

Parody and Intro to Satire

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s): **American & British Humor**
Time Period: **5 weeks**
Length: **5 weeks**
Status: **Published**

Unit Overview

The Parody and Introduction to Satire unit is meant to follow the Farce/Slapstick/Vaudeville unit, as the humor in Parody and Satire is more complex both in execution and the background knowledge required to understand the joke. The unit examines two main types of satire: general cultural satire and political satire. With cultural satire, we mean a criticism of some or several aspects of a given culture (usually American, but with some British); with political satire, we mean specific criticism of political figures. With the latter, the specific examples used are listed below but should be allowed to change with the a given political climate. In regards to Parody, the unit examines both the technique of good parody as well as how parody contains elements of farce and satire. Examples range from musical parody to impressions, as well as parodies that straddle the line between satire and parody with *The Onion* newspaper and video news. Finally, we examine how satire and satire work in tandem in a British context in films of Simon Pegg, Nick Frost, and Edgar Wright, which parodies American film while satirizing British culture and manners.

The main assignments/projects for this unit require students to first identify the elements of Parody and Slapstick and, second, to write their own versions of the respective text or script. The sequence is as follows: view/read, identify/critique, create/write/perform.

Transfer

Students will be able to independently use their learning to...

- Identify and analyze specific techniques used in parody;
- Analyze and critique the specific necessities of musical parody;
- Analyze and critique the technique impressionists use to parody well-known figures;
- Analyze the importance of embracing the absurd for performers' risk-taking, and the audiences' ability both to escape and to desire social change;
- Understand and analyze how the socio-political structures of a given age influences its satire;
- Understand and analyze the methods used to critique socio-political structures of their times in a satirical manner;
- Write knowledgeably about the influence of perspective, bitterness, and political persuasion in the construction of satire;
- Apply understanding of parody and satire to modern British film;
- Write knowledgeable arguments about the techniques, execution, and consequences of parody and satire used in modern British comedic film;
- Write scripts mimicking the style and techniques of parody and satire;
- Perform original sketches mimicking the style and techniques of parody and satire;
- Create dictionaries and newspapers in the style of unit examples to indicate understanding of and ability to use techniques of parody and satire.

Meaning

Understandings

Students will understand...

- Understand the following in all texts as applicable:
- Wordplay (all forms as applicable: e.g., pun, verbal irony, malapropism);
- The specific techniques of musical mimicry used in parody;
- The specific comedic choices (I.e., set and punchline) comedians use in musical comedy and how that mirrors those of the original song;
- How satire seeks to point to and criticize societal and political problems with the goal of changing audiences' minds and perhaps create social change;
- How parodists and satirists use assumptions about an existing form of expression or presentation (i.e., music, news, action film, etc) for comedy;
- How the political climate of a time both influenced and is influenced by satirical comedy.

Essential Questions

Students will keep considering...

1. What techniques are the comedic groups employing for their comedy?
2. How do comedic performers and writers mimic an original piece of art or mode of expression/presentation to create their comedy?
3. What political and social commentary, arguments, and assumptions are the comedic performers making, and how does satire help their persuasiveness?
4. What makes a piece of satire or a satirical performer more successful in making a social change?
5. How do British artists manage to both satirize and celebrate both American and British culture in satirical film?
6. What is the difference between high-brow and middle-/low-brow comedy?

Application of Knowledge and Skill

Students will know...

Students will understand...

- Understand and be able to write and discuss knowledgeably about the following in all texts as applicable:
- Wordplay (all forms as applicable: e.g., pun, verbal irony, malapropism);
- The specific techniques of musical mimicry used in parody;
- The specific comedic choices (I.e., set and punchline) comedians use in musical comedy and how that mirrors those of the original song;
- How satire seeks to point to and criticize societal and political problems with the goal of changing audiences' minds and perhaps create social change;
- How parodists and satirists use assumptions about an existing form of expression or presentation (i.e., music, news, action film, etc) for comedy;
- How the political climate of a time both influenced and is influenced by satirical comedy.

Students will be apply their knowledge by creating the following:

- Parody/Satirical Newspaper and Dictionary
- Parody/Satirical Newscast
- Analytical and Expository essays identifying and critiquing the techniques, politics, critiques, etc of pieces of parody and satire.

Students will be skilled at...

Students will be able to independently use their learning to...

