

“If You Just Change, I Won’t Have to Kill You”: Comedy as a Force of Social Change

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INTRODUCTION

Comedy is a method whereby a society can encourage individuals or groups to change behaviors or ideas through ridicule. The mockery expresses the disapproval of the first group and serves to unite those individuals against the idea or behavior that was deemed inappropriate. Thus, laughter and comedy function to unite individuals in agreement and to cause or attempt to cause others to cease inappropriate or unhealthy behavior. Specifically, comedic vehicles such as satire and standup comedy aim at uniting the audience with a shared idea of what is valuable and what is not *as a society* rather than for an individual (Mintz 78).

Satire as a comedic form is a rich medium with material spanning time from Ancient Greek comedies to present day television. The genre has been viewed variously as a method by which the satirist attempts to provoke social change, “a kind of doctrinaire writing, dedicated to teaching moral lessons, a form of rhetoric, a means of persuasion which, unlike comedy, was not designed merely to entertain” (Deer 712) or as an art form that illustrates the various roles man plays as he searches for an understanding of reality or, finally, as some combination of these opposing views (Deer 717). Any of these views allows the audience to gain an understanding of the socially accepted norms and beliefs, and indeed the audience must be assumed to have an understanding of these things in order to understand the satire.

Similarly, stand up comedy calls on a given audience to unite with the comedian in terms of shared values and an understanding of what is desirable in a society or community. The comedian in this case, however, does not assume a previous understanding with the audience; rather he or she must establish before a true routine what will be the normative beliefs and ideas (Mintz 78). Only after this understanding is established with the audience will they feel free to laugh at the jokes, which after all will, in all probability, mock some of their own foibles as well as make public their own understanding of what is appropriate or acceptable.

Satire and stand up are two forms of comedy that are imminently accessible to students, who partake of both forms, often daily. Many of them watch popular satirical shows, such as *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report*, *The Simpsons*, and *South Park*, and whether or not they watch professional stand up through a medium, such as *Comedy Central*, they almost certainly partake of its amateur counterpart in the lunchroom with their friends or in class in the form of the class clown. By bringing such a prominent part of most students’ lives into an academic section, the classroom can gain a new vitality as students become more engaged and willing to take part in discussions of literary practice and theory, so long as it pertains to something so entertaining.

OBJECTIVES

TEKS: English II

The student will:

Writing

- write in a variety of forms for various audiences and purposes.
- proofread writing for appropriateness of organization, content, style, and conventions.
- respond appropriately to peer review of his/ her work.

Reading Comprehension

- draw upon his/her background to make connections to text.
- analyze text structures for how they influence understanding.
- draw inferences and support them with textual evidence and experience.
- interpret influences of historical context on a work.
- recognize distinctive and shared characteristics of cultures through reading.
- use elements of text to defend responses and interpretations.
- analyze literary elements for their contribution to meaning in literary texts.
- read critically to evaluate characteristics of text, credibility of sources, mode of reasoning, and common persuasive techniques.

Listening/Speaking/Listening Critically

- listen and respond appropriately to presentations and performances of peers or published works.
- make relevant contributions in discussions.
- make valid interpretations of literary texts.

Viewing/Representing

- deconstruct media to understand the main idea.
- recognize how visual or sound techniques or design convey messages in media.
- examine the affect of media on constructing his/her perception of reality.

RATIONALE

I teach Pre-AP English II in a small school setting. My school is made up entirely of Gifted and Talented (G.T.) designated students, and our program is designed to prepare these students for college level courses. To be specific, my course is designed to ready students for the more rigorous AP English III and IV courses they will enter in the coming years. The students are studying world literature, with a focus on texts that have appeared on the AP Literature and Language tests. They are required to write papers that focus primarily on analysis of literary technique and connect those techniques to abstract literary elements such as theme. Students spend a good deal of class time writing in order to develop style and to discuss their understanding of works read outside of class. There is also class time devoted to group and whole class discussion activities as building blocks for writing activities. This format lends itself well to an examination of the techniques of writing comedy and analysis of the aims of specific writings, and it will offer students the opportunity to express understanding of the form through imitation as a writing assignment. This analysis and imitation will not only connect the material to the rest of the tenth grade curriculum but also equip students to be able to understand popular media in terms of purpose and technique, allowing them to identify their own assumptions and the assumptions of those around them. Specifically, satire and standup rely on assumptions of shared

