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Developing appreciation of humor through literature in the junior high school

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Project

DEVELOPING APPRECIATION OF HUMOR THROUGH
LITERATURE IN THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Submitted by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this project is to construct a series of graded lessons for the junior high school, to increase abilities to appreciate and express humor. Through such experiences pupils may become more understanding of human nature and more appreciative of humor as a part of creative expression. An indirect outcome may be to lead students to develop and express their own sense of humor more effectively.

Justification

In a recent article in The English Journal, Mr. Edward J. Gordon of Yale deplores the current lack in America of a genuine sense of humor:^{1/}

"The universal aspects of humor have disappeared . . . Humor needs to be taken seriously. Few people are changed by being objects of anger, but very few can stand being thought objects of comedy . . . The tragic view of life is the story of defeat, and that story is too easily accepted in our time. The comic view, through all myth and legend, does not contradict man's defeat, but rather transcends it."

George Meredith once said:^{2/}

/is/ "One excellent test of the civilization of a country . . . the flourishing of the comic . . . the test of true comedy is that it shall awaken thoughtful laughter."

^{1/}Edward J. Gordon, "What's Happened to Humor?", The English Journal, (March, 1958), 47:127-133.

^{2/}Quoted in ibid., p. 131.

The value of humor to the individual.-- Testimony as to the value of a sense of humor as a personal attribute is widespread in the writings of doctors, psychologists, sociologists, men of literature and other leaders. Physically, "The great majority of people . . . do not laugh nearly enough for the good of their hearts"^{1/} and "Even though a laugh should last not longer than a minute then all the blood in the body would have been exposed to the action of two or three times as much oxygen."^{2/}

Laughter tones up the mind as well as the body. This was recognized early in man's history, as shown in the story of King Amasis of Egypt. When his advisers asked the king why, although he was a king, he told funny stories, he is said to have replied:^{3/}

"When an archer goes into battle he strings his bow until it is taut. When the shooting is over, he unstrings it again. If he didn't unstring it, it would lose its snap; and it would be no good to him when he needed it."

Charles W. Kimmins, the British child psychologist, found this in World War I:^{4/}

"In the London air-raids the children . . . who found an outlet by great activity and occasional laughter . . . appeared to suffer no evil consequences."

Dr. Martin Grotjahn says: "A schizophrenic is saved when he shows an appropriate smile again"^{5/} and "A sense of humor signifies emotional

^{1/}J. J. Walsh, Laughter and Health, Appleton, New York and London, 1928, p. 58.

^{2/}Ibid., p. 28.

^{3/}Herodotus, 2, 173, as quoted in Albert Rapp, The Origins of Wit and Humor, E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., New York, 1951, p. 12.

^{4/}C. W. Kimmins, The Springs of Laughter, Methuen, London, 1928, p. 60.

^{5/}Martin Grotjahn, Beyond Laughter, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1957, p. 233.

maturity."^{1/} Louise Omwake^{2/} reports that 400 adolescents evaluated themselves more highly on their own sense of humor than on any other comparable characteristic except appetite. George W. Norvell^{3/} shows that humor is one of the four most popular themes in literature for teenagers.

The need for developing the adolescent's sense of humor.-- Max J. Herzberg, former president of the National Council of Teachers of English, and Leon Mones, in their book, Humor of America, say:^{4/}

"It is . . . obvious that often laughter, both on the part of young people and of their elders, is undisciplined, sometimes inconsiderate, often on a lower level of intelligence than need be."

They go on to ask:^{4/}

"Is there the possibility . . . of setting up, informally, and certainly, in this field, entertainingly, criteria by which taste in humor may be improved or created?"

They suggest genuine literary art and kindness as standards of evaluation. Norvell^{5/} found that most junior- and senior-high-school students have an appreciation for only the most obvious types of humor, a trait which persists to their final year. Ruth Wells^{6/} found some years ago that absurdity, slap-stick, satire and whimsy were popular in that order

1/Ibid., p. 81.

2/Louise Omwake, "A Study of Sense of Humor: Its Relation to Sex, Age and Personal Characteristics", Journal of Applied Psychology (1937), 21:688-704.

3/George W. Norvell, The Reading Interests of Young People, D. C. Heath and Company, Boston, 1950, p. 64.

4/Max J. Herzberg and Mones, Leon, Humor of America, D. Appleton Century Co., Inc., New York, 1945, p. 1.

5/Norvell, op. cit., p. 64 and pp. 45-46.

6/Ruth E. Wells, "Study of Tastes in Humorous Literature Among Pupils of Junior and Senior High Schools", Journal of Educational Research (October, 1934), 28:81-91.

throughout the high-school years.

In summary, this paper is justified by: (1) the need for adolescents to improve and broaden their skills in appreciating and expressing humor, in a world where such abilities are in high demand, and (2) the current lack of material for doing this.

Scope and Limitations

This project is limited to a series of eight lessons dealing with eight aspects of humor: spoonerisms, dialect, puns, exaggeration; parody, satire, irony and genial laughter about ourselves and others. It is further limited by emphasis on the briefly and specifically humorous -- the short example of exaggeration, the two-or-three stanza poem, parody, or satiric essay. Comedy, for instance, as exemplified in the novel or the drama, will be bypassed except in the opening discussion. The paper is also limited by the fact that it has not been tried out in an actual classroom situation.

Definitions

The following terms are used throughout this paper:

Humor^{1/} -- that quality which appeals to a sense of the ludicrous or absurdly incongruous.

The writer finds the definition of Stephen Leacock an especially appealing one for classroom teaching:^{2/}

"Humor is the kindly recognition of the incongruities of life and the artistic expression thereof."

^{1/}Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, G. and C. Merriam Company, Springfield, Mass., 1959, p. 403.

^{2/}Stephen Leacock, Humor and Humanity, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1938, p. 3.

<u>Comic</u> ^{1/} --	that element in art or nature which provokes mirth.
<u>Dialect</u> ^{2/} --	a local or provincial form of a language, differing from other forms, especially from the standard or literary form.
<u>Irony</u> ^{3/} --	a sort of humor, ridicule, or light sarcasm, the intended implication of which is the opposite of the literal sense of the words.
<u>Parody</u> ^{4/} --	a writing in which the language and style of an author is imitated or mimicked, especially for comic effect or in ridicule.
<u>Pun</u> ^{5/} --	a play on words of the same sound but different meanings or on different applications of a word, for the witty effect.
<u>Satire</u> ^{6/} --	trenchant wit, irony or sarcasm used for the purpose of exposing and discrediting vice or folly.
<u>Spoonerism</u> ^{7/} --	an accidental transposition of sounds, usually the initial sounds, of two or more words.
<u>Wit</u> ^{8/} --	felicitous perception or expression of associations between ideas or words not usually connected, such as to produce an amusing surprise.

1/Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 164.

2/Ibid., p. 228.

3/Ibid., p. 445.

4/Ibid., p. 611.

5/Ibid., p. 685.

6/Ibid., p. 751.

7/Ibid., p. 818.

8/Ibid., p. 983.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

What Humor Means Today

The causes of humor.--Why do men laugh? Is there any one cause that is common to all laughter? Anything in common between the jeer of the bully, the smile of a 40-day-old baby, a pun by a comedian, and a scene of high comedy? These questions, as Bergson says, ^{1/} are "a pert challenge flung at philosophic speculation."

The word "laugh" goes back to early recorded history; even in the Bible a hero is named "The Laughing One."^{2/} One of the earliest men to attempt an explanation of the comic was Plato, who said the mirth-provoking is primarily "that part of vice in general which involves the opposite of the condition mentioned in the inscription at Delphi" ("Know thyself").^{3/} Aristotle, too, emphasized the ridiculous element in the comic by dividing its causes into those involving "error" and those involving "deformity."^{4/}

Three principal explanations of the causes of mirth have been advanced in modern times. One theory, based on the idea of a feeling

^{1/}Henri Bergson, Laughter, An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1911, p. 1.

^{2/}Genesis 17:17-19.

^{3/}Plato, Philebus, Paragraph 48 (Loeb translation) as quoted in Rapp, op. cit., p. 66.

^{4/}Aristotle, Poetics, 1449 a 34 (translated by Rapp, op. cit., p. 43).

of triumph or superiority, is stated by Hobbes as follows: "Laughter is a sudden glory arising from some conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others or with our own formerly."^{1/} One might perhaps divide this theory into two streams: Darwin, Spinoza, and Max Eastman for the most part have held that humor was pure joy or good feeling; Stephen Leacock, Albert Rapp and other modern theorists, on the other hand, believe that laughter began by the destruction of one's adversary in prehistoric eras.

A second theory stresses the importance of the intellect in laughter. As Schopenhauer put it, "The cause of laughter in every case is simply the sudden perception of the incongruity between a concept and the real objects which have been thought through in some relation, and laughter itself is just the expression of this incongruity."^{2/} Immanuel Kant, Henri Bergson and some modern psychologists support this view. It fits in with the idea of man as the only self-conscious animal, who can distinguish external fact from internal thought.

A third theory is that of Freud, who stressed the fact that laughter gives release to suppressed impulses.^{3/}

The suppression theory of laughter.--Freud believed that there were two types of wit or poking fun. One, the so-called "wit as such,"^{4/}

^{1/}Thomas Hobbes, Human Nature, 1640, (Molesworth edition of Works, Vol. 4, Ch. 9, paragraph 3), cited in Rapp, op. cit., p. 46.

^{2/}Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Idea, 1819, Book 1, Ch. 13 (Haldane and Kemp, translators).

^{3/}Sigmund Freud, Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious. For a discussion see Grotjahn, op. cit., p. 10 ff.

^{4/}Elaborated in Grotjahn, op. cit., p. 10.

exists mostly as abstract theory. The other, "tendency wit,"^{1/} is a common method of expressing aggressive impulses buried in the unconscious mind. A joke is constructed in such a way as to give these impulses expression but in a disguised form. Thus a joke is considered successful by society if it effectively disguises, and at the same time gives outlet to, uncivilized urges. The comic, Freud believed, is prompted by a feeling of the superiority of one individual to another. For example, a father may laugh at the antics of his two-year-old child. Humor, a still gentler form of the mirth-provoking, results when an attempt to suppress painful emotion is started but proves to be unnecessary.^{2/} Freud added elsewhere that in the "humoristic situation" the one is adopting toward the other the attitude of an adult toward a child--identifying himself to some extent with the father while he reduces the other people to the position of children.^{3/} Freud is not always consistent in his viewpoints on the laughter-provoking. However, his emphasis on suppression of unconscious thoughts as a trigger for laughter sheds light on an important concomitant of a great many jokes of today.

The superiority theory of wit and laughter.-- The idea that laughter and wit have developed out of an early sense of victory in physical combat has been penetratingly and thoroughly discussed by Albert Rapp.^{4/}

1/Ibid., p. 11 ff.

2/Ibid., pp. 13-18.

3/Sigmund Freud, "Humor," International Journal of Psychoanalysis (1928), 9:3.

4/Rapp, op. cit.

He begins by stating his first proposition: "The single source from which all modern forms of wit and humor have developed is the roar of triumph in an ancient jungle duel."^{1/} From this origin have risen (1) the ridicule family, (2) the wit family, and (3) the "suppression laughter" family, which, he says, comprise all modern wit and humor. In this statement and elsewhere in the book this investigator does not claim to have scientific proof, but only scattered evidence which he is putting together in a logical framework.

The primordial savage laughed because his enemy had been put out of the way. Rapp finds no evidence of any self-conscious sense of humor in the drawings or sculptured works of the earliest races of man. But he assumes that men nevertheless laughed over others' misfortunes for four reasons:^{2/}

- (1) Man's earliest writings are full of it.
- (2) Children show this savage impulse.
- (3) Most people still have this impulse.
- (4) In extreme form many primitive groups still possess this characteristic.

He illustrates his second reason by referring to studies on the responses of boys and girls to questions on humor, starting at the age of eight. In one study^{3/} a group of eight-year-olds when asked what

1/Ibid., p. 21.

2/Ibid., pp. 33-34.

3/Katharine A. Chandler, "The Sense of Humor in Children," Century Magazine, 1902, 64 (new series, 42): 959-960. Quoted in Rapp, op. cit., p. 34.

funny things they had experienced, listed without exception jokes involving discomfort or pain to someone else. Kimmins' study more recently corroborated these results.^{1/} To support his fourth statement Rapp refers to Captain Anthony Ludovici's quotation in The Secret of Laughter from Basil Thomson's The Fijians, where cannibals are observed to laugh at their victims' being roasted alive.^{2/}

Rapp traces the history of laughter, then, from the "laugh of triumph" over the fallen enemy to the laugh at the black eye or mangled limb of the enemy, to that over the black eye or mangled limb of the chance individual encountered.^{3/} In this last case the deformities symbolized the ease with which this individual could be defeated. The chance individual could even be the victim of an accident and not of a fight at all. But his anticipated weakness provoked a laugh.

Some time afterward, according to this writer, man found that artificial ridicule could also aid in the struggle for existence. If one's bandy-legged opponent was no longer laughed at because people got used to his bandy legs, one eventually thought of deliberately ridiculing him by persuading spectators to look at this misfortune in a fresh way.^{4/}

^{1/}C. W. Kimmins, op. cit., discussed in Rapp, op. cit., p. 35.

^{2/}Basil Thomson, The Fijians, London, 1908, p. 96, in A. M. Ludovici, The Secret of Laughter, London, Constable, 1932, cited in Rapp, op. cit., p. 36.

^{3/}Rapp, op. cit., pp. 42-43 ff.

^{4/}Rapp, op. cit., p. 48.

Thus conscious art entered the field of the comic. Such derision, Rapp holds, is the ancestor of such contemporary forms as satire, burlesque and caricature.

Humor, one of mankind's greatest inspirations, came as a blending of ridicule and affection.^{1/} This type of laughter does not seem to reflect hostility, but Rapp asserts that some of it is still there. The first instances of this in literature take the form of a father gently laughing at his child.^{2/} Humor between equals followed, and at last that very modern development of being able to laugh at oneself.

The development of wit.-- Wit^{3/} is explained as a separate progression from "thrashing laughter" in which the prehistoric combatants decided to battle it out mentally instead of with their fists. Riddles, puzzles, repartee, puns and many jokes grew from this beginning. For instance, the riddle is very old and is found in the folklore of races from the Eskimos to the Samoans; it is found in the Old Testament.^{4/} Because of the sudden, surprise solution of the riddle, it often caused laughter, especially if more than two individuals were involved in hearing and telling it. Conundrums, part pun, provided a transition to "the lowest form of humor." The victim of the pun is "involved in a contest without even knowing that there was a contest."^{5/}

Repartee, similarly, is held to be intellectual fencing, replacing the earlier physical conflict.

1/Ibid., p. 57.

