, *Lockie Leonard - Human Torpedo* by Tim Winton, or a Paul Jennings short story.

## Procedure

### 1 What is funny?

Students write down some of the jokes, comedy situations or incidents they have found funny, then try to explain why they found these things funny.

Groups of students read out their explanations, identifying similarities or patterns in what others say about what is funny.

Discuss these observations as a whole class.

### 2 Types of humour

Sources of humour likely to be identified by students include:

- something unexpected happens
- someone says something unexpected
- something terrible happens to someone else
- something embarrassing happens to someone else
- someone does something silly, awkward or clumsy

Groups of students select one of the three comedy extracts in the *Inside Out* video. Then they discuss how the humour is operating in terms of the above ideas. Each group's analysis is shared with the rest of the class. Similarities and differences in interpretation are noted.

### 3 Techniques for creating humour

The teacher reads a humorous short story or a section from a novel to the class. During the reading each student notes examples of the following types of humour:

- play on words
- slapstick
- humour that breaks down taboos
- humour that deals with fear or intolerance

At the end of the reading the class discusses the examples noted.

### 4 The audience

The class discusses the following questions.

- Would all age groups and all groups in society find this text funny?
- Would some groups find it funnier than others?
- What are some examples in the text indicating that the humour is aimed at a particular group?
- What groups might disapprove of the humour or not 'get' the humour?

Encourage discussion of specific examples from the text.

## Extension activity

Are there topics which certain age groups, or other groups in society, are likely to find funny? Students list groups and try to identify topics they might find funny. During discussion students consider what types of humour and techniques for creating humour are most likely to appeal to their age group, students in middle primary school and their parents' generation.

## Acknowledgments

*Inside Out* is an ABC Children's and Education Television production and video of broadcasts.

## Related products

- [Teaching Viewing and Visual Texts: Secondary](#)  
Introduces teaching about visual language and visual texts and provides a range of classroom activities.
- [Teaching Language: Secondary](#)  
Activities and units to help teach written and spoken language.