values and cultural ideals; students should be able to make conscious decisions about which cultural assumptions they will support and which ones they will reject. This goal will be accomplished through that close examination of technique and style, leading to an understanding of purpose. Connecting the work of the classroom to student life outside of school is a key step to the retention of important material, and as students identify the similarity between the irony of a poem or essay read in class and the cartoon watched on television later that night, they will add to the depth of their understanding and memory of a lesson.

UNIT BACKGROUND

The goal of the high school classroom is to equip students with tools to use in future endeavors and interactions with society. The English classroom specifically seeks to introduce students to useful texts and provide skills that will allow students to effectively understand future texts and furthermore to communicate this understanding clearly through writing. Although these purposes do not seem to dictate genre or mode, there appears to exist a general consensus in academic circles that they should be accomplished through the study of “serious” works, such as tragedy or epic. An examination of the tenth grade curriculum, for instance, reveals that almost every text is a tragedy in either form or content. The truth, however, is that comedy as a genre is a perfectly viable vehicle for the same skills as tragedy, and a real study of comedic form has also the potential to provide further depth of understanding to other forms and genres (Williams 15). At the same time it is much more likely to appeal to the sensibilities of students worn out with the unleavened discussion of serious texts and serious topics.

The tendency to ignore comedy in literary study is, in fact, rather surprising, considering the genre’s ubiquitous presence not only in its own right but also inside of those other works so valued by the traditional curriculum – Shakespeare’s tragedies are never without their comic relief, and even the Greek tragedies include a comic figure now and then. The examination of these comedic moments can often reveal more about the cultural and societal norms of the time period of a text, and thus a deeper understanding of the motives of a text, as Robert Williams states above. The comic figure of the sentry in Sophocles’ *Antigone*, for instance, adheres to a pattern of differentiation between characters in which those of humbler status are given more examples of colloquialism and casualness in an attempt to differentiate them from those figures of greater stature, the tragic heroes and their relations (Stevens 95). The recognition of this separation allows students to understand the importance of class difference in the Greek tragedies, a distinction which further leads to the use of the plays as propaganda reminding citizens of their proper place (below both god and state). Without the recognition of the sentry’s ridiculous dialogue, further discussion of class and social status risks falling by the wayside.

One possible contributor to the failure of the curriculum to address comedic style is a common lack of consideration or understanding of what actually makes comedy funny. While most of us intuitively comprehend the message of a joke, many of us cannot articulate just how we got that message (Williams 17). It is within this understanding that the best opportunity for connection to traditional curriculum occurs. The forms of comedy are rich in literary devices and techniques, and the discussion of these techniques can often bring about a richer understanding of style than some of the “serious” texts. For a student to understand satire, for instance, s/he has to understand not only those common devices like irony, juxtaposition or oxymoron, and parody but also how these devices function in the mind of the audience. Not only is the student examining the method of writing satire, s/he is also examining the purpose or affect on the audience. The

practice of writing in this same form further requires students to apply the methods in order to produce an intended affect on the audience, a consistently-taught objective in any English curriculum.

The simple understanding of a joke, outside of form, also allows students to make connections to theme and meaning. When combined with knowledge of technique and method, students will be armed with a powerful arsenal for interpreting the cultural and societal messages of comedic works, another important English objective. In general, satire and stand up as modes of comedy seek to accomplish specific goals, usually involving the determination of acceptable versus non-acceptable behavior. The result of such determination is to let members of a group know what behavior to emulate and what behavior to change. For many satirical works, that change is in fact the end goal of the work. A comedic performer or writer ridicules a group or behavior in the hopes that such mockery will result in a change of behavior or allegiance. Such a change is dependent on the complicity of the audience and a general agreement on acceptable behavior – a fact that most audience members will never stop to consider. Hopefully, the consideration of these two popular genres will create awareness in students of the sort of societal norms with which they choose to comply.