2/Ibid., pp. 58-59.

3/Ibid., pp. 87 ff.

4/See, for instance, Judges 14:12.

5/Rapp, op. cit., p. 13.

Laughter that results from suppression.-- People often laugh, Rapp says, not primarily because a situation or idea is very funny, but because they wish to ridicule a social or moral tabu or law that forbids expressing oneself under ordinary circumstances. People laugh with release when they hear somebody overstep the line. Such laughter, he states, is often therapeutic because it is a more effective way of dealing with subconscious rebellion against restraint than allowing it to remain hidden. For this reason, what people find funny in one age or social climate is not amusing to those in another. A nudist camp would hardly laugh at Lady Godiva, while during Prohibition days in the United States there was no theme which was more likely to arouse laughter than that of concealing alcohol.^{1/}

Rapp concludes his study by analyzing present jokes and gags to see why some of them are especially laughed at. The best-liked ones, he holds, are so because they appeal to all three of these streams of the comic: wit that shows intellectual triumph over an opponent, ridicule of an opponent, and rebellious expression of uncivilized impulses.

A literary theory of the comic.-- Henri Bergson analyzes the humor of the intellect,^{2/} what Cazamian called the humor of finesse.^{3/} Like Schopenhauer, he is able to show that the comic is closely related to a feeling for the contrast between concept and reality.

^{1/}Ibid., p. 109 ff.

^{2/}Henri Bergson, op. cit.

^{3/}Louis Cazamian, The Development of English Humor, Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina, 1952, p. 25.

Bergson makes three points: (1) Humor is always, not only done by man but directed at man or at an animal or object because it is similar to man; (2) humor is social and requires an audience; (3) humor is essentially a process of mind--emotion of any kind tends to produce a serious, not a funny, atmosphere.^{1/}

Bergson elaborates further on the nature of humor by showing its kinship to what is living and progressive; in most cases, he says, people are caused to smile by a contrast between the living and adaptable and the rigid or inelastic.^{2/}

"Now take the case of a person who attends to the petty occupations of his everyday life with mathematical precision. The objects around him, however, have all been tampered with by a mischievous wag, the result being that when he dips his pen into the inkstand he draws it out all covered with mud, when he fancies he is sitting down on a solid chair he finds himself sprawling on the floor."

This is the practical joke type of the comic.

On a more intellectual plane, one laughs at the person whose habits of mind are inflexible; for instance, the absent-minded individual who fails to cope with reality. Further, Bergson says, certain vices have the same relation to character as the rigidity of a fixed idea to the intellect. This type of vice, as distinguished from tragic vice, is laughable because, unlike the latter, it has a more or less independent existence of its own and is not inseparably tied with the character represented in the play or other art form. For instance, Ben Gunn in

^{1/}Ibid., p. 3 ff.

^{2/}Bergson, op. cit., pp. 197-200.

Stevenson's Treasure Island would be considered chiefly comic since his vice of being a spendthrift is not especially associated with him alone; the protagonist in Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman has vice which is like no one else's.

The laughable, Bergson continues,^{1/}

"...consists in a certain rigidity of body, mind and character that society would still like to get rid of in order to obtain from its members the greatest possible degree of elasticity and sociability. This rigidity is the comic and laughter, a social gesture, is its corrective."

Bergson breaks down the comic into the several ways in which it occurs. Facial expression or ugliness can be comic, provided that it can be imitated. So can such deformity as being hunchbacked. In short "A deformity that may become comic is a deformity that a normally built person could successfully imitate."^{2/}

This explains the humor of caricature. Gestures and movements are laughable in proportion as they remind us of a mere machine,^{3/} as opposed to spontaneous life. Or again, humor is caused by contrasting the routine and physical with the original or spiritual.

Moving farther away from the human being, Bergson demonstrates that any arrangement of acts and events is comic if it gives us the illusion of being a mechanical arrangement.^{4/} Similarly the humor of word repetition can be explained by the contrast between a repressed feeling which nevertheless comes out in words and an idea that delights

1/Ibid., pp. 20-21.

3/Ibid., p. 32.

2/Ibid., p. 23.

4/Ibid., p. 67.

in repressing the feeling anew.^{1/} Nonsense and puns are funny because two different meanings are given at the same time, which is an artificial mechanization of life.^{2/}

Bergson continues: "A comic effect is always obtainable by transposing the natural expression of an idea into another key----Transpose the solemn into the familiar and the result is parody."^{3/} Similarly, irony and satire are contrasts between the real and the ideal. Humor in the use of language occurs because we feel that it contains an element of our own life and that, like our own lives, part of it, which is mechanical, is contrasted to that part which is fresh and changing.^{4/}

Comedy is also related to character. A comic character always begins by being unsociable, Bergson believes, and we may laugh at serious faults as well as at lesser ones or even at virtues, so long as they are depicted in a way that does not appeal to our emotions but only to our intellectual sense of the incongruous.^{5/}

Moliere's characters such as Tartuffe, the doctor in Le Medecin Malgre Lui, and the central figure in Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme are good examples.

The writer of comedy is concerned with the outward manifestations of human nature--with the visible, with the average, which can be understood and laughed at. The writer of tragedy deals with the individual. This theory and its extension has also been dealt with in a thought-

1/Ibid., p. 73.

4/Ibid., pp. 129-131.

2/Ibid., p. 96 ff.

5/Ibid., p. 134.

3/Ibid., p. 123.

provoking modern work.^{1/}

Bergson concludes his discussion by referring to the similarity of laughter to dreams. He repeats his stress on its spontaneous character, which, he adds, is sometimes kindly, sometimes hateful, but on the whole, nature's means of correcting for a good purpose.^{2/}

Recent trends towards an eclectic theory.-- An increasing number of contemporary theorists on humor feel that the truth does not lie in any one view.^{3/} Albert Rapp cites Roger Piret^{4/} as saying that a broad interpretation of the incongruity theory of Schopenhauer was to him the most nearly adequate. Max Eastman also favors a broad interpretation, saying: "Laughter, according to my view, may be a response to any pleasant stimulus and to any unpleasant one that can be taken playfully."^{5/} Stephen Leacock emphasizes that the humor towards which we should aim is that benign contemplation of the incongruities of life which in turn produces sympathetic understanding.^{6/}

^{1/}Albert Cook, The Dark Voyage and the Golden Mean, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1949.

^{2/}Bergson, op. cit., pp. 197-200.

^{3/}Merrel D. Clubb, "Plea for an Eclectic Theory of Humor," The University of California Chronicle (July, 1932).

^{4/}Roger Piret, "Recherches Genetiques sur le Comique," Acta Psychologica (1940), 5:103-142, cited in Rapp, op. cit., p. 181.

^{5/}Max Eastman, Enjoyment of Laughter, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1936, p. 354.

^{6/}Stephen Leacock, Humor and Humanity, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1938, p. 3.

Humor in the History of Literature

"Humor" and the Anglo-Saxon race.-- The writings of the English-speaking people seem to fit the incongruity theory most easily. Note shall be taken of the growth in meaning of the word "humor," as we trace our history. Both the idea and the word were developed in Britain, according to Louis Cazamian.^{1/}

He divides literary humor into (1) the humor of boisterous laughter, native to the British common man, and (2) the "humor de finesse," or intellectual, subtle humor, which crept into England through French influence.^{2/} The earliest humor was merely the expression of a twist of thought that contrasted what appeared on the surface with what really was. This process involved at least a slight conscious restraint on the part of the writer and some awareness of the dichotomy he had created. Such humor is dimly felt even in *Beowulf*. For example, *Beowulf* scornfully tells Unferth that the latter's race is not so warlike after all.^{3/}

Chaucer: a great originator.--Although the lighter spirit of the Norman invaders may have been responsible for the first use of the term "merry England," the work of Chaucer produced the first true flowering of the humor latent in previous writings, and added many types almost altogether new. Chaucer gave not only examples of earthy laughter, but also genial fun, mild satire, parody, irony and ridicule. For instance, "The Tale of Sir Topas" in The Canterbury Tales is a parody, both in

^{1/}Louis Cazamian, op. cit., pp. 7 and 8.

^{2/}Cazamian, op. cit., p. 25.

^{3/}Paraphrased from Beowulf as quoted in Cazamian, op. cit., p. 12.

subject matter and verse form, of the then popular metrical romance. Chaucer was fully conscious of creating this humor.

With the exception of a few Scotch and English figures, there were few followers of Chaucer. The types of humor that do appear are mostly in the areas of satire and burlesque. Some of this latter element was included in the early "miracle plays."

Shakespeare's humor.-- Although Ben Jonson and others of Shakespeare's contemporaries displayed considerable wit, Shakespeare, as Chaucer before him, represents almost a unique island of highly developed humor in a sea of relative lack of understanding or appreciation of the art.^{1/} However, the background had been prepared for him by the speech and customs of generations. In a sense he represented a culminating merger of the streams of "humor de finesse" and popular broad humor.

Shakespeare's humor takes its variety from his many-sided representation of human life. For instance, in A Comedy of Errors the two Dromios behave like clowns and their names are constantly being falsely interchanged. In contrast to such punning and caricature, As You Like It has a tone of pleasant fun, as when Rosalind teases her lover by pretending she is a man. Ariel, the sprite in The Tempest, who sings "Merrily, merrily shall I live now," strikes a note of fancy. Falstaff, who originated the phrase, "a jest with a sad brow" (which, as Cazamian points out, denotes the manner of the intentional humorist),^{2/} has ever since been admired. "Sir John" here shows the method of the true joke-teller: he gives a twisted meaning that will cause others to smile and

^{1/}Ibid., p. 180.

^{2/}Ibid., p. 132.

yet he himself refrains from laughing.^{1/} Much later in the development of English humor Addison, Steele and others become aware of the importance of this self-restraining feature.

Ben Jonson and the word "humor".-- Ben Jonson, a contemporary of Shakespeare's, became especially associated with the meaning of the word "humor." This term had originated with the Greeks, who had used an almost identical word as a medical term for one of the basic fluid components of the human body. In the Middle Ages these were considered to be: blood, phlegm, choler and melancholy; both the learned and the unlearned believed for centuries that a man's physical and mental temperament depended on the predominance of one of the four. Jonson extended "humor," then, to stand for the emotional way in which people reacted to circumstances, and this was its significance in his play entitled, "Every Man in His Humor."

During the 17th century "humor" continued to have the Jonsonian meaning. With the 18th century, however, two things began to take place: (1) the word "humor" came to refer specially to the singularities of an individual, then to the laughable, and finally to a trait possessed by a person who was conscious of the comic in himself or others; (2) the scope and frequency of comic writing and speech was widened throughout England, by such writers as Swift, Pope, Johnson, Boswell, Addison and Steele. Corbin Morris, among others, makes the self-conscious nature of humor very evident when he says:

1/Ibid., p. 132.

2/Corbin Morris, "Essay Towards Fixing the True Standards of Wit, Humour, Raillery, Satire and Ridicule," 1744, as cited in Louis Cazamian, op. cit., p. 410.

"In short, a Man of Humour is one, who can happily exhibit and expose the oddities and foibles of a humorist /a man with a peculiar temperament/ or of other characters."

Cazamian concludes his study by showing that the concept of humor as deliberate poking fun, whether genial or otherwise, had matured and hereafter would spread throughout the land.^{1/}

Humor in early America.-- Meanwhile, on the other side of the sea, the American sense of the incongruous had begun to assert itself. Rourke^{2/} traces the types of humor which have been outstandingly of the United States.

The Yankee.-- The earliest beginnings of American humor and wit have developed out of the figure of the Yankee--that forward-looking individual who could make the most of a new country. At every place of trade he was to be seen. If he came "with a load of fashionable white paper hats and found no market because of cholera, he ground them up in a mortar and made them into pills."^{3/} If a Southerner jibed, "Down east a cow and a calf and a calico frock is said to be a girl's portion and that's the place you come from," the Yankee was apt to answer, "Well, an' you're from that place ain't you where a potato patch has cracks in it so wide the grasshoppers can't jump over, and that's the portion of the eldest son?"^{4/}

^{1/}Ibid., pp. 409 and 412.

^{2/}Constance Rourke, American Humor: A Study of the National Character, Harcourt Brace and Company, New York, 1931.

^{3/}Ibid., p. 4.

^{4/}Ibid., p. 4.

From the above illustrations it can be seen that hyperbole and exaggeration, together with good-natured ridicule, were among the first marks of American humor.

The New England Yankee's sense of humor may have been partly a revolt from the severe austerity of the Puritans. Governor Bradford, for example, urged that feelings of mirth be enjoyed, if they must, in secret. But by the time of the Revolution "Yankee Doodle" was being sung and jokes were cracked even about the War. After the further War of 1812, Americans began to regard themselves as distinct works of art, about which they could add embellishments.^{1/}

Jonathan Trumbull, Washington's friend, probably was the prototype of Uncle Sam, with his red and white trousers and blue-tailed coat. This figure stood mainly for the Yankee.

The Yankee spoke a sort of self-assumed dialect (not necessarily representing actual speech in any section of the country). Words such as "nat'ral" or native similes such as "so thin you could pitch him clean through a flute"^{2/} were characteristic. On the whole, the Yankee represented the cocky and self-sufficient. When a Yankee met a backwoodsman who had dropped his powder horn into a river, down went the Yankee and poured what was left of the powder into his own horn before coming back up again!^{3/}

The Yankee dialect and figure were unfolded to Americans through travelling stage-shows. There were many variants. One of the chief

1/Ibid., pp. 12-13.

3/Ibid., p. 32.

2/Ibid., pp. 16-21.

of these last was Jack Downing, who represented satire and understatement, in contrast to the usual Yankee wit and bravado. Jack Downing said to General Pierce, for instance, "Uncle Joshua always says, 'In nine cases out of ten it costs more to rob an orchard than it would to buy the apples.'^{1/}

The tall tale.-- The American of the early, and especially the middle and later nineteenth century, was fond of the tall tale. Although a few early tales were laid in New England, most of them came from the Southwest and West. These latter began with the figure of the backwoodsman. Acquainted with horror and stark reality, he liked to talk in an exaggerated manner of strength, size, mortal combat, Indians and the marvels of nature.

Another type, the flatboatman, also told such tales or figured as a character in them. Davy Crockett and Mike Fink can be taken as models of the backwoodsman and the flatboatman.

Tall tales and exaggerations took many forms. Trips to the moon or across the Atlantic by balloon were recounted. Playing practical jokes on the stars, winds, and waters were common, especially in the West. Self-conscious oratory flourished and new words were coined to express oversize ideas--words such as slantendicular, cahoot, catawampus, rumsquattle and supernatiuousness.^{2/}

In New England the backwoodsman and the flatboatman came in for criticism, and the running exchange between the Northeast and those further west gave cause for original satire and ridicule. Such exchanges

1/Ibid., p. 25.