- Identify and analyze specific techniques used in parody;
- Analyze and critique the specific necessities of musical parody;
- Analyze and critique the technique impressionists use to parody well-known figures;
- Analyze the importance of embracing the absurd for performers' risk-taking, and the audiences' ability both to escape and to desire social change;
- Understand and analyze how the socio-political structures of a given age influences its satire;
- Understand and analyze the methods used to critique socio-political structures of their times in a satirical manner;
- Write knowledgeably about the influence of perspective, bitterness, and political persuasion in the construction of satire;
- Apply understanding of parody and satire to modern British film;
- Write knowledgeable arguments about the techniques, execution, and consequences of parody and satire used in modern British comedic film;
- Write scripts mimicking the style and techniques of parody and satire;
- Perform original sketches mimicking the style and techniques of parody and satire;
- Create dictionaries and newspapers in the style of unit examples to indicate understanding of and ability to use techniques of parody and satire.
- Utilize the following in writing (in-class and take-home essays):
- a wide-ranging vocabulary used appropriately and effectively;
- a variety of sentence structures, including appropriate use of subordination and coordination;
- logical organization, enhanced by specific techniques to increase coherence,
- such as repetition, transitions, and emphasis;
- a balance of generalization and specific illustrative detail; and
- an effective use of rhetoric including controlling tone, establishing and maintaining voice, and achieving appropriate

emphasis through diction and sentence structure.

Academic Vocabulary

- "Shoe-horning"
- Absurdism
- Comedic Duo
- Farce
- General Social versus Specific Political Satire
- High-Brow Comedy
- Impression
- Low Comedy
- Malapropism
- Middle-Brow Comedy
- Parochialism
- Parody
- Pun
- Satire
- Social Anxieties
- Social Dynamic
- Stiff upper lip mentality
- Stock Characters
- Verbal Irony
- Wordplay

Learning Goal 1

Students will understand the techniques employed in parodic and satirical comedy.

Target 1

Students will cite examples from the examples viewed in class to exhibit their understanding of parodic and satirical comedy and comedy generally.

LA.RL.11-12.2

Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

LA.RL.11-12.3	Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
LA.RL.11-12.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (e.g., Shakespeare as well as other authors.)
LA.RL.11-12.5	Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
LA.RL.11-12.6	Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).
LA.RL.11-12.9	Demonstrate knowledge of and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century foundational works of literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.
LA.W.11-12.2.A	Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
LA.W.11-12.2.B	Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
LA.W.11-12.2.C	Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
LA.W.11-12.2.D	Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.
LA.W.11-12.2.E	Establish and maintain a style and tone appropriate to the audience and purpose (e.g., formal and objective for academic writing) while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
LA.W.11-12.2.F	Provide a concluding paragraph or section that supports the argument presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

Target 2

Students will write scripts, satirical dictionaries, and newspapers employing the techniques of parodic and satirical comedy and comedy generally.

LA.W.11-12.3.A	Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
LA.W.11-12.3.B	Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
LA.W.11-12.3.C	Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).
LA.W.11-12.3.D	Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
LA.W.11-12.3.E	Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or

resolved over the course of the narrative.

LA.W.11-12.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)
LA.SL.11-12.1.B	Collaborate with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and assessments (e.g., student developed rubrics), and establish individual roles as needed.
LA.SL.11-12.5	Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.
LA.SL.11-12.6	Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Learning Goal 2

Students will understand the socio-political commentary, arguments, and assumptions in certain parodic, middle- and high-brow satirical comedy.

Target 1

Students will cite examples of a piece's or comic's use of class distinctions, class conflicts, political dogwhistling, political critiques, and political arguments.

LA.RL.11-12.1	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence and make relevant connections to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
LA.RL.11-12.3	Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
LA.RL.11-12.5	Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
LA.RL.11-12.9	Demonstrate knowledge of and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century foundational works of literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.

Target 2

Students write persuasively about how a piece's or comic's use of class distinctions, class conflicts, political dogwhistling, political critiques, and political arguments allow audiences to achieve catharsis, understand social/political problems, and desire social change.