Satire as a Literary Genre

“A Modest Proposal”

When criticism is extended beyond the description of a single work to the study of entire genres...then the process of abstraction and the resultant coarseness of reading is intensified – so much so that many critics have thought that such large-scale criticism leads away from the literary work rather than toward it, and blocks rather than sharpens our vision. (Kernan 223)

In order to avoid this “coarseness,” it will be best to examine specific works of satire and define the patterns inherent in the texts themselves and thus reason outward from each work. It will be in students’ best interest to take this approach, but at the same time for the instructor to guide students in appropriate directions of analysis; thus, both the specific and the genre are approached critically with hopefully less “coarsening” of the material. A work such as Jonathan Swift’s “Modest Proposal” offers a good opportunity for this method, as it is short enough for students to read it in its entirety quickly and, therefore, analyze the entire structure and techniques employed by the author. Swift’s satire is an excellent piece for students to begin their study, simply because it provides an obvious (or maybe not for some students, but clear enough once pointed out) example of how a satire seems to praise a subject even as it ridicules it.

Swift’s proposal is rich in rhetorical technique, both familiar and unfamiliar to students. Students will probably be able to identify the specific sentence structures used by Swift to build rhetorical purpose, although they may have some difficulty in identifying purpose and overall structure. The Proposal uses a unique rhetorical organization that blends two different points of view by means of two separate organizational structures (Smith 135). By allowing students to identify those structures with which they are familiar, the genre of satire will have some basis in the familiar, and the instructor can then move from the structures themselves to their unusual purposes in Swift’s proposal. These purposes can then be examined through the lens of satiric method in general, as defined by Alvin Kernan in *The Plot of Satire*. Students can then seek to

identify other broad applications of this technique in the Proposal and then beyond it. For example, students can easily identify the complex and compound-complex sentences that make up the body of the Proposal. They may further be able to identify the use of devices like polysyndeton or the repetition of the structure of items in a list (compounding by threes). The instructor can guide them to the realization that these structures are further arranged so that all emotion is connected to the proposer and his friends in the main clauses, while the reader sympathizes instead with the horrifying descriptions of the plight of the poor in the subordinate clauses and phrases. Swift uses this structure repeatedly and frequently as part of his attempt to discredit the proposer and present the opposite point of view (Smith 137). Further connections take place when it is revealed to students that one popular satirical method is to either minimize objects, ideas, or people of importance or enlarge in importance those objects, ideas, or people usually considered trivial. Often, the satirist accomplishes both of these, one by dint of another (Kernan 34-5). In Swift's case, he minimizes the plight of the people and enlarges the feelings of the proposer, a situation that causes the proposer's argument to become ridiculous and to repel the audience from it.

Allowing students to search for further examples and enumerate instances in which the proposer's argument is negated, ridiculed, or made to look ridiculous will give them practice identifying the techniques of satire as well as giving them some ownership of the work. They can also be encouraged to bring forward further examples of any similar techniques.

Standup and Satire

The privilege of the stand up comedian is to give voice to the unspoken in a given culture. He or she has the right to voice the beliefs inherent in a society and demand agreement and participation; or maybe s/he will state the unspeakable – those things unacknowledged and unspoken but still existent – and demand acknowledgement. Take this anecdote as related by Lawrence Mintz in "Stand Up Comedy as Social and Cultural Meditation." Mintz is discussing the reaction of different generations to Redd Foxx's Las Vegas comedy routine:

The younger people in the audience were laughing in a manner... 'anthemic.' They leaned *toward* Foxx, often applauded, raised their hands or fists as though... in agreement, while occasionally yelling, 'yeah,' or 'right on,' or 'all right,' or just yelping with delight. For them Foxx was the counter-culture spokesman with the courage (and the comically protected situation) to state publicly and openly that the...taboo... was, in their view at least, no longer valid or operative. Foxx led them in an expression of their cultural truths. (76)

This reaction was then compared to the reaction of shock and surprise from older audience members – they leaned back, *away* from Foxx, as they laughed. The humor from them came from his daring to say these things, not from their agreement. This case exhibits both the comic's ability to say the unspoken, perhaps even unadmitted cultural beliefs as well as his ability to say that which may cross the cultural line. The different generations both accepted Foxx as a spokesman, but for different reasons.