2/Ibid., p. 62.

were like a continuing one between Britain and all Americans. This last encounter is clearly brought out in Our American Cousin by James Walleck and its forerunners.

The negro.-- Another figure often ridiculed was the negro and his customs and language. The minstrel show illustrates this appeal. Tunes such as "Turkey in the Straw" and spirituals such as "Swing low, sweet chariot" are negro in origin. Stephen Foster's lyrics, such as "De Camptown Races" owe their quaint humor to the same source.

Longer forms of the comic.-- Burlesque and satiric comedy began with companies of travelling players. Sentimental writings about the American Indian were satirized early. Burton and Brougham^{1/} changed "the last of the Wampanoags" into "the last of the Pollywogs" and added other caricatures of Indian names. Later, Mark Twain was to subject James Fennimore Cooper's writings to pungent ridicule. In one of the early burlesques it was said by way of prelude that the play was discovered in the vest pocket of a man in armor, by a certain Long Fellow. This comment, poking fun at Longfellow's "The Skeleton in Armor" was followed by parody of his "The Song of Hiawatha." Columbus also came in for his share of downgrading.

Social comedy began as women as well as men were brought in as important figures. Revivals of the older British comedy such as Oliver Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer" were followed by native ones. Walleck's Our American Cousin, the play Lincoln was watching when he was assassinated, made an impression in London.

^{1/}For this and the following material, see ibid., pp. 123 ff.

Humor of the Civil War period.-- Abraham Lincoln was himself accomplished in many forms of humor. He could tell stories, caricature his opponents, and gently ridicule office seekers to good purpose. He particularly delighted in humor caused by deliberate misspelling in an age when Americans were very conscious of education. One of his favorites was Artemus Ward, a travelling showman who delighted in pho-
netic and outrageous spelling; it is well known that at the Cabinet meeting where he first read the Emancipation Proclamation freeing the Southern slaves Lincoln prepared the way by reading Ward's "The High-
Handed Outrage at Utica" to the assembled gentlemen.^{1/}

Individualism and introversion became prominent in the writings of R. W. Emerson, Walt Whitman and Henry D. Thoreau. Like Melville, they were influenced by the Puritan tradition and in all of them, particularly, Melville, there seems to be considerable irony. Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe turned towards handling the comic in the form of legend, Puritan or otherwise. To the writer, a good example of this blending of the mysterious and the comic is Hawthorne's "Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe," in which the Yankee pedlar again appears.

In the Middle West, Mark Twain came into prominence as the author of "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." This story, concerning bets on a jumping frog, contains elements of most of the types of American humor so far mentioned: Yankee shrewdness, understatement, exaggeration, the tall tale, and bad spelling. Mark Twain's The Adventures

^{1/}For a description of the scene, see Stephen Leacock, Humor: Its Theory and Technique, Dodd, Mead, and Company, New York, 1935, pp. 24-28.

of Huckleberry Finn went beyond this and is representative, according to Stephen Leacock, of the highest type of genial humor.^{1/} In it the foibles and hypocrisies of humanity of all classes are held up to thoughtful ridicule. Mark Twain also satirized the American traveller to the European continent, as in Innocents Abroad.^{2/}

Bret Harte, O. Henry and others later gave further examples of Western humor. Harte's usual method was reflective understatement and occasional stinging irony.^{3/} O. Henry delighted in throwing language around in a carelessly luxurious fashion, employing such phrases as "intersections with their predispositions," "tempted an anchovy to forget his vows" and "exasperated the piano with quotations from the operas."^{4/}

Building a comic tradition for Americans.-- Perhaps Henry James, the novelist who wrote of the American personality in Europe has been the subtlest of all American writers to employ satire. Constance Rourke believes that he and other more recent American writers have produced a distinctively American comic tradition quite different from that of Europe, a legacy which a new writer would inherit.^{5/} A great company of modern American writers, some of them since Rourke's book was written, have continued to expand the historic strains of American humor. Many from other nations have expressed their respect for its originality.^{6/}

^{1/}Leacock, op. cit., pp. 125 ff.

^{3/}Ibid., p. 225.

^{2/}Rourke, op. cit., pp. 235-236.

^{4/}Leacock, op. cit., p. 41.

^{5/}Rourke, op. cit., pp. 265 ff.

^{6/}See, for instance, Leacock, op. cit., pp. 31, 38 and 94 ff.

Humor and the Modern Scene

Humor in somewhat earlier American and British writers will next be discussed; contemporary channels of humor will then be examined.

Humor in modern American writers.-- Two major writers whose works have been strongly influenced by the comic tradition are Erskine Caldwell and Sinclair Lewis. Lewis' writing is frequently satirical, as in Babbitt, his story of the self-satisfied, but not overconscientious, business man.^{1/} Similarly, in Main Street, he pokes fun at the drabness of the citizens' thinking in Gopher Prairie as well as at Carol Kennicott's city sophistication. Erskine Caldwell also has the sense of the comic in novels such as Tobacco Road. It is this that saves Jeeter, for instance, one of its leading characters, from being artistically intolerably sordid and gloomy.^{2/} More specifically humorous, Will Rogers followed the Yankee tradition of linking humor with common sense and became famous for his pithy comments on the national scene.^{3/} Robert Benchley, another popular fun maker, typically capitalized on the unconscious humor in the behavior of the preoccupied individual.^{4/}

British humorists.-- Great nineteenth century writers in the comic vein include Charles Dickens with his caricatures in The Tale of Two Cities and his ever-present satire and William M. Thackerary with his

^{1/}For a discussion see Edgar Johnson, A Treasury of Satire, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1945, pp. 660 ff.

^{2/}Joseph W. Beach, American Fiction: 1920-1940, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1948, pp. 227-228.

^{3/}Walter Blair, Horse Sense in American Humor, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1942, pp. 262 ff.

^{4/}Blair, op. cit., pp. 281-283.

gentle irony in Vanity Fair. George Bernard Shaw, the Irish playwright, "like Dickens, only even more insistently than Dickens, [is] a social satirist."^{1/} Thus in Heartbreak House he satirized the jazz age by having Ellie Dunn, of the younger generation, marry the fat and middle-aged Mangan, because of her own cynicism.^{2/} On the lighter side, Shaw wrote the delightful Pygmalion, translated into the famous musical "My Fair Lady." Through Higgins and Eliza he pokes fun at the aristocracy who are misled by mere correctness of speech.

Max Beerbohm, with his clever stories and accompanying line drawings, Hilaire Belloc, (who wrote "When I am dead, I hope it may be said: 'His sins were scarlet, but his books were read'"^{3/}), and P. G. Wodehouse, the contemporary creator of the inimitable butler Jeeves--all contain much to amuse.

Contemporary American humorous writers and poets.-- E. B. White and James Thurber are two current popular mirth-makers. James Thurber,^{4/} brought up in Columbus, Ohio, attended Ohio State University. After routine work on several newspapers he was appointed, through E. B. White, to the staff of "The New Yorker." Since then he has continued to write parodies and amusing stories; his unique line sketches accompany many of them. His play The Male Animal became later a popular motion picture.

^{1/}Johnson, op. cit., p. 590.

^{2/}Ibid., p. 596.

^{3/}Hilaire Belloc, "On His Books," quoted in Johnson, op. cit., p. 186.

^{4/}For a discussion see Walter Blair, Horse Sense in American Humor, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1942, p. 283 ff.

Perhaps his upbringing in a rather unusual family, if his autobiography My Life and Hard Times is to be believed, accounts for his own feeling that:

"/humorists/ lead...an existence of jumpiness and apprehension.../that they/ have...a genius for getting into minor difficulties: they walk into the wrong apartments, they drink furniture polish for stomach bitters, they drive their cars into the tulip beds of haughty neighbors."^{1/}

Two special irritations to Thurber are women and machines. Writing about people exasperated by amusing minor difficulties, as in "The Night the Ghost Got In," "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" and "University Days" is his specialty. Through such pieces he satirizes both himself and all mankind for getting so excited. "Ultimately it seems to him that he is looking at a whole society with its tiles loose."^{2/} Mere irrationality, however, Thurber dismisses as harmless, but he becomes lethal when he ridicules those who insist that their enthusiasms or panaceas be forced on others.^{3/} Thurber's title Let Your Mind Alone expresses his thoughts on life.

Another humorist of our day, E. B. White, who graduated from Cornell University and obtained his doctor of literature degree from Dartmouth, joined the staff of "The New Yorker" more than 30 years ago and for some time has been its editor.^{4/} Like Thurber, he is constantly concerned with man's departure from reality through artificial customs. For instance, White states:^{5/}

^{1/}Ibid., p. 284.

^{2/}Johnson, op. cit., p. 733.

^{3/}Ibid., pp. 733-734.

^{4/}For a discussion see Clifton Fadiman, Party of One, The World Publishing Company, Cleveland, Ohio, 1955, pp. 54-62.

^{5/}Ibid., p. 55.

"Clubs, fraternities, nations--these are the beloved barriers in the way of a workable world; these will have to surrender some of their rights and some of their ribs. A 'fraternity' is the antithesis of fraternity. The first (that is, the order or organization) is predicated on the idea of exclusion; the second (that is, the abstract thing) is based on a feeling of total equality."

In addition to editing a magazine and, with his wife, a humor anthology,^{1/} White has written collections such as The Second Tree from the Corner and One Man's Meat. Although some of White's humor is sophisticated, there are many pieces adolescents would understand and like in these collections.

Phyllis McGinley, is one of the best-liked and most lucid verse satirists of our time.^{2/} Born in Oregon, she early went to New Rochelle, New York, where her career began as a high school teacher of English. For some years she has been a regular contributor to "The New Yorker" and holds many honors including a doctor's degree from Wheaton College (Massachusetts), the Catholic Christopher medal and the Poetry Society Award for 1955. Her light verse as in Pocketful of Wry and The Emperor's Nightingale have sold thousands of copies. Critics have praised her skill as a versifier, her clarity of thought and the warmth of her feeling. She continually satirizes, whether she writes of an office Christmas party or a trip to English cathedrals, but her laughter is always kindly.

^{1/}E. B. White and Katharine S. White, ed., "A Subtreasury of American Humor," Coward-McCann, Inc., New York, 1941.

^{2/}Kay Sullivan, "From Suburbs to Saints: Phyllis McGinley," in The Catholic World (September, 1957), pp. 420-425.

Furthermore, she can laugh at herself as in her prose "New Year and No Resolutions."^{1/}

Perhaps the best known of all comic writers today and one who has directed much of his verse specifically to adolescents, is Ogden Nash. Very familiar to readers of "The Saturday Evening Post" and "The New Yorker," Nash has also entertained millions by reading his own pieces over the radio.^{2/} To understand his writing one must realize that "he is like other modern humorists in having his words shaped by a mind not completely under control."^{3/} Frequently he is under the spell of associated sounds as in such titles as "To Bargain, Toboggan, To-Whoo!," and "A Ride on the Bronxial Local," or in such "Nash-isms" as "preproceros" to rhyme with "rhinoceros" or "losted" to rhyme with "exhausted." In spite of his freedom with language the conservative British newspaper, "The Manchester Guardian," comments:^{4/}

"His rhymes, if unusual, are always considered; the diversities of form match the diversities of family life and with enjoyable absurdity of language he makes us recognize once again how much of ordinary life is comic."

Fadiman writes of Nash:^{5/}

"Any dullard can match 'June' and 'moon.' It needs an ear as highly trained as a piano tuner's to fashion lines like:

^{1/}In Phyllis McGinley, Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, The Viking Press, New York, 1958, pp. 41-48.

^{2/}Blair, op. cit., p. 295.

^{3/}Ibid., p. 296.

^{4/}"The Manchester Guardian" (December 18, 1951), p. 3.

^{5/}Clifton Fadiman, op. cit., p. 63.

'O Kangaroo, O Kangaroo,
 Be grateful that you're in the zoo,
 And not transmuted by a boomerang
 To zestful, tangy Kangaroo meringue.'"

Nash's light verse is comic not only for its playful use of sounds, but also because he frequently pokes fun at much of modern living. People who pretend they don't like to be wealthy, those who are so efficient they don't have time to live, youngsters who blame adults for their own shortcomings and adults who do the same thing in reverse: these are among his major themes. Furthermore, Nash is widely appreciated for his wit--his pithy, conversational way of expressing maxims of life. Such volumes as Parents Keep Out were written directly to youngsters and much of Nash's other poetry directly touches their experience.

Nights with Armour, one of Richard Armour's collections of poetry, indicates by its play on words something of his wit, which resembles Nash's in many ways, principally in the terseness of his rhymes. Dr. Armour, who is a college professor, has written several volumes of poems and many epigrams for such magazines as "The Saturday Evening Post." Light Armour, like Nights with Armour, contains much abbreviated common sense; such poems as "Assorted Relishes" and "Money" show this quality. Although some of Armour's writing is extremely pungent and sophisticated, at other times he can show ordinary fun. The Christian Science Monitor says of Armour's verse:^{1/} "It's verse to be tucked into white spaces at the bottom of magazine columns...afterward published...simply because so many

^{1/}The Christian Science Monitor, (May 22, 1958), p. 13.

people were delighted." Armour himself says "Brevity and levity rhyme. In other respects also they are a good pair."^{1/}

David McCord, also highly educated, shows a wide variety of skills as a humorist. Not only can he write nonsense as in^{2/}

"As I was perning in the gyre
I met a man from Invernshire;"

he can also write epigrams and longer satire. His widely known What Cheer is an excellent anthology of humorous verse.

Writers of generally funny stories for teenagers are legion and include Emily Kimbrough and Cornelia Otis Skinner, who wrote about a trip to Europe in Our Hearts Were Young and Gay; Max Shulman with his many stories about the romantic Dobie Gillis; George and Helen Papishvily, the authors of Anything Can Happen; and Ruth McKenny who wrote My Sister Eileen.

Humor through radio, television and drama.-- Today's high school students become acquainted with the varieties of humor, more through what they watch and hear than through what they read, however. This must be recognized when designing a program with primary reference to literature. Viewing shows starring comedians like Bob Hope or Red Skelton are very popular activities.

Bob Hope, who entertained the Armed Services overseas in 1945, has starred in Roberta, Have Tux, Will Travel, and many other stage or motion picture roles. Beginning his career as an announcer, Hope

^{1/}Quoted in A. S. Bureck, ed., The Writers' Handbook, The Writer, Inc., Boston, 1960, p. 389.

