

Analyzing humor is fun, and what you learn studying humor can be applied to other aspects of literary analysis. Sometimes it can feel like you are killing a joke by reducing it to its parts. But do not despair; humor is based on surprise; improving your analysis skills cannot ruin the surprise of a good joke.

For your pattern-recognition convenience, I have broken humor into three general classes. These classes won't cover everything, but this simplification will help you to improve your literary analysis skills.

THREE GENERAL CLASSES FOR CREATING HUMOR

EXAGGERATION

- Overstatement and understatement
- Wit (increased intelligence)
- Increased stupidity (characters worse than ourselves)
- Wordplay (wit: exaggerated intelligence)
- Slapstick (exaggerated physical humor)
- Malapropism (misusing words) ✓
- Exaggerated selfishness (coarse, flat characters)

REVERSAL

- Contradiction
- Irony
- Oxymoron
- Reversal of intention, awareness, and fortune (peripeteia and catastrophe)
- Comic deflation (characters losing status)

MISMATCH

- Comic juxtaposition (things that don't go together) *don't go together*
- Taboo (profanity, name calling, sex talk, political incorrectness, and toilet humor)
- Comic misunderstanding ("It's hot." "You think I'm hot?")
- Song and dance

COMEDY ESSAY

For the comedy essay, you are going to analyze a funny movie, episode of a TV show, or play (breaking it down into parts), identifying traditional comic patterns. The essay should be 3-6 pages long, not counting your Works Cited page. Use MLA style; write in the third person.

Here is the outline:

1. Background information (cite two sources)

Who directed, acted, wrote and produced the work?

When was it made?

What are some interesting facts about it? (Cite this source.) 1

How was it reviewed? (Use a different source and cite it.) 2

Working thesis question: *Does the work contain traditional comic patterns?*

2. Plot analysis

How closely does the plot follow either of the traditional patterns Aristotle identifies in *Poetics*? (**happy ending, catastrophe averted / no happy ending, catastrophe**)

What is the "ridiculous error" that creates the **complication** in the plot?

Does this ridiculous error create the result in **peripeteia (reversal of intention)**, **anagnorisis (recognition of the error)**, **catastrophe (reversal of fate)**?

3. Comic modes

What elements of farce, satire, and romantic comedy does it contain?

Cite some examples.

4. Character analysis

Are there characters who express what Aristotle describes as "the action of men [or women] worse than ourselves"?

Are there traditional comic characters?

Examples of comic characters: The wise servant or subordinate, the wise-cracking satirist, the young lovers, the overbearing authority (the parent or boss), the buffoon, the braggart.

Are there any round, flat, static, and dynamic characters?
How do they affect the plot and the theme?

5. Comic dialogue analysis (quotation sandwiches)

Write **four paragraphs** each containing examples of comic dialogue, wrapped in a quotation sandwich.

Name the comic device in the claim; integrate the dialogue; comment specifically on the dialogue, using keywords, phrases, and sentences, used by the speaker(s) in the commentary of your paragraph. In your commentary, break down the elements of the literary device and explain their function (create humor, delineate character, advance the plot).

6. Conclusion

Present the point (thesis) of your essay. You looked for old patterns and found them.

What does this analysis of the comedy show about human nature?
Has our taste for comic devices changed?

7. Works Cited page

The movie, TV show, play or book
The background information
The review by a critic
Other sources

CHECKLIST FOR RESEARCH

1. Title of work:

22 jump street (Movie, show, and play titles are in italics; the title of an episode is in quotations.)

2. Article on background Information:

Author: _____ Title: _____

3. Review of work:

Author: _____ Title: _____

COMIC DIALOGUE FOR YOUR COMEDY ESSAY

DIRECTIONS Name the comic devices, and write down the actual dialogue.

Comic dialogue example 1

Comic devices _____

Comic dialogue _____

Comic dialogue example 2

Comic devices _____

Comic dialogue _____

Comic dialogue example 3

Comic devices _____

Comic dialogue _____

Comic dialogue example 4

Comic devices _____

Comic dialogue _____

QUOTATION SANDWICHES FOR YOUR DIALOGUE ANALYSIS

DIRECTIONS

Write your quotation sandwiches for your comedy essay.

Comedic dialogue paragraph 1

These pages are for writing your rough draft of your dialogue analysis paragraphs.

Be sure to name the comedic devices in the claim.

CLAIM

There is a situational irony

QUOTATION, EITHER BLOCK OR IN-TEXT

SCHMIDT. What do you think of this out thing?
MAYA. It is like two pte supporting each other
SCHMIDT. I think they are like my testicles

COMMENTARY

it is stupid how he says about the
two part are his testicles

Comedic dialogue paragraph 2

Be sure to name the comedic devices in the claim.

CLAIM

QUOTATION, EITHER BLOCK OR IN-TEXT

COMMENTARY

2

che
khe

QUOTATION, EITHER BLOCK OR IN-TEXT

COMMENTARY

Comedic dialogue paragraph 4

Be sure to name the comedic devices in the claim.