This unique position of safety occupied by the comedian is what allows him or her to perform the further function of determining socially acceptable behaviors and ridiculing those who do not accept them. This ridicule then serves the purpose of attempting to affect a change, much the

same as satire, one of stand up comedy's staples. The very nature of stand up lends itself to satire; in fact, as the comedian takes on a persona and opens him or her self to ridicule, or s/he outright ridicules the opposing belief or person. In an interview during Becky Anderson's *Spirit of Satire* report on CNN, satirist Hadi Khorsandi describes this method of comedy as an "attack" that "destroys the present image in order to make way for a better world." This definition exemplifies the goal of a comedian, and especially of a stand up artist or satirist. Students will learn through analysis of form to also recognize the cultural and societal norms with which a comedian identifies and to choose to accept or reject those norms consciously as a member of the audience.

Students should be asked to contribute heavily to this segment of the unit, as they will benefit most from watching and analyzing those clips, skits, or writings with which they and their classmates already identify. In the first place, it will be easier for them to pick out norms in examples with which they identify, and in the second place, it will be informative to witness the norms their classmates bring to the fore. The possibility that different students operate on different sets of norms can be a powerful way to articulate differences between students and understand how these differences cause reactions in a classroom setting. In addition to those examples identified by students, the following examples can be used to introduce concepts within the unit:

CNN: The Spirit of Satire

Becky Anderson's special segment in which she attempts to discover the "spirit" of various ideas and concepts provides a foundation for students who are unfamiliar with the genre and its history. With references to the satire of Ancient Rome and interviews with current stand up artists and political cartoonists, Anderson succeeds fairly well in defining the genre in "layman's terms". Students can watch the 15 minute segment as an introduction to the purposes of satire and stand up and an understanding of possible audience reactions, from laughter to death threats. The story of Hadi Khorsand in particular will make a good connection to speeches by Stephen Colbert and Cicero.

Mitch Benn, Happy Birthday War

Mitch Benn's homemade music video addresses the war in Iraq and satirizes statements by the Bush administration in relation to its length. Students will be able to make connections both to the satirical method of Swift and the topic of war satire, which will be discussed in relation to *Catch-22*. The satirical method in the video is fairly transparent and easy to categorize, allowing students to make connections easily. For instance, Benn uses the simple technique of juxtaposition to accomplish much of his ridicule, comparing the statements made by the administration to the reality of the existence of the war – a technique students may recognize as well from Mark Antony's funeral oration in *Julius Caesar*.

Flight of the Conchords: Think About It, Think, Think About It

The comedy team Flight of the Conchords is known for their ironic takes and parodies dealing mainly with pop culture. Their songs typically combine parody of a specific style of music with ironic lyrics meant to catch the audience by surprise. In this way, they speak to audience members by mocking generally accepted ideals and practices. Their series on HBO portrays the two singer/songwriters as hapless and naïve, and these personae allow them to

display ridiculous behavior and ideals in all seriousness, much as their songs do. The song “Think About It, Think, Think About It” uses verbal irony to mock the general acceptance of world problems such as youth violence and poverty. The naïvete of the two singers combined with the unexpected phrasing in the lyrics serves at first to mock the idealism of the two singers: “Children on the streets using guns and knives/Taking drugs and each other’s lives/Killing each other using knives and forks/And calling each other names like dork.” The juxtaposition of the serious nature of the first two lines and the use of “knives and forks” and “dorks” in these next lines of the song simply shows how ridiculous the two singers are, as they seriously underestimate the situations and use uninspiring illustrations of their points. However, by the end of the song, the listener can no longer completely ignore lines like, “Well, at the end of your life, you are lucky if you die/ Sometimes I wonder why I would even try/Why try,” and the juxtaposition, while still humorous, no longer points out the ridiculousness of the two singers but instead, of the situation. Issues such as poverty, AIDS, and violence should not be addressed solely by comedic songwriting, but that’s what the Conchords imply when they sing, “We’re talking about the issues, but we’re keeping it funky.” The implication is that if they don’t keep it funky, no one will want to talk about the issues.