^{2/}David W. T. McCord, "Shenanigans" in his Odds, Without Ends, Little Brown and Company, Boston, 1954, p. 137.

improved on the original script by saying, "Ladies and gentlemen, next week's show features a Scotchman named Marshall Walker. He must be a Scotchman; he got married in his own back yard 'cause he wanted the chickens to get the rice."^{1/} Such satire on the peculiarities of people and customs make up much of Hope's frequent ad libbing and puns are also frequent. The laugh is often on himself as in his usual role of the breezy, overconfident fellow who somehow manages to get "loused up." "He is that rarity among comedians, the clown who can also be the leading man."^{2/} His humor is never unkind; and he has won a top reputation because of the extremely clever timing of his jokes and his personal warmth.

Another popular comedian is Red Skelton, "one of the great clowns of our time."^{3/} Skelton is physically funny and his abnormal walk, his hat that matches his expression and his proclivity to fall at exactly the right moment have made him a favorite. "Skelton's comedy makes much of defects and ugliness and falling down and stumbling and getting seasick and looking cross-eyed."^{4/} His comedy rests on caricature and frequently comes close to slapstick. Thus he has been compared to Charlie Chaplin. He also shares Chaplin's ability to impersonate sympathetically a figure such as a tramp.^{5/}

1/Steve Allen, The Funny Man, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1956, p. 201.

2/Ibid., p. 211.

3/Ibid., p. 265.

4/Ibid., p. 267.

5/Ibid., p. 275.

Milton Berle and Sid Caesar also capitalize frequently on awkward behavior. Groucho Marx is famous for caustic remarks to contestants on quiz shows. Jack Benny, Jackie Gleason and others perform outstandingly as lead men in group scenes.

Comedians, of course, as well as such singers as Frank Sinatra, often play leading roles in movies. Light musicals such as Richard Rogers' and Oscar Hammerstein's "Oklahoma" provide a still different type of humorous entertainment.

Other sources of the humorous.-- Comic magazines and strips constitute another source of entertainment. "Mad Magazine,"^{1/} under the pretext of being written by and about a mad individual, cleverly satirizes the American scene, from television commercials to educational textbooks and politics. The June, 1961 issue contains, for example, these captions or comments: "Stop the car!...My feet went through the floorboards again" (backstage one minute after the end of a Hertz Rent-A-Car commercial); "Pay a visit to your Mayor if he is currently out of prison" (from a "Mad" civics textbook); and, in an article on improving America's prestige abroad, a cartoon captioned "Foreign aid project #14--8-lane cloverleaf interchange for Afghanistan."

Charles M. Schultz, in such books as Good Ol' Charlie Brown^{2/} satirizes Charlie Brown in a benevolent manner as the shy boy (or man) who is always finding it difficult to get along with his friends,

^{1/}"Mad," E. C. Publications, Inc., New York (June, 1961).

^{2/}Charles M. Schultz, Good Ol' Charlie Brown, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, 1957.

especially girls. Occasionally modern psychology is poked fun at or government agricultural policy ("He's a human soil bank").

Carnivals, circuses, and unintentional mistakes by public speakers also cause laughter. Perhaps the greatest of all sources of adolescent humor is the youngsters themselves as they play practical jokes on their friends, behave boisterously or maintain a position of respect with their peers by their ability in repartee.

Ways of Expressing Humor

Stephen Potter, Stephen Leacock and other theorists have divided humor into four categories:^{1/} (1) humor of words, (2) humor of ideas, (3) humor of situation, and (4) humor of character. Leacock, in particular, also distinguishes as a fifth category, humor of life as a whole.^{2/}

Humor of words includes, among others, the following: bad spelling and grammar, as in Artemus Ward's "Utiky"^{3/} speech or Ring Lardner's boxing jargon in Champion; repetition of sounds or rhythm automatically, as in "Sighted sub, glub, glub;" alliteration as in "simply a lump of limpid lard;"^{4/} puns, as in "He cauterize and winked;"^{5/} dialect as in

^{1/}Leacock, Humor and Humanity, pp. 22, 49, 76, 98.

^{2/}Leacock, op. cit., p. 211.

^{3/}Artemus Ward, "The High-Handed Outrage at Utica," quoted in Leacock, op. cit., pp. 35-36.

^{4/}Jarvis Keily, "The Song of the Jellyfish" quoted in Marjorie O'Brien, The Development of Appreciation of Humor in Literature, Boston University Graduate School Master's Thesis (unpublished), 1956, p. 78.

^{5/}Bennett Cerf, The Life of the Party, Doubleday and Company, Inc., Garden City, N.Y., 1956, p. 235.

"You batta your life, notta. I gotta;"^{1/} and the unconscious humor of spoonerisms such as "New Jinea jungles" (for New Guinea jungles) or certain self-contradictions such as the Irish bull ("The dead man was last seen walking down the street").

Although humor of ideas often includes humor on words, it concentrates on the thought rather than the language. Much burlesque, previously defined as the treating of a serious subject comically, often makes fun of an idea. A simple type consists of exaggerated figures of speech, as in Lincoln's "Sending men to that army is like shoveling fleas across a barnyard--they don't get there."^{2/} or the scenes in A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court where such medieval institutions as heavy armor and other trappings of knighthood are ridiculed. Parody makes fun of the style or language of an accepted writing by imitating it. "Topside Galah," for example, one of many take-offs on Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "Excelsior" contains these lines: (in pidgin English):^{4/}

"Man-man, ' one galo talkee he,
'What for you go topside look see?'"

Satire, a general term for all wit that mocks folly or vice, is found in major writers from Horace to George Bernard Shaw; the King of Brobdingnag, in Swift's Gulliver's Travels, for instance, felt as follows:^{3/}

^{1/}T. A. Daly, "Mia Carlotta," in David McCord, What Cheer, Coward-McCann, Inc., New York, 1945, p. 88.

^{2/}Quoted in Eastman, op. cit., p. 83.

^{3/}Jonathan Swift, Gulliver's Travels, quoted in Edgar Johnson, A Treasury of Satire, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1945, p. 292.

^{4/}Anonymous, quoted in Carolyn Wells, A Parody Anthology, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1904, pp. 122-124.

"He was perfectly astonished with the historical account I gave him of our affairs [Great Britain's] during the last century, protesting it was only an heap of conspiracies."

Nonsense and whimsy are other vehicles for humor of thought, when ordinary ideas are distorted to their logical extremes. Edward Lear's "The Owl and the Pussy Cat" or Hugh Mearns' "The Perfect Reactionary" are two instances among myriads. "The Perfect Reactionary," to illustrate, contains the lines:^{1/}

"As I was sitting in my chair
I knew the bottom wasn't there."

Unconscious humor figures in what Leacock calls "supercomic" verse,^{2/} where a poet treats a serious subject with good intentions but poor art, resulting in travesty. For example, lines about the sinking of the "Titanic" begin:^{3/}

"My! What an awful night they had!
That night that boat went down."

Slapstick comedy is built around the humor of situations. So is the practical joke. Much unintentional humor results from an awkward or unexpected situation. Farce, too, frequently depends upon it. The grave-diggers in Hamlet, for example, provide comic relief by unexpectedly digging up a skull. Red Skelton or the clown Huckleberry Finn saw

^{1/}Hugh Mearns, "The Perfect Reactionary," quoted in David McCord, op. cit., p. 431.

^{2/}Leacock, op. cit., pp. 151 ff.

^{3/}Cited in ibid., p. 155.

create a scene by pretending drunkenness while riding a horse, are further instances.

Humor of character, satire on the weaknesses or peculiarities of individuals, includes caricature and is found universally in comic literature, from the light-hearted portrayal of his botany professor by James Thurber in "University Days" to the deeper irony in the inconsistency in Sinclair Lewis' Babbitt, or Edwin Arlington Robinson's grim ridicule in "Richard Cory."

It is humor arising out of our own experiences of life itself, especially when viewed as a whole, that Leacock, E. B. White, Thurber and others consider the highest of all types. This "sublime humor" is close to pain and comes when we are able to look at life as a whole and to understand the comparative insignificance of our feelings, our woes and ourselves. Such humor makes us more understanding of the sufferings of others and unites us in a common bond of humanity.

"A thing gets so bad and you feel so terrible that at last you go to pieces and it's funny."^{1/}

"The things we laugh at are awful while they are going on, but get funny when we look back. And other people laugh because they've been through it too."^{2/}

Humor may be expressed in many literary forms. A large proportion of all drama is comedy, which often contains, besides humor of character, verbal witticism or whimsy. Novels, short stories and essays are

^{1/}E. B. White, quoted in Eastman, op. cit., p. 343.

^{2/}James Thurber, quoted in Eastman, op. cit., pp. 341-342.

frequently mainly satires. Poems and epigrams often depend for their popularity on an unexpected turn of thought. The same play on ideas or words is the basis of many jokes.

The Development of Humor in Adolescents

Humor in young children.-- Smiles are associated with human babies from the earliest days of their lives. In fact, Henri Bergson^{1/} and others have defined man as "the laughing animal." The smiling and laughing of young children have been studied considerably, although many questions yet await an answer.

Max Eastman,^{2/} Albert Rapp^{3/} and others point to the first smile which babies give their parents about the fortieth day of life, the former considering it purely an expression of delight. Ruth Washburn^{4/} concluded that the smiles of babies as a response to the mother are one of the earliest forms of social communication.

Katherine Chandler^{5/} studied older children and found a somewhat different reaction. She discovered that when 700 eight-year-old children in one grade school were asked to record the best joke which they had participated in or observed, during a school vacation, "...the jokes recorded were always on somebody else...all embodied an idea of discomfort to somebody or something."^{6/} Kimmins, the British psychologist,

^{1/}Henri Bergson, op. cit., p. 3.

^{2/}Max Eastman, The Sense of Humor, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1921, p. 7.

^{3/}Rapp, op. cit., p. 180, footnote 6.

^{4/}Ruth Washburn, "A Study of the Smiling and Laughing of Infants in Their First Year of Life," Genetic Psychology Monographs, 1929, vol. 6: nos. 5 and 6.

^{5/}"The Sense of Humor in Children," Century Magazine, 1902, 64:959-960.

^{6/}Ibid.

corroborated these findings some years later and further concluded that such delight in others' discomfiture was found to a greater extent in boys than in girls in all age groups.^{1/}

Harmes^{2/} summarizes studies in the field of children's humor by concluding that from the ages of one to three, children smile merely as a response to social stimulation; that from the age of three to seven, their humor centers around curiosity about their environment; and that from the age of seven through early adolescence humor centers on caricature and deliberate ridicule. Adolescence, he says, is the first stage of growth in which kindly humor becomes prominent.

Adolescent humor.-- The earliest of three studies of adolescent humor is that by Ruth Wells.^{3/} To a group of 400 children in the high schools and junior high schools of Syracuse and Solway, New York, she gave 40 samples of humorous extracts from literature. Literary authorities had previously agreed that these selections were humorous and also that they could be subdivided into four groups: those showing predominantly (1) slapstick comedy, (2) absurdity, (3) satire and (4) whimsy. These terms were defined as follows: (1) slapstick--physically boisterous comedy, (2) absurdity--incongruous situations, predicament because of stupidity (little thought shown in the laughter), (3) satire--the kind of material we laugh at or with, but with a touch of scorn; ridicule of

^{1/}C. W. Kimmins, The Springs of Laughter, Methuen Press, London, (1928).

^{2/}E. Harmes, "Development of Humor," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 38:351-369, July, 1943.

^{3/}Ruth Wells, "A Study of Tastes in Humorous Literature Among Pupils of Junior and Senior High Schools," Journal of Educational Research, 28:81-91 (October, 1934).

notions or foibles, usually through exaggeration or overemphasis; and (4) whimsy--presentation of truth often ludicrous in an imaginative way, inseparable from the author's personality (we laugh over it inwardly with sympathy, but without scorn).

The pupils were asked to record their preferences as they compared the four types of selections with each other. Reliability correlations of .50-.79 were found in the consistency of their responses to all types of humor excepting absurdity. In this last case the correlations of reliability were .34-.44.

Several types of conclusions were drawn from this study: The pupils enjoyed the test. Those in the 7th grade laughed the most and finished first. Those in the 9th grade reacted less obviously (i.e., some of the laughter was open but some of the reactions were harder to discern). Those in the 12th grade showed signs of steady, mild enjoyment.

In all grades taken together the popularity of the four types of humor was: (1) absurdity, (2) slapstick, (3) satire, (4) whimsy. The taste for satire and whimsy increased gradually on an average as the grade level increased. Girls enjoyed whimsy more than did boys. Both sexes enjoyed it more than they did satire. Differences in girls' and boys' taste grew continually greater from the 7th grade through the 12th grade and presumably well on into adulthood. Those who came from more cultured homes were proportionately more in favor of whimsy and satire than the rest. However, pupils from cultured homes showed the same over-all order of preference. Neither social adjustment nor mental ability produced measurable effects on valuations of humor.

The above findings were statistically validated. They do not

necessarily imply that adolescents' humor patterns can be changed by teaching. Wells believes, however, from personal experience and informal analyses (such as that of one 11th grade class) reported by others that: (1) pupils' appreciation of humor can be broadened to include the more literary and kindly forms and (2) the 9th grade, because of the divergent reactions to humor usually manifested there, is the logical place to begin reeducation of adolescent humor.

Another experimental study was that of Louise Omwake.^{1/} Before describing her own, she summarizes previous experimental studies, including Wells' dealing with adolescent reactions to humor. Omwake's purpose was to find adolescents' ratings of their own capacities for appreciating humor. Her procedure was to give rating forms to 597 high school and college students in "two eastern co-educational universities, one southern college for girls, one middle-western co-educational university, one eastern junior college for girls and one middle-western high school."^{2/} They were asked to rate themselves on what they considered to be their own abilities and inclinations in various fields, one of which was humor. The scale used was numerical, with the following equivalencies: 1---low; 2---below average; 3---average; 4---above average; 5---high. Averaging the results, Omwake found that the typical pupil rated himself at 3.53 on his sense of humor, a higher valuation than that placed on any similar propensity excepting appetite.

^{1/}Louise Omwake, "A Study of Sense of Humor: Its Relation to Sex, Age and Personal Characteristics," Journal of Applied Psychology, 1937, 21:688-704.

^{2/}Op. cit., p. 695.

Besides ranking for humor as a whole, ratings for responses within the field of humor were obtained: (1) capacity to appreciate and (2) to create humor. The major results are presented in Table 1:^{1/}

Table 1. Average Self-Ratings on Propensities
In Reference to Humor by 597 High
School and College Students

Type of Propensity	Average Self-Rating
Part I. Humor and Other Traits	
Possession of sense of humor.....	3.53
Possession of a good appetite.....	3.54
Tendency to be healthy.....	3.47
Possession of general intelligence.....	3.15
Tendency to be a good mixer in social groups.....	2.87
Tendency to be overweight.....	2.29
Part II. Appreciation of Humor	
Ability to understand point of joke.....	3.49
Ability not to be shocked at unconventional joke.....	3.49
Appreciation of good puns.....	3.43
Enjoyment of Mickey Mouse (in 1937).....	3.33
Enjoyment of movie comedies with human actors	3.25
Tendency to laugh at joke on yourself when someone else calls attention to it.....	3.19
Tendency to permit others to poke fun at jokes you tell without being offended.....	2.95
Part III. Creation of Humor	
Ability to create for others a humorous story out of an actual experience.....	2.97
Tendency to pun.....	2.64
Ability to improve on joke you've heard.....	2.45

^{1/}Ibid., p. 700.