LA.RL.11-12.1	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence and make relevant connections to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
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LA.RL.11-12.3	Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
LA.RL.11-12.5	Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
LA.RL.11-12.6	Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).
LA.RL.11-12.9	Demonstrate knowledge of and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century foundational works of literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.
LA.W.11-12.1.A	Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
LA.W.11-12.1.B	Develop claim(s) and counterclaims avoiding common logical fallacies and using sound reasoning and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.
LA.W.11-12.1.C	Use transitions (e.g., words, phrases, clauses) to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
LA.W.11-12.1.D	Establish and maintain a style and tone appropriate to the audience and purpose (e.g., formal and objective for academic writing) while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
LA.W.11-12.1.E	Provide a concluding paragraph or section that supports the argument presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).
LA.L.11-12.5.A	Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text.
LA.L.11-12.6	Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Formative Assessment and Performance Opportunities

- Discussion
- Handouts/Worksheets
- Journaling
- Script Writing/Skit Performance (brief, in the style of *The Onion*)
- Writing in the style of shorter texts (like Bierce's *The Devil's Dictionary*)
- Do Nows/Closures
- Terms Quiz

Summative Assessment

- Unit Test

- Writing a new "Modest Proposal".
- Creating a newspaper in the style of *The Onion*.
- In-Class Essay

21st Century Life and Careers

CRP.K-12.CRP1.1	Career-ready individuals understand the obligations and responsibilities of being a member of a community, and they demonstrate this understanding every day through their interactions with others. They are conscientious of the impacts of their decisions on others and the environment around them. They think about the near-term and long-term consequences of their actions and seek to act in ways that contribute to the betterment of their teams, families, community and workplace. They are reliable and consistent in going beyond the minimum expectation and in participating in activities that serve the greater good.
CRP.K-12.CRP2.1	Career-ready individuals readily access and use the knowledge and skills acquired through experience and education to be more productive. They make connections between abstract concepts with real-world applications, and they make correct insights about when it is appropriate to apply the use of an academic skill in a workplace situation.
CRP.K-12.CRP4.1	Career-ready individuals communicate thoughts, ideas, and action plans with clarity, whether using written, verbal, and/or visual methods. They communicate in the workplace with clarity and purpose to make maximum use of their own and others' time. They are excellent writers; they master conventions, word choice, and organization, and use effective tone and presentation skills to articulate ideas. They are skilled at interacting with others; they are active listeners and speak clearly and with purpose. Career-ready individuals think about the audience for their communication and prepare accordingly to ensure the desired outcome.
CRP.K-12.CRP6.1	Career-ready individuals regularly think of ideas that solve problems in new and different ways, and they contribute those ideas in a useful and productive manner to improve their organization. They can consider unconventional ideas and suggestions as solutions to issues, tasks or problems, and they discern which ideas and suggestions will add greatest value. They seek new methods, practices, and ideas from a variety of sources and seek to apply those ideas to their own workplace. They take action on their ideas and understand how to bring innovation to an organization.
CRP.K-12.CRP7.1	Career-ready individuals are discerning in accepting and using new information to make decisions, change practices or inform strategies. They use reliable research process to search for new information. They evaluate the validity of sources when considering the use and adoption of external information or practices in their workplace situation.
CRP.K-12.CRP8.1	Career-ready individuals readily recognize problems in the workplace, understand the nature of the problem, and devise effective plans to solve the problem. They are aware of problems when they occur and take action quickly to address the problem; they thoughtfully investigate the root cause of the problem prior to introducing solutions. They carefully consider the options to solve the problem. Once a solution is agreed upon, they follow through to ensure the problem is solved, whether through their own actions or the actions of others.
CRP.K-12.CRP11.1	Career-ready individuals find and maximize the productive value of existing and new technology to accomplish workplace tasks and solve workplace problems. They are flexible and adaptive in acquiring new technology. They are proficient with ubiquitous technology

applications. They understand the inherent risks-personal and organizational-of technology applications, and they take actions to prevent or mitigate these risks.

Differentiation

- Allow for shorter responses on written assignments
- Allowing students to choose more than one response on multiple choice assessments
- Grouping students with others of greater ability
- Allow for students to simply *write* and direct sketches without needing to *perform* them.

Enrichment

- Research Projects on modern satire and satirical performers
- Leading class discussions/dialogues

Unit Resources

- Background notes on above academic terms
 - *The Onion* video news
 - *The Onion* newspaper
 - Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*
 - Simon Pegg and Edgar Wright, *Shaun of the Dead/Hot Fuzz*
 - Monte Python's *Flying Circus* (selections of sketches)
 - Jonathan Swift, *A Modest Proposal*
 - Jon Stewart/Trevor Noah, *The Daily Show* (specific sketches)
 - John Oliver, *Last Week Tonight* (specific sketches)
 - Stephen Colbert, *The Colbert Report* (specific sketches)
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- Background Notes
 - Historical Music/ Photos
 - Original Texts
 - Video
 - Vocabulary words and examples