CLAIM

QUOTATION, EITHER BLOCK OR IN-TEXT

COMMENTARY

FORMATTING THE WORKS CITED PAGE

FILMS OR MOVIES WITH THE DIRECTOR NAMED FIRST, ACTORS NOT NAMED

Director. *Movie title in italics*. Studio, release date.

Lucas, George, dir. *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope*. Twentieth Century Fox, 1977.

FILMS OR MOVIES WITH THE MOVIE TITLE NAMED FIRST, DIRECTORS AND ACTORS NAMED

Movie title in italics. Director, Major actors, Writers, Name the studio, release date.

The Usual Suspects. Dir. Bryan Singer. Perf. Kevin Spacey, Gabriel Byrne, Chazz Palminteri, Stephen Baldwin, and Benicio del Toro, Polygram, 1995.

RECORDED TELEVISION EPISODES

"Episode title in quotation marks." *TV show's name in italics*, season if available.

Writers and directors, Studio, distribution date.

"The One Where Chandler Can't Cry." *Friends: The Complete Sixth Season*. Writ.

Andrew Reich and Ted Cohen, Dir. Kevin Bright, Warner Brothers, 2004.

Note: Use your discretion when naming directors, writers, performers, producers between the title and the distributor.

Abbreviate *dir.*, *writ.*, *perf.*, *prod.*

MORE WORKS CITED PAGE FORMAT EXAMPLES

WORKS CITED PAGE FROM A WEBSITE

Author or editor. "Title in quotes." *Website name in italics*, publication date (if available),
URL. Date accessed if publication date is not available.

WORKS CITED PAGE WEBSITE EXAMPLE, AUTHOR AND PUBLICATION DATE NAMED

Pidd, Stewart. "Paraphrase Rules." *Attackthetext*. Attack the Text Publishing, 13 Nov. 2013,
attackthetext.com/paraphraserules/youknowit.

WORKS CITED PAGE WEBSITE WITHOUT AN AUTHOR NAMED OR THE PUBLICATION DATE

"Making Vegetarian Food Tasty by Adding Meat." *Carnivore*, 24 Feb. 2012,
www.carnivore.com/eat/9321.

WORKS CITED PAGE WEBSITE WITHOUT AN AUTHOR OR THE PUBLICATION DATE NAMED

"How to Sleep." *eSleep*, eSleep.com/2010/how-to-sleep/. Accessed 12 Apr. 2016.

IN-TEXT CITATIONS REVIEW

When citing in text, use the first entry of the citation on your works cited page (First entry refers to the first thing that appears on the line for each entry, usually the author or the title of the work:

AUTHOR AS FIRST ENTRY, USING A QUOTATION

Works Cited page website example, author and publication date named

Pidd, Stewart. "Paraphrase Rules." *Attack the Text*, 12 Oct. 2010, *attackthetext.com/rules*.

In-text citation of using the author as the first entry

The website lists many profound insights: "Paraphrasing is very difficult" (Pidd).

Title as first entry, using a paraphrase

The author describes her pet cow named T-Bone in great detail ("Making Vegetarian Food Tasty by Adding Meat").

WRITING EXERCISE 5: ANALYSIS OF A COMEDY

Directions: Write an essay breaking down patterns of comedy by taking the following steps.

1. Pick a movie, TV show, or play, and watch or read it.
2. Get background research and turn in.
3. Write parts 1-4.
4. Find comic dialogue and list.
5. Write four quotation sandwich paragraphs analyzing comic dialogue.
6. Write conclusion and Works Cited page.
7. Peer-review your essay.
8. Revise your essay and turn it in.

OUTLINE

I. Parts 1 - 4

Background information (cite two sources)

Plot analysis

Comic mode analysis (farce, romantic comedy, and satire)

Character analysis

II. Part 5

Comic dialogue (four quotation sandwich paragraphs)

III. Conclusion

Thesis

Witty or insightful comment

IV. Works Cited Page

Movie or TV show, play or book

Background research

Pollitt (if you cited the book)

Steven Beydler

Mr. Gary Pollitt

English 101

23 April 2013

Hair Comes Trouble: Classic Comedic Patterns in *Tangled*

Directed by Nathan Greno and Byron Howard, *Tangled* premiered in November 2012 as Walt Disney Pictures take on the classic fairytale "Rapunzel." According to Chmielewski and Eller, the film was originally titled *Rapunzel*, but Walt Disney Studios later decided to rename their movie *Tangled* to give the film a less gender-specific impression. By adjusting the title, Walt Disney Studios incentivized more young boys to see the film, therefore increasing their profits ("Disney Restyles"). *Tangled* received many positive reviews: Sandy Kenyan wrote that it is "a must-see movie the entire family can enjoy together." *Chicago Sun-Times* critic Zwecker gave it "four out of four stars." Making over 590 million dollars, *Tangled* "may be [one of Disney's] best movies ever" (Cooper).