Omwake concluded that: (1) in our culture young people consider sense of humor an indispensable trait; (2) they tend to rate themselves highly on ability to enjoy various types of jokes except those perpetrated on themselves; (3) they rate themselves somewhat lower on their ability to create humor.

In a separate part of the same study Omwake's purpose was to find to what extent students' estimates of abilities to appreciate humor corresponded with the judgments of independent external observers. The study did not include a section on self versus external evaluations of ability to create humor. She gave 12 jokes of different types including one that designedly had no point, to the above-mentioned students. All jokes were chosen informally by herself and her assistants. The responses showed that: each of the 12 jokes was considered pointless by at least one student; only one-third of the pupils marked the joke designedly pointless as such; wide variation existed in types of jokes enjoyed. Pupils who had rated themselves high on their own sense of humor were no more understanding of the jokes than the average student. Omwake concluded, without making an elaborate statistical analysis, that students' self-ratings on ability to appreciate humor are scarcely, if at all, related to their actual abilities.

Polyxene Kamboropoulou^{1/} studied the recording of what they considered funny by Vassar College freshmen. From collating material in their diaries Kamboropoulou concluded that (1) most people of that age tend to laugh through a feeling of superiority, (2) this tendency to like jokes which

1/P. Kamboropoulou, "Individual Differences in the Sense of Humor," American Journal of Psychology, 1926, vol. 37, pp. 268-278.

emphasize one's superiority was found more frequently among introverted students, (3) students of high mental ability had greater preference for puns than the others, (4) bright students preferred nonsense materials more than others and (5) bright students recorded more humor than did average students. She concluded that humor arises from incongruity between the normal and what is considered to have a defect. Although she found no direct implications for teaching, the present writer infers from results (3), (4) and (5) above that dull students need far more training than bright ones in appreciating humor, especially of the verbal variety.

An additional study bearing generally on adolescents' feelings about humor is that of George W. Norvell,^{1/} who concluded, from an intensive survey of the literature preferred by young people in the high schools of New York State, that "obvious humor" ranked with patriotism, animals and adventure as the top favorite themes.

Teaching Humor in the School

As long ago as 1907 Stephen Colvin^{2/} said:

"The teacher can have no higher ideal than that of teaching his pupils to laugh aright, for he who laughs well, laughs wisely...has high knowledge, sympathy and philosophical calm."

Nash stated:^{3/}

^{1/}George W. Norvell, The Reading Interests of Young People, D. C. Heath and Company, Boston, 1950.

^{2/}Stephen S. Colvin, "The Educational Value of Humor," The Pedagogical Seminary, (December, 1907) 14:517.

^{3/}W. H. Nash, "Educating the High-School Students' Sense of Humor," English Journal (March, 1938), 27:236.

"The training of a student's sense of humor contributes far more to his social education than do most of the subjects that loom large in the English program...A misplaced comma will seldom lead to disastrous consequences, whereas a misplaced laugh is always dangerous and may be a social catastrophe."

Brown^{1/} adds that humor benefits the teacher as well as the pupil, listing, among other benefits its value as a (1) personality developer, (2) tonic for tired mental faculties, (3) saving factor in embarrassing, trying situations, (4) help in classroom efficiency. He quotes Irving S. Cobb: "A laugh a day keeps the doctor away."

Humor has long been employed in teaching. Even of the schoolmaster in Oliver Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" it was said that his pupils "laughed with counterfeited glee at all his jokes, for many a joke had he."^{2/} Brumbaugh,^{3/} Abbott^{4/} and many others have stressed the importance of the teacher's having a sense of humor. Warren^{5/} comments "I usually announce to a class that no one will find it necessary to cut up that semester, that I will be quite funny enough for the entire group." Colvin,^{6/} Rubin^{7/}

^{1/}E. J. Brown, "Humor of the School," American School Board Journal (February, 1944), 81:55-56.

^{2/}Quoted in Allan Abbott, "The Mission of Humor in the Teaching of English," (March, 1946), 29:79.

^{3/}Florence Brumbaugh, "Laughter and Teachers," Educational Method, (November, 1940), 20:69-70.

^{4/}Allan Abbott, loc. cit.

^{5/}J. E. Warren, "English Teacher as Humorist," Clearing House, (October, 1949), 23:85.

^{6/}Colvin, op. cit., p. 523.

^{7/}I. Rubin, "Use of Humor as a Teaching Device," High Points, (March, 1935), 17:30-31.

and others stress the importance of humor as an aid to promote satisfactory behavior.

Planning for a classroom atmosphere in which the student is free to express and receive humor is important in teaching its appreciation. Warren^{1/} lists these suggestions: (1) Make students feel that humor is being dwelt on for a good reason--to help serious learning--and that it is not mere frivolity on the part of the teacher, (2) the teacher must be able to laugh at himself, (3) he must look gratefully at those who laugh at his humor, (4) he should supply examples of the ridiculous in his teaching and (5) he must understand the psychology and technique of humor. Nash^{2/} further suggests, specifically, that (1) conscious emphasis be given to various types of humor, (2) outside reading in humor be encouraged, and that (3) meetings of book clubs and literary societies be laced with humor. He concludes that each pupil needs to grow in appreciation of humor in the way best suited to his personality. Click^{3/} suggests silent reading of brief humorous material as an aid in helping slow students to appreciate humor. When one pupil smiles, the rest try to find the joke. Extra curricular activities involving need for humor are cartoons, school bulletin boards, sketches (pictorial or otherwise) for the school newspaper, variety entertainments and school plays.^{4/}

Direct teaching of humor is, of course, the most forceful method. But comparatively few materials are available to exemplify a unit in the art.

^{1/}Warren, op. cit., pp. 82-84.

^{2/}Nash, op. cit., pp. 244-245.

^{3/}Donald Click, "Humor and Comprehension," English Journal, (June, 1952), 40:321.

^{4/}Nash, op. cit., p. 245.

Nevertheless the National Council of Teachers of English early included two units on humor as part of the language arts program. Today, among others, the states of Florida, Nevada and Pennsylvania, and such cities as Hampton, Pennsylvania, Denver, Colorado, Atlanta, Georgia and Baltimore, Maryland also provide such units. Two Boston University master's theses include exercises and units for building skills and understandings as well as appreciations of humor.

"Laughter Holding Both Its Sides,"^{1/} will be examined as an example of a school system publication and the units of O'Brien^{2/} and Freeman^{3/} will be discussed as academic contributions.

Broening, the principal author of the state guide states in her introduction to the unit, referring to the school where she teaches, "We have a unit in reading humor in every grade from the seventh through the twelfth."^{4/} Her particular objectives for this seventh grade unit are:^{5/}

"to cultivate a sense of humor (a) as an asset in friendly companionship; (b) as a safety device in protecting any individual from excessive feelings of self-importance, self-righteousness, self-pity, self-denial, and self-consciousness; (c) as an aid in keeping a sound mind and a stout heart when adversity overtakes one; (d) as the pause that refreshes during the serious moments of life; and (e) as a means of gaining rapport with an audience."

^{1/}Angela Broening, "Laughter Holding Both Its Sides," in Experiencing the Language Arts, Bulletin No. 34, State Department of Education, Tallahassee, Florida, 1948, pp. 230-235.

^{2/}Marjorie O'Brien, "Developing Appreciation of Humor Through Literature," Unpublished Master's Thesis, Boston University School of Education, 1956.

^{3/}Elsie T. Freeman, "The Unit Organization of Two Topics for Grade Eleven: Humor in Literature," Unpublished Master's Thesis, Boston University School of Education, 1955.

^{4/}Ibid., p. 232.

^{5/}Ibid.

Her unit opens by discussion of the question, "Do you know anyone who has a mania?" This motivates the reading of Leacock's "How to Live to be 200." Further activities include an inventory of students' present tastes in humor, reading which ties in with the humorous experiences of their own lives,^{1/} much oral and silent reading to give training in recognizing the incongruities that cause laughter, writing about amusing personal experiences, and listening to get the point of a humorous story and to remember the particular humorous words used. It will be recognized that all four fundamental English foci--reading, writing, speaking and listening--are involved.

Marjorie O'Brien's master's thesis^{2/} first surveys the varied definitions of humor and its history and tradition in literature. She then discusses types of humor and, particularly, ways of developing sense of humor through school activities. She suggests that humor can aid in building skills of creative listening.^{3/} Similarly, she says:^{4/}

"Since one of the most common student-complaints is not knowing what to write about, humor can serve well and with variety. Everything in the world which appears not as it should is material for humor."

Appreciation for a broader range of humor including the more literary types can be fostered directly by workbook exercises training students in skills and methods of humor, by units centered on humor, by a

1/Ibid., p. 233.

2/Marjorie O'Brien, op. cit.

3/Ibid., p. 71.

4/Ibid., p. 72.

combination, or indirectly by units on mass media of entertainment, for instance, or in connection with serious literature.^{1/} O'Brien's workbook considers these topics, inductively leading the student to understand and apply various types of humor: "Information, Please!", "What Makes Humor Glisten and Gleam" (alliteration), "Having Fun with the Riddle and the Pun," "Verbal Twists," "Humor via Radio and Television," "Limericks," "More Nonsense," "Epigrams and Epitaphs," "Jokes, Anecdotes and Humorous Stories," and "Humor Through a Mirror." The concentrated learning of skills in the workbook are then applied in the broad activities of the resource unit which follows.

Elsie Freeman's study^{2/} likewise gives background on the history of humor but concentrates almost exclusively on American literature. The importance of democracy in education, and of the individual student's need for developing the social, intellectual and emotional sides of his personality are stressed. The change to extensive, individualized reading advocated by the National Council of Teachers of English, to replace the older emphasis on the classics, is incidentally discussed and attention is again focused on America's particular type of humor as helping to identify the nation in its own consciousness. Other teaching materials are reviewed and two units, one on international and one on American humor, are provided. Introductory pretests investigating student recognition of and preferences for types of humor, activities such as committee programs or displays of cartoons or book jackets, and

1/Ibid., pp. 72-73.

2/Elsie Freeman, op. cit.

extensive final tests and suggestions for evaluation by both teacher and pupil are ingeniously handled.

Bibliographies of humorous literature.-- In addition to such completed projects, bibliographies of humorous literature are further aids in the construction of materials for teaching humor. "Laughter Holding Both Its Sides," the already mentioned unit on humor, contains a short bibliography of amusing stories.^{1/} "Substitute for the Comic Books,"^{2/} contains a somewhat similar selection of materials. Both "Laughing Stock,"^{3/} and "Time to Laugh,"^{4/} contain excellent lists of novels, stories, and poems, mostly current, carefully selected and annotated for the high school student. Finally, "Chuckles for Children,"^{5/} and "Books for Chuckles,"^{6/} contain lists of books, mostly, however, of a more elementary sort.

Summary.-- A survey of the professional literature indicates that humor has been an important influence in the history of Western civilization. The writing of today relies on the comic for much of its appeal.

^{1/}Broening et al., op. cit., pp. 234-235.

^{2/}Constance Carr, "Substitute for the Comics," reprinted from Elementary English (April and May, 1951).

^{3/}"Laughing Stock," Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, 1953.

^{4/}"Time to Laugh," Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, 1956.

^{5/}"Chuckles for Children," Boston University School of Education, Boston, n.d.

^{6/}Lorraine E. Tolman, "Books for Chuckles," Boston University School of Education, Boston, n.d.

Stories and poems by such contemporaries as Ogden Nash, Phyllis McGinley, James Thurber and Richard Armour reflect the amusing contrast between society's goals and its practices. Research has shown that young people regard humor highly both in books and as a personal asset.^{1/}

This workbook uses materials from contemporary and older writers to provide examples of the humorous. Adolescents' fondness for what is obviously funny^{2/} is used as a basis for developing appreciation of subtler forms of humor as well.

^{1/}Norvell, op. cit., p. 64; Omwake, op. cit., p. 700.

^{2/}Wells, loc. cit.

WORKBOOK OF EXERCISES:

LET'S LEARN ABOUT LAUGHTER

To the Teacher

The general purpose of this Workbook is to increase junior high school students' enjoyment of varieties of humor and to broaden their sympathies. A further outcome should be the development of their own sense of humor.

In order to clarify thinking about humor, three divisions of lessons are distinguished, according to purpose. They are: (1) Laughter that entertains, (2) Laughter that teaches, and (3) Laughter that brings harmony. The purpose of each lesson is to increase appreciation of a certain type of humor and ability to express it in its simplest forms. The lessons involve, in order, the following topics: spoonerisms, dialect, puns, exaggeration, parody, satire, irony, and genial humor based on understanding of character.

These exercises and activities, which may be modified to suit individual classes, may be done in two to three weeks.

Evaluation may be accomplished in a variety of ways. The following principles, based on the research of Smith and Tyler, may be applied as showing growth in appreciation in humor:

- (1) satisfaction in the thing appreciated;
- (2) desire for more of the thing appreciated;
- (3) desire to know more about the thing appreciated;
- (4) desire to express oneself creatively;
- (5) identification of oneself with the thing appreciated;
- (6) desire to clarify one's own thinking with regard to the life problems raised by the thing appreciated.
- (7) desire to evaluate.^{1/}

The exercises of this Workbook may be discussed upon completion of each lesson; thus pupils may relate the concepts while fresh in their minds, to their own experience. Such informal comparison of students' thinking leaves room for individual tastes and gives the capable student a stimulus to excel in an area where much is subjective.

The Workbook may be used in a variety of ways: as a preparation for a unit on humor, as a general introduction to the subject, or as remedial material in connection with the study of the comic in literature.

^{1/}E. R. Smith; R. W. Tyler; et. al. Appraising and Recording Student Progress, Vol. II, Adventures in American Education, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1942, pp. 247-249.

To the Student

Some of you may think that humor--real fun--is not related to learning. Actually, however, humor and education can go together.

For example, during World War II the United States Army gave many of its lessons on safety through cartoons. Cartoons have also proved most effective in helping people to learn to swim, to use a new stove, to drive a car, to learn the pattern of a foreign language. Humor has become a part of our way of life in America.