The song offers not only a connection into pop culture and stand up, but an opening to discuss the use of modes such as stand up or music to communicate about serious news topics. Students may have their own insight on the use of these genres, and they can also provide examples of popular music or television, especially comedy, discussing issues. The biggest examples here are perhaps *The Daily Show* and its counterpart *The Colbert Report*, two “fake news” programs that provide selective news and commentary and that are often cited by younger viewers as their news source of choice.

War-time Satire

If satire as a genre is concerned with changing the current image, then nothing provides so much material as government. Within the category of political satire, war satire is especially clear about the desire to change current policies and actions. America’s history of political activism and protests and our right to free speech lead naturally to discussions of the protests over the Vietnam, Gulf, and Iraq wars, all of which are familiar cultural references for students, to varying extents. The discussion of war satire specifically allows cross-curricular connections to social studies classes both in terms of the topic of U.S. involvement in wars in the last century as well as the study of political cartoons and satire. Within the context of these discussions, students can clearly grasp the intent of comedy to change an opposing view or unacceptable behavior. With that goal in mind, we will examine some specific examples of this satirical subject.

Catch-22

“The discussion of the relevance of *Catch-22* to serious sociological discourse points up the relation of *satire* to serious sociological thinking” (Gregory and Lewis 70).

Catch-22 is a satirical novel that asks readers to consider the ravages of war in several different aspects, from its effects on innocents (Snowden’s death and Yossarian’s subsequent inability to deal with the implications of this death) to its function in a capitalist society as a means for increasing the profit of the aggressor (Milo Minderbender’s eventual ubiquitous profiteering scheme, more prominent in the film). The complexity of the novel makes it a rich

example for analysis and discussion, and the subject matter allows for broad connections to further satirical works. The current U.S. military presence in various countries and especially in Iraq, where soldiers still engage in combat on a daily basis, provides material for many current satires that can be compared to Heller's work. Students will be able to point up satirical elements of the text as well as discuss their intended purpose within the context of theme, and they will also be able to engage in a larger discussion of the consequences indicated by the novel and its contemporary counterparts.

Good Morning Vietnam

The film starring Robin Williams pairs well with *Catch-22*, as it uses satirical and stand up elements to indicate the consequences of America's involvement in the Vietnam War. Both the satirical plot of the film, which highlights some of the ridiculous occurrences in the field as well as ridicules the leaders responsible for "running" the war, and Williams' use of standup as part of his characterization work well with the unit as a whole. Students can make comparisons between the two works, and they can discuss the historical connections to the movie. The film embodies the nation's growing dissatisfaction with the American presence in Vietnam, as it shows the pointlessness of the sacrifices made by the characters, the ridiculous nature of the regulations and censorship imposed on the soldiers, and the negative feeling towards the President and his administration. As such, it clearly demonstrates the call for change and the ability of comedy to make that call.

Slaughterhouse-5

Vonnegut's anti-war novel will provide students with a more straightforward literary model of war satire. Excerpts from the story of Billy Pilgrim, who has come "unstuck in time" as a result of his inability to deal with his experiences during World War II easily show the use of satirical elements to build the theme of the book. For instance, the reversal of ideals in the scenes between the American and British prisoners clearly shows the inappropriateness of the cheerful, efficient British prisoners in the face of the abject misery of the Americans. Similarly, the contrast between Billy's stories about his abduction and his lectures on philosophy only serves to emphasize the horror of the human propensity for war. Vonnegut attempts to shock his readers into changing their behavior by implying that they cannot, in fact, stop such horror from occurring. The reader instinctively rebels from this idea, in part because it is paired with the ridiculous ramblings of Billy Pilgrim as he discusses his trips to Tralfamadore.

Reading excerpts of the novel will allow students to discuss method and message outside of the context of the story, clearly seeing not just what Vonnegut's message is, but how he conveys it.