Laughter takes many forms. We laugh at Red Skelton when he walks to the edge of the stage and topples over; we laugh at Groucho Marx for a comment like, "May I help you out? Which way did you come in?" Perhaps we read Mad magazine and smile over a picture of a cereal box top, with the name slightly changed to make fun of it. Among our own circle of friends we may have enjoyed a story about the place where it's so wet that the bullfrogs croak "Give me my galoshes!" Perhaps we've been amused by a slip of the tongue like the one about the canary whose voice fell in the meat grinder and became "shredded tweet." In our reading we may have come across a "jazzed-up" version of an ancient poem like "Listen, Pigeon, bend an ear" instead of the first line of Henry W. Longfellow's "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere." Occasionally, too, we get provoked in our laughter and speak with "tongue in cheek."

As you do the exercises in this Workbook, you will sample a variety of types of humor. You will have a chance to broaden your enjoyment of laughter, especially the kind found in books. The Workbook is divided into these sections, according to the reason for which we laugh: (A) Laughter that entertains, (B) Laughter that teaches, (C) Laughter that brings harmony. "Suggested activities" gives you ideas for applying what you have learned in the Workbook. Notice that the reading references are coded. 1:88-93 means page 88-93 in the first reference.

You may wish to collect clippings of cartoons, jokes, pictures of comedians and other material to share with the class during discussions. A committee from the class will choose the best materials to be put on the bulletin board for that day. Others may wish to put on a skit in a group or to try their hand at telling funny stories. Others may wish to bring humorous recordings. Let the teacher know of other activities which you or the class would like to explore.

I hope you will have fun.

INTRODUCTION

LESSON ONE (INVENTORY)

THE FUNNY SIDE OF LIFE

Few things in life do not have their funny side. What do you think are the funny things in your everyday life? Discuss your answers in the space provided (of course, there are no "right" or "wrong" answers).

1. Who are your favorite comedians on radio or television at present? _____

Why do you consider each of them funny? _____

2. Which types of fun do you enjoy most in the movies or on radio or television? _____

Slapstick comedy? _____ witty back talk? _____

clever plays on words with more than one meaning? _____

making fun of a person through imitating his behavior? _____

riddles? _____ skits on a social custom? _____

commercials? _____.

3. What are some of the reasons you laugh when you are with friends?

Have you ever had a practical joke played on you? _____

Have you ever played one on someone else? _____

4. What types of jokes do you enjoy most? _____

ones that turn on nationality or non-English speech? _____

_____ that depend on double meanings? _____ accidental

mistakes that people make (for instance, amazing answers by
students to test questions)? _____ tall stories? _____

those which "take off" some famous person? _____.

5. What humorous stories, poems or jokes have you enjoyed most?

6. What comic strips do you read most? _____

What cartoons do you remember that seemed funny at the time?

7. What kinds of music do you laugh at or with? _____

Give examples. _____

8. What humorous entertainments (skits, carnivals, shows, plays,
comedy acts) have you watched with pleasure? _____

9. In your opinion is having a sense of humor important?

_____ . Do you laugh often? _____ sometimes?

_____ almost never? _____ .

LAUGHTER THAT ENTERTAINS

LESSON TWO (SPOONERISMS)

WHAT I DIDN'T MEAN TO SAY

Sometimes speech shows slips of the tongue. Learn in this lesson to make this kind of mistake on purpose so others will laugh!

I. Why are the following examples of talk humorous?

- A. A commercial: Visit your nearest A and Poo Feed Store.
- B. An introduction: Met my dear friends, the Duck and Doochess of Windsor.
- C. News item: He has just visited the states of Karizona and Ansas.
- D. The opening line of a hymn: Kinquering congs their titles take.
- E. An Announcement: Mr. Jones will now render a slote flulo; Miss Wyat will accompany him on the piano.

Answer each of these questions in the space provided:

1. What is the funny phrase in the first sentence? _____
 _____ If the words are not funny in themselves, why are they funny in this sentence? _____

2. Why do we consider sentence B funny? _____

 Sentence C? _____
3. In sentence D, what words make it humorous? _____
 _____ To what extent is unusual sound a cause of humor here? _____
 Surprise at changes in the words? _____

4. How has sentence E been changed to make it ridiculous? _____

5. Is the humor in the five sentences intentional? _____

If not, why do we laugh? (See question 3.) _____

II. Take two or more words and change them so that your sentences will be humorous for the same reason as sentences A - E above. Be as extravagant as you can!

	<u>Original</u>	<u>Your Sentence</u>
Example	Peter sells gym shoes at the store	Geter sells pym shoes at the store. <u>or</u> Peter sells shym joos at the store, etc.
1.	Alec Guinness is a British actor.	_____
2.	Medicine is good for sick lambs.	_____

Now write 3 of your own sentences. Then change them to make them as amusing as possible.

- | | | |
|----|-------|-------|
| 3. | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |
| 4. | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |
| 5. | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |

III. Suggested Activities

1. Read Bennett Cerf's Life of the Party (10:244-246) or his Try and Stop Me (11:73). Prepare to discuss the history of this kind of humor. You will also be interested in the name given to it.
2. Letters such as "b" and "p" are called "plosives". Other letters

our discussion. "The Reader's Digest" column "Pardon, Your Slip is Showing" will give you many more - select only the best.

LAUGHTER THAT ENTERTAINS
LESSON THREE (DIALECT)

WHERE I COME FROM

Have you heard Amos and Andy fracture English? Have you heard someone from another land learning English and smiled? Here we shall listen to English as it is actually spoken in many places. Imitating the amusing ways of such language is a source of fun.

- I. What in the following sentences is funny to you?
- A. "Mine brodder Max has a movelous memory. But not inwincible. So occasional, he forgots." (43:35)
- B. I thought the winner had been found
 The day I heard a woman make
 The butcher cut her off a pound
 Of finè and juicy soylern steak.

 "Brooklynese Champion" by Margaret Fishback (32:89)
- C. Guiseppe, da barber, ees greata for "mash"
 He gotta da bigga, da blacka moustache,
 Good clo's an' good styla an' playnta good cash

 Guiseppe, da barber, he gotta da cash,
 He gotta da clo'es an' da bigga moustache,
 He gotta da seelly young girls for da "mash",
 But notta--
 You bat my life, notta
 Carlotta.
 I gotta!

 "Mia Carlotta" by T. A. Daly (32:88)
- D. Ay ant lak pie-plant pie so wery vell;
 Ven ay skol eat ice-cream, my yaws du ache;
 Ay ant much stuck on dis har yohnnie-cake
 Or crackers yust so dry sum peanut shell.
 And ven ay eat dried apples, ay skol svell
 Until ay tenk my belt skol nearly break;
 And dis har breakfast food, ay tenk, ban fake:
 Yim Dumps ban boosting it, so it skol sell.

But ay tal yu, ef yu vant someteng fine,
 Someteng so sweet lak wery sveetest honey,
 With yuice dat taste about lak nice port vine,
 Only it ant cost hardly any money--
 Ef yu vant someteng yust lake anyel fude,
 Yu try stewed prunes. By yiminy! dey ban gude.

"Sonnet on Stewed Prunes" by William F. Kirk (32:91)

Complete the following exercises:

1. In the first selection above, what words are not ordinary English?

What is the source of humor? _____

Who would speak language like this? _____

2. State in your own words what causes the humor in Selection B.

3. Make a list of the words in Selection C which are definitely dialect and not English. _____

Read the poem aloud to a friend; see if you can deduce the meaning of "mash." _____

What language background does "Guiseppe" represent? _____

4. What is the word of double meaning that gives the humorous punch line to the whole poem? _____

5. From the context build your own definition of each non-English word in Selection D. _____

What makes this selection funny (two reasons)? _____

The speaker came from _____.

6. What characteristic is common to examples A through D? _____

From your own experience or a book write two sentences giving an example of this characteristic. _____

II. The name for speech which is a local variety of English is dialect. Try changing each of the following sentences so that it is funny because of the dialect. You are free to choose your dialect, but give its name and be consistent in any given question. Make up or find the last three original sentences yourself. Look at the example:

	<u>Original Sentence</u>	<u>Your Sentence</u>	<u>Dialect</u>
	<u>Example</u>		
	I am from another land and still don't yell for help	I am from anodder land an' still don't holler 'Halp'! (43:102)	Yiddish
1.	The world would be a better place all round if grownups behaved more like children.	_____	_____

2.	He gets from certain people nothing but smart-aleck behaviour.	_____	_____

3.	Punctuation makes a wonderful difference in the writing of a gentleman.	_____	_____

<u>Original Sentence</u>	<u>Your Sentence</u>	<u>Dialect</u>
4. Kitchens full of dirt and germs were used by the early settlers.	_____	_____
5. Upstate New York is his idea of pretty country	_____	_____
6. <u>Junior Jokes</u> is just what I want.	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____
8. _____	_____	_____
9. _____	_____	_____
10. _____	_____	_____

III. Skim Leo Rosten's The Return of Hyman Kaplan (43). Collect the best lines for a scrapbook to be shown to the class.

Suggested Activities:

1. You may enjoy reading Louis and Marguerite Herman's American Dialects (18). Write a paragraph of humorous conversation between two people in a dialect. Use the unusual phrase. "Plime blank," for instance, means "certainly" in Southwest Virginia.

2. Listen for enjoyment in class or outside to a recording of people using their native speech. Try to remember a few of the most unusual words and expressions to tell the class. Suggested records:

Brand, Oscar, "Election Songs of the United States," Folkways Records (Schwann Cat. No. 1215)

Dana, Bill, "More Jose Jiminez," Kapp Records (Schwann Cat. No. 5280)

Hacket, Buddy, "Original Chinese Waiter," (Schwann Cat. No. 3351)
"Steamboat 'Round the Bend," Folkways Records (Schwann Cat. No. 9974)

3. Read "Timothy Hatch" by Wilson McDonald (32:90), "The Courtin'"
by James Russell Lowell (30:219-220) and "The Intro" by C. J. Dennis
(32:83-86). Such poems are amusing not only for the speech but for the
characters and the characteristics of the people of the area. You may
wish to read these or similar poems to the class.

LAUGHTER THAT ENTERTAINS
LESSON FOUR (PUNS)

WHEN I HEAR DOUBLE TALK

If you heard someone say, "Cauterize--that's how he first got acquainted", you might think "Let's go for a dictionary". But not if you were a punster. In this lesson we shall sample the many delightful ways of using words with double meanings. Then we shall have practice in making our own puns and using them in sentences.

I. Look at the following:

- A. Once upon a time there was a king who had a jester or court funmaker. The jester's particular specialty was making fun out of words with more than one meaning. In fact, he made fun of everything except the king. "The king," he said, "is not a subject."

"Well, then," said the king, concealing his irritation, "why do you make fun of my figure?"

"Sire," said the clown, "everyone likes to make fun at someone else's expense." But the king grew tired of such puns. "Hang that jester!" he said.

Later, as the noose was around the man's neck, the king sent a messenger to pardon him on condition he wouldn't joke in that way again.

"No noose is good news," said the jester and died gladly.

Here are some exercises to give you an opportunity to show how well you understand the story.

1. In the first paragraph above the jester's specialty was

2. What does subject mean in a country where there is royalty?

3. What does subject mean in the phrase "stay on the subject"?
- _____
4. Write the sentence "The king is not a subject" two ways:
 (1) substituting the meaning you found in Question 2 and (2)
 substituting the meaning you found in Question 3. _____
- _____
- _____
5. What word sounds almost the same as "news" in the last sentence?
 _____ What is its meaning? _____
6. Using your answers to Question 5, state as exactly as you can
 the "crime" for which the jester died. _____
- _____

Now look at the following. Pay especial attention to the words and phrases.

- B. "If you weren't so stupid, you would see that that board-walk can't be built."
 "Lay your heads together and the thing is done, men."
- C. A weasel is something that blows at noon.
- D. A man sitting at a restaurant counter with a mirror along the wall in front became disgusted with the food and broke the mirror by throwing a sandwich. (Comment: Food for reflection).
- E. I will make you a tailor-made suit for a milk-cow or work horse. (Comment: Not if we can stop you.)

Answer these questions in the space provided:

7. How does Selection B depend on a word which applies both to the men's heads and to the walk? _____
- _____
8. What was meant to be said in Selection C? _____

9. Why does the comment in Selection D make the story humorous?

10. Explain in your own words the reason for humor in Selection E.

(Hint: Is "I will make you" double talk?) _____

II. In each of the following quotations fill in the blanks appropriately on your answer sheet so as to give more than one meaning, using one of the words in the list at the end of the exercise:

1. His death, which happened in his (a) _____,
At forty odd befell:
They went and (b) _____ the sexton,
And the sexton (c) _____ the bell. (Thomas Hood)
2. Epitaph on a Dentist: Stranger! Approach this spot with gravity!
John Brown is filling his last (a) _____.
3. The light which (a) _____ in woman's eyes and
(b) _____ and (c) _____ and (d) _____! (Thomas Hood)
4. Teacher: How would you define _____?
Johnny: It's what they put the election notices up with.
5. A young doctor met a pretty nurse in a Los Angeles hospital
corridor. He winked at her. She winked back, " _____?"

Words: bedroom, tale (tail), birth (berth), run, interne (a beginning physician), tax (tacks), lies, star, president (precedent), told (tolled), miss, down, cavity, tooth, set.

III. Now write an example using each of the following words (or pairs of words having the same sound) so as to show more than one meaning. You may use the word more than once in a sentence. The first one is done for you as an example:

- | | | |
|------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| (1) saw | (2) archaic (our cake) | (3) bear |
| (4) rain (reign) | (5) Missouri (misery) | (6) wild Irish rose |

Example: 1. The blind man picked up his hammer and saw.

2. _____

3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

By writing these sentences you have created puns of your own. Try one on a friend some time!

Suggested Activities:

1. There are many examples of entire sentences of double meaning.

Here is a sample to whet your appetite:

A high Soviet commissar named Rudolph Mozoltoff was walking down a Moscow street with two friends--a man and his wife--when a drop of moisture settled on his blouse. "It's raining," he announced through his beard. "You're wrong," said the wife. "It's snowing." "Oh no," insisted her husband. "Rudolph, the Red, knows rain, dear."

For other long puns skim Bennett Cerf's The Life of the Party (10:230-238).

Try writing two or three examples of your own. Show the class the results!

2. Have a session of "tea-kettle." To play "tea-kettle" in a group, simply think of a word such as "might" that has several meanings. (As long as the word sounds like "might," its meaning may be included too; for instance, "mite" is all right.) Think of a sentence using your word, but instead of saying that word, say "tea-kettle." Example: He was no tea-kettle but an unknown animal of considerable tea-kettle. The group has twenty questions or as many as you wish to guess the word. The one who guesses may then think of his own word. Otherwise the original "it" gets another try.

3. Make a collection of puns for a scrapbook. Joke books, magazine humor columns and comedy shows are good sources. You may wish to contribute the best to the school newspaper.

LAUGHTER THAT TEACHES

LESSON FIVE (EXAGGERATION)

WHEN I STRETCH THINGS A LITTLE

When a person exaggerates something why does it turn out in one case to seem merely boastful, whereas in another case it's really funny? In this lesson we'll look at things that are stretched till they become comical. Then, we'll have practice twisting both sentences and entire stories so they stand on end.

I. Look at the following examples:

- A. Sending men to that army is like shoveling fleas across a barnyard--they don't get there.

Abraham Lincoln (14:83)

- B. The call of the yellow-billed cuckoo of North America is often mistaken for a Bloodhound drinking a bowl of milk.

Will Cuppy (14:83)

- C. You mumble something about being in a hurry and coming back again, and retreat with all the grace and ease that would be shown by a hard shell crab that was trying to back into the mouth of a milk-bottle.

Irwin Cobb (14:83)

- D. Over in the swamps near the Louisiana line, chills and fever are so bad that the alligators come up on the bank and ask for quinine. And the bullfrogs over there croak, "Double the dose, double the dose."

(22:14)

- E. "Why There Are No Trees in the Desert" by Glen Rounds. (67:440-443). See Appendix A of this Workbook.

Write your answers to the following questions in the space provided:

1. Some exaggeration concerns figures of speech. In Selection A Lincoln is speaking about the lack of enthusiasm for joining the Northern Army in the Civil War. To what are the men compared in Selection A?

To what extent is the comparison true? _____

How is it ridiculous (two ways)? _____

2. What are the objects compared in Selection B (be exact)? _____

To what extent are the animal and the bird different in the ideas they suggest? _____

What causes the humor? _____

3. How did you feel if you've ever said, "I'll be back in a minute," after forgetting something that it was embarrassing not to have? _____

In what ways is the idea of a hard shell crab backing into a milk bottle absurd? _____

4. Why do the alligators and bullfrogs in Selection D behave as they do according to the selection? _____

What causes the humor? _____

5. What feats did Paul have difficulty in performing in Selection F? _____
- _____

To what extent would the story be less humorous if there were no obstacles in Paul's way? _____

6. In your own words what causes the humor in all six selections? _____
- _____

II. Humor can come from a ridiculous comparison. In each of the following exercises there is a comparison statement. After it, write a comparison that reaches absurdity. Study the example:

Comparison Statement

Humorous Comparison

Example: That parrot is so educated it will say "I want to eat" at a moment's notice.

The other day Spinoza, my parrot, perched on my shoulder as I was eating and said, "Don't forget to wash my dishes!"

1. The soil in that country is so fertile that everything will grow.
2. That scarecrow kept the crows from stealing any more corn for the winter.
3. Texas is so hospitable that people get oil wells for nothing.
4. In Texas the distances are very long.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| 5. The flea is so rude that even an elephant takes notice of it. | 5. _____

_____ |
| 6. A town in Texas has so many statues you can't see the human beings. | 6. _____

_____ |
| 7. _____

_____ | 7. _____

_____ |
| 8. _____

_____ | 8. _____

_____ |

III. Write a tall tale of the life of a legendary hero such as Paul Bunyan, John Henry (the steel driving man), or Davy Crockett. Use the skills you have developed in II of this lesson. Look at the example below (on Davy Crockett) quoted from Constance Rourke, American Humor (39 in References for Teachers' Use) in 14:167:

One January morning it was so all screwen cold that the forest trees were stiff and they couldn't shake, and the very daybreak froze fast as it was trying to dawn. The tinder box in my cabin would no more ketch fire than a sunk raft at the bottom of the sea. Well, seein' daylight war so far behind time I thought creation war in a fair way for freezen fast: so, thinks I, I must strike a little fire from my fingers, light my pipe, an' travel out a few leagues, and see about it. Then I brought my knuckles together like two thunderclouds, but the sparks froze up afore I could begin to collect 'em, so out I walked, whistlin' 'Fire in the mountains!' as I went along in three double quick time. Well, arter I had walked about twenty miles up the Peak O'Day and Daybreak Hill I soon discovered what war the matter. The airth had actually friz fast on her axes, and couldn't turn round; the sun had got jammed between two cakes o' ice under the wheels, an' thar he had been shinin' an' workin' to get loose till he friz fast in his cold sweat. C-r-e-a-t-i-o-n! thought I, this ar the toughest sort of suspension, an' it mustn't be endured. Somethin' must be done,

Suggested Activities:

1. You may wish to tell a tall tale concerning your own imaginary adventures or those of a friend, to the class.

2. Selections D and E come from Texas. Tall Talk from Texas (22) by Boyce House provides further examples of Texas humor.

3. You may wish to make a pictorial map of the United States, putting in several legendary figures, such as Buffalo Bill, Davy Crockett, or Daniel Boone with accompanying action. See Wallace Wadsworth's Paul Bunyan and His Great Blue Ox (62) for material on Paul Bunyan. See also references 8 and 14.

4. Tongue-twisters are a form of exaggeration. You may wish to put examples of the ones you hear in your scrapbook. Read Bennett Cerf, Try and Stop Me (11:347-348) for examples. If you wish still more, write: Chief of the Folklore Section, Library of Congress, Washington 25, D. C.

5. Get recordings of folklore such as the story of John Henry "the steel-driving Man." A book that will be useful to you is Carl Carmer's America Sings (8).

LAUGHTER THAT TEACHES
 LESSON SIX (PARODY)

WHEN I IMITATE MOCKINGLY

What kind of girl laughs and says she can keep up an intelligent conversation on baseball just by appropriate sighs? Sometimes people have fun out of literature too by imitating the way it's put but thinking quite different thoughts. We shall study some examples and have a chance later to do "take-offs" both on very short bits of writing and longer selections.

I. Compare the following carefully:

A. Original (Joyce Kilmer, "Trees"--52:344)

I think that I shall never see
 A poem lovely as a tree.

 A tree that may in summer wear
 A nest of robins in her hair;

New Version (Ogden Nash, "Song of the Open Road"--32:259)

I think that I shall never see
 A billboard lovely as a tree.
 Indeed, unless the billboards fall
 I'll never see a tree at all.

B. Original (Jane Taylor, "The Star"--52:18)

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
 How I wonder what you are!
 Up above the world so high,
 Like a diamond in the sky.

New Version (Lewis Carroll, 7-32:266)

Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!
 How I wonder what you're at?
 Up above the world you fly,
 Like a tea-tray in the sky.

- C. Original (Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "Paul Revere's Ride"--
52:489)

Listen my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April, in seventy-five;
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year.

- New Version (H. W. Haenigsen, "Listen, Pigeon, Bend an Ear"--
32:256-257)

Listen, Pigeon, bend an ear
To the midnight ride of Paul Revere
The only dude who was then alive
Who could cut a rug to the down beat jive!

- D. Read Donald Stewart's A Parody Outline of History (53:25-54)

See Appendix C.

Complete the following exercises in the space provided:

1. The original poem in A rhymes somewhat automatically. Nash's lines also have a very regular rhythm. Both poems are about a tree, a sentimental subject. What is Nash making fun of here? the original poem? modern advertising? both? _____

Explain the reasons for your answer. _____

2. What words in the original stanza in Selection B represent something beautiful? _____

What words are substituted for them in the second poem? _____

Why does this comparison cause humor? (Hint: Humor is caused by incongruity; that is, two very different ideas encountered at the same time.) _____

In what other ways is the "new version" different? _____

Similar? _____

3. In Selection C what is the meaning in teen-age talk of pigeon, dude, cut a rug and jive? _____
4. How is the new version of Selection C similar to the old version? _____
- How is it different? _____
5. The new version of the selection in A, B and C is called a parody of the original. From your understanding of information learned in questions 1-5, build your own definition of parody. _____
6. In what ways is the usual story of Columbus' life and character parodied in Selection D? _____

II. Each of the following selections can be parodied. To make the parody effective you will want to have clear-cut ideas of how you are going to change the original. (Hint: Must you make the same kinds of changes all the way through?) Later you may supply your own "original". Look at the following:

Original

Parody

Example 1:

If Wallace contributes \$47 and Lefty contributes \$13, how much must Lefty pay Wallace later if they buy a \$60 radio?

If Wallace has \$47 and Lefty has \$14, how many times will Lefty have to hit Wallace before Lefty has \$47.14?

Original

Parody

Example 2:

The fog comes on little
cat feet.
"The Fog" by Carl Sandburg
(32:450)

The frogs come on little flat
feet.
Myron S. Kaufman (32:450)

From a textbook:

1. Two men in a standard motor vehicle approaching a stop sign at 45 M.P.H. must apply the brakes ___yds. in advance?
2. If Bill, Harry and yourself can repair the sink in four hours, how long will it take a plumber working alone?
3. The boy stood on the burning deck, 'Til all but he had fled.
4. Class project in civics: Pay a visit to the most honest man in town--the Mayor; he's always free to see you.
5. Mail us 50¢ and 12 box tops and we'll send you a valuable prize.

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

	<u>Original</u>	<u>Parody</u>
10.	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____

III. A parody makes fun of something well known already, written or spoken. Try writing parodies of one of these: A TV commercial; a conversation you overheard; a newspaper advertisement.

	<u>Original</u>	<u>Parody</u>
1.	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____

Suggested Activities:

1. You may wish to read the rest of the parody of Paul Revere's ride (Selection C). If you wish, memorize it and be ready to say it for the class.

2. Examine Carolyn Wells' A Parody Anthology (64); Carolyn Wells' Such Nonsense (65); David McCord's What Cheer (32:253-275). Try writing a parody of your own on a nursery rhyme (64:346-352) or on a poem by a well-known writer. See Mary J. J. Wrinn's The Hollow Reed (68) for suggestions.

3. Make a scrapbook collection of originals and parodies of poems.

During discussion the class will be invited to look at your materials.

A committee chosen by the class will select the best ones for a bulletin board display.

LAUGHTER THAT TEACHES

LESSON SEVEN (SATIRE)

WHEN I LAUGH AT THE WAY IT'S DONE

Perhaps you have heard Groucho Marx give a stinging answer on a television show. He is reported to have told a girl after a date, "I had a nice evening--but it wasn't this one." Such ridicule of human beings or their ways is satire and is the subject of this lesson.

I. Compare the following. In what ways are they similar?

- A. Our doctor is dead; ah well, dry your tears;
Death's said, but what use to resent it?
For, if he had lived for another few years,
There'd be none of us here to lament it.

"The Departed Physician" by Ben Jacob (4:224)

- B. Here lies our sovereign lord the King
Whose word no man relies on
Who never said a foolish thing
Or ever did a wise one.

"Epitaph on Charles II" by John Wilmot (32:353)

- C. This is a song to celebrate banks,
Because they are full of money and you go into them
and all you hear is clinks and clanks,
Or maybe a sound like the wind in the trees on the hills,
Which is the rustling of the thousand-dollar bills.
Most bankers dwell in marble halls,
Which they get to dwell in because they encourage
deposits and discourage withdralls,
And particularly because they all observe one rule which
woe betides the banker who fails to heed it,
Which is you must never lend any money to anybody
unless they don't need it.
I know you, you cautious conservative banks!
If people are worried about their rent it is your duty to
deny them the loan of one nickel, yes, even one copper
engraving of the martyred son of the late Nancy Hanks;
Yes, if they request fifty dollars to pay for a baby you
must look at them like Tarzan looking at an uppity ape
in the jungle,
And tell them what do they think a bank is, anyhow,
they had better go get the money from their wife's

But suppose people come in and they have a million
 and they want another million to pile on top of it,
 Why, you brim with the milk of human kindness and
 you urge them to accept every drop of it,
 And you lend them the million so then they have two
 million and this gives them the idea that they
 would be better off with four,
 So they already have two million as security so you have
 no hesitation in lending them two more,
 And all the vice-presidents nod their heads in rhythm,
 And the only question asked is do the borrowers want
 the money sent or do they want to take it withm.

"Bankers Are Just Like Anybody Else, Only Richer,"
 by Ogden Nash (67:383-384)

- D. There's this to be said for making New Year's resolutions:
 it is good clean sport--one that limbers the imagination,
 flexes the muscles of the character, and adds a kind of
 rough-and-tumble zest to those dreary weeks immediately
 following the winter holidays.

But like most forms of exercise, it should be indulged
 in with moderation--particularly as one reaches the wiser,
 or declining, years....I'm not sure anyone over forty
 should make a resolution.

Particularly not on the first of January. Of all the
 bleak, dark, unthinkable times to write out a prescription
 for improvement, January is the bleakest and darkest and
 most inauspicious....

And yet the temptation to make resolutions is something
 I've not been able to overcome. "This year," I tell myself,
 "no promises!" But let one wild bell ring out, let me get
 halfway through a chorus of "Auld Lang Syne," and I find
 myself vowing that, come tomorrow, I'll begin my program of
 bending from the waist fifty times, night and morning, or
 answering all my letters the day they reach me. And it's
 sometimes as late as February before I've won the struggle
 against my Better Self. It takes strength of character not
 to give in to good resolves.

But one must fight off the impulse. For resolutions
 made under a sprig of fading mistletoe are generally the
 wrong type for January. I can imagine someone's vowing to
 cross a desert or lead a crusade or build a rocket to the
 moon and managing it triumphantly. Those are active aspira-
 tions and they'd keep one's mind off the weather. But in a
 season that cries out for small solaces, we keep on giving
 up things.

We promise to deprive ourselves of the trivial comforts
 that may be all that stand between us and frenzy....Are we
 chatterers by nature, loving the neighborly tidbit on the
 tongue? Then we swear to forego gossip and be succinct on
 the telephone.

Or else we vow to shun the second helping of chicken
 with dumplings and that cream puff for dessert, to live
 horribly on cottage cheese and pineapple for our waistline's

sake. Somehow we persuade ourselves that, however dismal the soggy landscape and the winter afternoons, cutting down on our pleasures will bring the roses to our cheeks and the bonus to our pay envelopes....

My plan calls for giving up no luxurious bad habit. I shall try only to savor each with more contentment. That plumpness around the midriff may be insurance against nagging at the dinner table. Fortified by that extra cup of coffee in the morning, I can kiss my husband off to work serenely. And I shan't mind which television station he insists on watching, so long as I am not going cigarette-less through the evening. Besides, how do I know--since doctors still debate the issue--that science will not some day decree there is a necessary vitamin in tobacco or something especially nutritious in caffeine? Wouldn't I feel silly then, having spent all that anguish of mind in doing without them?

Up, then, with the guilty cup, the avoirdupois, the cigarette! My sincerest efforts shall lie in taking more pains with the percolator and improving my recipe for crepes suzette.

The same goes for the other indulgences. Give up gossip? Why, it's the very stuff that talk is made on....