The Daily Show/ Colbert Report

These two "fake news" shows provide frequent commentary on the current war. Each comedian, Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert, has his own style of comedy, which will allow students to compare different methods of satire within a similar format. Jon Stewart relies on the juxtaposition of videos and clips from sources such as CNN with his own commentary that mocks or ridicules the subjects of the videos; these segments are interspersed with commentary from fake correspondents. Stephen Colbert, on the other hand, chooses to portray a character whose

views he disagrees with. This style is similar to Jonathan Swift's use of overt/covert viewpoints to state two opposing views (Smith 135), and will allow student's to make a comparison of methods across mediums.

The use of clips from these two programs will allow students to participate in dialogue related both to current events and to pop culture, as many students are familiar with the formats of the two shows. Students may engage in discussion of the clips, or they may use them as a basis for imitation in later writing assignments.

Conclusion

Comedy can unite or divide, delight or shame. Satire and stand up especially operate by joining an audience together in common cause – to ridicule those of another cause. It will be interesting to see how these two modes of comedy operate within a classroom. Will students be united in their study of comedy, or will there be different groups of students uniting around different comedic works?

The comedy of a time period can help define the beliefs and behaviors of that time period. Similarly, the jokes at which a group laughs can identify the values of that group and often cause an individual to seek or decline membership in that specific group. For students, the opportunity to examine both the societal beliefs of the current time and their own choices about what to laugh at can provide them with an opportunity for self-examination and expression that will last even after the lessons are over.

In the end, comedy can provide an ideal lesson, as the works can be both amusing and socially relevant, as well as providing plenty of opportunity to study the conventions of English language. Students become engaged for the sake of the content, and they remain engaged as they discuss the methods and techniques used to portray that content. The complexities of satiric method will help them to sharpen their writing skills and improve their understanding of other complex texts as well as provide an enjoyable break from the seriousness of the typical English curriculum.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson Plan 1: Elements of Satire

Objective: The students will identify techniques used to create a satirical tone in Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal."

TEKS: 10.7D Reading/comprehension. The student comprehends selections using a variety of strategies. The student is expected to analyze text structures such as compare and contrast, cause and effect, and chronological ordering for how they influence understanding.

TEKS 10.10B Reading/ literary response. The student expresses and supports responses to various types of texts. The student is expected to use elements of text to defend his/her own responses and interpretations.

Materials: copies of "A Modest Proposal" and of the guided questions handout

Procedures:

Students should receive a copy of the Proposal one night ahead of time. They should read it and annotate the night before. Give students topics to locate and on which to comment in their annotation: unknown allusions, new words, sentence structure, and rhetorical devices.

In class, students will be grouped to complete the guided questions handout on the Proposal. The handout will include questions asking students to identify specific sentence structures, such as subordinate clauses and phrases in certain sentences, and determine a purpose for those phrases and clauses. The goal of the handout should be to guide students towards an understanding of the characterization of the proposer and an articulation of the analogy employed by Swift. Students should work together on the handout for about 30 minutes of class time.

During the remaining class time, students will come together to discuss the answers to the guided questions. As the discussion progresses, guide students to an understanding of both satirical and rhetorical devices used in the Proposal through connection to Alvin Kernan's *Plot of Satire* – trivialization, exaggeration, and reversal. Give students examples from the Proposal and then ask them to identify further examples. Students should back up statements with evidence from the text.

Assessment: This is a group discussion designed to introduce students to material. The discussion will provide an opportunity for informal assessment of student understanding through comments and participation. Students will be formally assessed on the elements of satire in later imitative writing assignments and on the final exam.

Lesson Plan 2: Writing a “Modest Proposal”

Objectives: The students will apply understanding of the elements of satire used in a specific work to create an original, imitative work.

TEKS: 10.1 Writing/purpose: The student writes in a voice and style appropriate to audience and purpose and organizes ideas in writing to ensure coherence, logical progression, and support for ideas.

Procedures:

Students have already read “A Modest Proposal” and dissected its structure and use of satire to determine how Swift accomplishes his sharp ridicule of governmental entities failing to aid the starving Irish countryside. For this assignment, they will compose their own “modest proposal” aimed at school, classmates, or society. First review structure and satirical elements identified by students. Next, have students summarize Swift’s voice and style. Find examples within the text to support student generalizations. How important is tone and voice to Swift’s proposal? It may be easier for some students to imitate Swift’s proposal more closely, on a sentence-by-sentence or passage-by-passage basis, while other students will be more comfortable departing from structure but maintaining the satirical voice established in the “Proposal.”

In groups, students will brainstorm issues that might appropriately be addressed by their proposals. What criteria would students propose to determine whether an issue is appropriate? How closely must it match the dire need of Swift's satire? Can a successful imitation be written from a trivial issue? Is the goal to satirize the issue, Swift's "Proposa,l," or both? Students may choose to work in groups of 2-3 or as individuals to complete the proposal. If they choose to work in groups, they must assign specific parts to each group member and document the assignments and their successful completion. Each group or individual will present the proposal to the class, who will determine its success or failure as a satire. Consider allowing students to design a creative response to the prompt – i.e. a skit, video, PowerPoint presentation, etc. – that meets the objectives of the assignment.

Assessment: Students will be assessed based on their presentations to the class. Assess students both on presentation style and similarity to Swift's style based on a pre-determined rubric. The assessment will count as a major grade.

Lesson Plan 3: Establishing a Norm in Standup

Objectives: The student will identify and analyze satirical and rhetorical devices used to establish rapport between comedian and audience.

TEKS 10.20 (B), (D) Viewing/ representing/ analysis. The student analyzes and critiques the significance of visual representations. The student is expected to (B) deconstruct media to get the main idea of the message's content; (D) recognize how visual and sound techniques or design convey messages in media such as special effects, editing, camera angles, reaction shots, sequencing, and music.

Materials: computer and projector or TV with video/DVD player; student provided handouts or requirements

Procedures:

This lesson will take place as a series of mini-lessons spread over the entire length of the unit. Students should find examples of stand up comedy and bring these examples to class. They may be in the form of DVD recordings or internet links. All links must be emailed ahead of time to make sure they work and are available ahead of time. Ideally, students will summarize the content of their examples ahead of time so that they may be best matched with content for the rest of the day's lesson, but this may not always be possible.

All videos should be school appropriate and no longer than 5 minutes. Students will teach a 5-10 minute mini-lesson on their clip, in which they address the following ideas:

- the cultural norms established or assumed by the comedian
- the main idea or conclusion of the routine (what does s/he want to change?)
- the methods through which the comedian communicates this message.

Students should seek to provide an interesting and unique mini-lesson for their peers.

Connect each day's mini-lesson to the day's remaining lesson through content or technique.

Assessment: Students will be assessed on successful implementation of all goals of the assignment and on presentation technique. The assessment can count as a holistic daily grade or as a test or project grade, depending on the level of detail included in the directions and requirements.

Lesson Plan 4: Themes in *Catch-22*

Objectives: Students will compose themes for the novel and create thesis sentences for a subsequent essay that attaches these themes to specific satirical elements used in the text to communicate purpose.

TEKS 10.7G Reading/comprehension. The student comprehends selections using a variety of strategies. The student is expected to draw inferences such as conclusions, generalizations, and predictions and support them with text evidence and experience.

TEKS 10.1C Writing/purposes. The student writes in a variety of forms, including business, personal, literary, and persuasive texts, for various audiences and purposes. The student is expected to organize ideas in writing to ensure coherence, logical progression, and support for ideas.

Procedures:

In groups, students will compose themes for the novel *Catch-22*. Each group should brainstorm at least three themes. For each theme, students should provide at least three supporting details from the text.

Each group will choose one theme to share with the class. The class should discuss whether the theme is reasonable and appropriate. Write each new theme on the board as the group proposes it.

Each student will now compose a thesis statement that addresses theme and connects it to the use of one or more satirical and/or rhetorical devices used by the author. Ask for student volunteers to read their thesis statements. Are they successful?

Assessments: Discussion of group themes and individual thesis statements will provide an opportunity for informal assessment. Students will be formally assessed through the subsequent outline and finished paper connected to the thesis statements.

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 This is a brief description of the rationale behind a Comedy in Literature offered by the author at Hillsdale High School in California. The author lists several usable and relevant texts and very briefly mentions teaching methods for the unit.