To ignore my progeny, then; to skimp the housework, to gossip over cups of coffee and cigarettes, to let the pounds and the great books fall where they will; are those reputable goals for a human being and a citizen? I think perhaps they are. At least in January. They are the lesser lapses I shall cultivate to combat the larger ones of greed, ambition, faultfinding, spite, and envy. If I let myself have my head on the small vices, maybe I'll have time to encourage the small benignities like admiring my husband's jokes or my friend's hairdo. I'll keep blithe enough to give a compliment when it's needed, listen to Bach done to "Lute, Harpsichord, and Consort of Viols," and see the winter through without an ulcer.

If I ever feel myself genuinely on fire for a fling at heroism or sainthood, I'll choose a different time. There'll be sun beaming away like a rich uncle and dogwood budding and the earth spicy with flowers and fertilizer.

But that will be some lacquered day in April, at the genuine beginning of the year.

"New Year's and No Resolutions" by Phyllis McGinley (34:41-48)

- E. Consider the auk;
 Becoming extinct because he forgot how to fly, and could only walk.
 Consider man, who may well become extinct
 Because he forgot how to walk and learned how to fly
 before he thought.

"A Caution to Everybody" by Ogden Nash (38:22)

Answer the following questions in the space provided:

1. Why does the poet say, "There'd be none of us here to lament it," in Selection A? _____

What "accepted ideas" are being ridiculed? _____

Why is such ridicule humorous? _____

(Hint: What is an element of all humor? See lesson 1.)

2. What kind of person--never says a foolish thing or ever does a wise one (Selection B)? _____

What qualities are necessary in a king? _____

What then causes the humor? _____

To what extent do you agree with the idea that although people are rarely changed by being made objects of anger, few can stand ridicule? ^{1/} _____

Give one example from your own reading or experience to illustrate your view. _____

3. What characteristic of bankers does Ogden Nash find especially hypocritical? _____

^{1/}Edward J. Gordon, "What's Happened to Humor?" The English Journal (March, 1958), 47:127-133.

How does he make them look absurd from the poem? _____

To what extent do you feel he is right? _____

4. What two groups of people is Phyllis McGinley making fun of in regard to New Year's resolutions? _____

In what group does she include herself? _____

Why does "New Year's resolutions" make a good topic for satire?

5. What is the meaning of auk in Selection E? _____

Of extinct? _____

What do you think Nash may have in mind in the following underlined phrases: "Man may well become extinct because he forgot to walk and learned to fly, before he thought"? (Hint: does "walk" stand for "behave in a reasonable way"?).

Why is it ridiculous to put man in the same class with the auk?

What do you think Nash hoped to accomplish? _____

II. For each of the following "commercials" write an original and creative one making fun of it.

For example:

Ideas: Nice car? Wipe it off every nice day with a Jersild Auto Dry Wash Cloth and you'll NEVER have to hose it. JERSILD will even DRY wash a nice car that is so dirty you can hardly tell the color of the paint.

Satire: If you have a nice car you will not want to spoil it by scratching with the Jersild Auto Dry Wash Cloth. If the paint is partly gone JERSILD will take the rest.

1. Men, women and children, who have DRY SKIN--(6) drops of our BATH OIL added to your bath water--will--LUBRICATE YOUR SKIN AS YOU LIKE IT.

2. Crunchy Oatstix gives you that extra energy you need. Start the day right with Oatstix.

3. Instant with special beard-softening ingredients, provides extra soaking action, built-in after-shave comfort.

-
-
4. Clearerex is the shampoo that glorifies your hair--makes it young and vibrant. Try Clearerex today.
-
-
-
-

5. This cloth is winter-proof. It matches everything. It's suitable all year.
-
-
-
-

III. Below are sets of habits or customs. Write paragraphs satirizing two from the list. One is done for you as an example:

Example:

(Choice 1):

Mr. Danforth had just decided not to buy a new television set, when the doorbell rang. It was Jones, the salesman. Danforth had never been quite sure "what was expected of him by the neighbors." The salesman was saying, "'All-beauty' Silicone set...only \$20. down and 2 years to pay. I've sold a set to nearly every home on this street," he added indifferently.

Danforth hesitated. "He's probably right," he thought. "Well, I suppose I should go along."

An hour later he told Mary. "What have you done?" she cried. "That's the money we needed for the rug--you know, the one like Lester's."

- (1) Buying a new television set just to "keep up with the neighbors"
- (2) Being unconcerned with world peace by "letting George do it"

Suggested activities:

1. Selection B at the beginning of the lesson is an example of an epigram--a short, witty, poem, usually satiric. Here is another one:

"Life is a jest and all things show it;
I thought so once, and now I know it."

John Gay (16:125)

Read 16:3-45; 32:173-183 and 342-359, or 51:3-84 for further examples of satiric epigrams. Then write several of your own. See Mary J. J. Wrinn, The Hollow Reed (69:63-68) for help in composing short poems. Wrinn says, for instance, "Frequently the title is the bridge between the ethereal world of fancy and the place of reality, especially in very short poems."

2. Listen to a comedian like Red Skelton, Jackie Gleason, Mort Sahl, or Bob Newhart. What things do they satirize? With a group you might wish to write and put on a brief skit satirizing the manners, speech and behavior of a certain group as they behave at a party or other function; or write a "mock gossip column" for a newspaper in which you make fun of local social news; or make a bulletin board display with cartoons and captions satirizing an aspect of current events.

LAUGHTER THAT TEACHES

LESSON EIGHT (IRONY)

WHEN I SPEAK WITH TONGUE IN CHEEK

If a friend picks an apple off a tree, eats it, makes a wry face, and says, "That's the sweetest thing I ever tasted!" what does he really mean? Speaking with "tongue in cheek" is called irony.

I. As you read the following examples ask yourself "What is the author really saying? "

- A. Here lies returned to clay
Miss Arabella Young,
Who on the first of May
Began to hold her tongue.

Anon. (32:358)

- B. It was a summer evening,
Old Caspar's work was done,
And he before his cottage door
Was sitting in the sun,
And by him sported on the green
His little grandchild Wilhelmine.

She saw her brother Peterkin
Roll something large and round,
Which he beside the rivulet
In playing there had found;
He came to ask what he had found
That was so large and smooth and round.

Old Caspar took it from the boy,
Who stood expectant by;
And then the old man shook his head
And with a natural sigh,
"'Tis some poor fellow's skull," said he,
"Who fell in the great victory."

.....
"They say it was a shocking sight
After the field was won;
For many thousand bodies here
Lay rotting in the sun;
But things like that you know must be,
After a famous victory."

"Great praise the Duke of Marlboro won
And our good Prince Eugene,"
"Why, 'twas a very wicked thing!" said little
Wilhelmine.

"Nay, my little girl," quoth he,
 "It was a famous victory."
 And eveybody praised the duke,
 Who this great fight did win,"
 "But what good came of it at last,"
 Quoth little Peterkin.
 "Why, that I cannot tell," said he,
 "But 'twas a famous victory."

"The Battle of Blenheim" by Robert Southey (60:688-690)

C. Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
 We people of the pavement looked at him;
 He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
 Clean favored, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,
 And he was always human when he talked;
 But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
 "Good-morning," and he glittered when he walked.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,
 And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
 And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
 Went home and put a bullet through his head.

"Richard Cory" by E. A. Robinson (43:38)

In the space provided discuss the following questions:

1. In Selection A, what kind of person do you infer Miss Arabella Young was? _____

What is the literal meaning of "began to hold her tongue?"

What other meaning is suggested here? _____

What contrast in thought is brought about by having a second, deeper meaning? _____

Suppose this example were changed to read: "The only one for whom Miss Arabella Young would hold her tongue, was the doctor." How would the humor then differ from that of the present example. _____

Which type of humor do you prefer? _____

Why? _____

2. Who are the three main characters in "The Battle of Blenheim"?
- _____

How do the little boy and girl feel about the reason for the battle fought so long ago? _____

The phrase "a famous victory" occurs several times in the poem. If the poet himself agrees with the children, why does he stress this phrase? _____

3. What phrases describe Richard Cory? _____
- _____
- _____

From whose point of view? _____

What is the surprise in the poem? _____

In the light of what happened in Stanza 4, which of the phrases you listed concerning Cory do you consider are to be taken "tongue in cheek"? _____

If "still waters run deep," what warning was Arlington giving in this story? _____

II. Under what circumstances could the following statements be ironic?

One exercise is done for you as an example:

<u>Statement</u>	<u>Circumstances</u>
<u>Example</u>	
Step on the gas! Go a little faster.	"Hot rod" driver at 70 M.P.H., wet roads, hairpin turn 75 yards ahead
1. You played a wonderful game last night!	_____ _____ _____
2. That puppet show was a real hit!	_____ _____ _____
3. I don't know anything, of course.	_____ _____ _____
4. Our street would certainly make a good advertisement for a visitor to town.	_____ _____ _____
5. That's the fairest organization I know!	_____ _____ _____

Now try the reverse process! Given the circumstances, what would be an ironic remark?

<u>Circumstances</u>	<u>Statement</u>
1. No one at home when you arrived. You had called up in advance and were told your brother would open the door. After an hour your brother pulls up in his jalopy.	_____ _____
2. Movie supposed to have good acting turns out lifeless.	_____ _____
3. Hungry boy; sister said she'd save cake; half slice left.	_____ _____

4. Swim suit on; arriving at pool, all water drained out so pool can be cleaned.

5. International peace conference supposed to promote harmony; instead, useless bickering.

III. Irony is sometimes found in entire paragraphs or stories. For instance, Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels^{1/} contains much irony and his piece, "A Modest Proposal,"^{2/} suggesting that all Irish babies be used for stew, is irony throughout. (It protested the British government's policy in Ireland.) Below you will find several possible topics from which to write a paragraph of irony or you may choose a subject of your own. As you write, keep your "tongue in cheek " tone; you will need to give the reader some hint, of course, that you don't really mean what you say. One paragraph is done as an example;

Example:

Helping Negroes

Of several ways to help the colored race it seems obvious that the best is to leave them alone. They want to be themselves and not try imitating the ways of white folks. Clean homes are foreign to their nature and since their skin is black it is against all reason for them to take baths. If they were better educated they would be more miserable, for they would find that, with their minds, they could never reach the attainments of other races. The same thing applies to money; they wouldn't know how to use it even if they had it. Therefore, let them stay to themselves and we'll stay to ourselves, I say.

- (1) Fishing (or some other hobby you personally don't care for) and Me
- (2) How Basketball (or some other sport) Should Be Played

^{1/}Jonathan Swift, "Gulliver's Travels," (Louis A. Landa, ed.), Houghton, Mifflin and Co., Boston, 1960.

^{2/}Jonathan Swift, "A Modest Proposal," in Jonathan Swift (Herbert Davis, Ed.), Irish Travels, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1955, pp. 107-118.

- (3) Suggestions for Helping Negroes (or some other minority group)
- (4) Ways to Promote World Disarmament
- (5) Science is More Important than Studying about Man (or the other way around)
- (6) How to Preside over a Meeting

IV. As you read the following selection, look for irony, not of words, but of circumstance.

- A. Once upon a time there were two chipmunks, a male and a female. The male chipmunk thought that arranging nuts in artistic patterns was more fun than just piling them up to see how many you could pile up. The female was all for piling up as many as you could. She told her husband that if he gave up making designs with the nuts there would be room in their large cave for a great many more and he would soon become the wealthiest chipmunk in the woods. But he would not let her interfere with his designs, so she flew into a rage and left him. "The shrike will get you," she said, "because you are helpless and cannot look after yourself." To be sure, the female chipmunk had not been gone three nights before the male had to dress for a banquet and could not find his studs or shirt or suspenders. So he couldn't go to the banquet, but that was just as well, because all the chipmunks who did go were attacked and killed by a weasel.

The next day the shrike began hanging around outside the chipmunk's cave, waiting to watch him. The shrike couldn't get in because the doorway was clogged up with soiled laundry and dirty dishes. "He will come out for a walk after breakfast and I will get him then," thought the shrike. But the chipmunk slept all day and did not get up and have breakfast until after dark. Then he came out for a breath of air before beginning work on a new design. The shrike swooped down to snatch up the chipmunk, but could not see very well on account of the dark, so he batted his head against an alder branch and was killed.

A few days later the female chipmunk returned and saw the awful mess the house was in. She went to the bed and shook her husband. "What would you do without me?" she demanded. "Just go on living, I guess," he said. "You wouldn't last five days," she told him. She swept the house and did the dishes and sent out the laundry, and then she made the chipmunk get up and wash and dress. "You can't be healthy if you lie in bed all day and never

get any exercise," she told him. So she took him for a walk in the bright sunlight and they were both caught and killed by the shrike's brother, a shrike named Stoop.

Moral: Early to rise and early to bed makes a male healthy and wealthy and dead.

"The Shrike and the Chipmunks" by James Thurber (67:122-123)

B. Once there were two iron dogs on the front lawn of a Pennsylvania millionaire.

One of them said, "I do not believe in a future for iron dogs. When I lose another leg, I will go to the scrap heap, and that will be the end of me."

The other one said, "I have the utmost faith in some noble destiny for iron dogs; though I should be broken to bits, yet will I live again somehow, somewhere, somewhen, to some excellent purpose."

The millionaire just then came along and directed a workman to remove the iron dogs, for his daughter had come home from a select school and told him they were a Mistake.

The first iron dog was thrown upon the junk heap as he had predicted, and became rust, doing no one any good.

But the second one, who had believed in his own destiny, was melted down and made into munitions with which to kill Germans.

Moral: You don't have to have a soul unless you want one.

"Fable of the Iron Dogs", by Don Marquis (67:136)

Answer the following questions:

1. In Selection A which was the ambitious character?

What happened because of such ambition? _____

2. In Selection B what happened to the dog with the noble ideal? _____

3. What is the irony in these selections? _____

What does the irony teach? _____

Explain your view. _____

Suggested Activity:

Select a belief against which you are strongly opposed. Orally or in writing present your opposition through irony against that view.

LAUGHTER THAT BRINGS HARMONY

LESSON NINE (CHARACTER)

WHEN I LAUGH WITH OTHERS

How can you laugh at someone without being mean? In this lesson we shall find examples showing laughter at others and at oneself that brings pleasure to all. You will have a chance to try your hand too.

I. Study the following:

A. Say there! P'r'aps
 Some on you chaps
 Might know Jim Wild?
 Well,--no offence:
 Thar ain't no sense
 In gittin' riled

 Dead?-
 That little cuss?

 Dead!
 Poor-little-Jim!
 -Why, thar was me,
 Jones, and Bob Lee,
 Harry and Ben,-
 No-account men:
 Then to take him!

 Well, thar--Good-by,--
 No more, sir,--I--
 Eh?
 What's that you say?--
 Why, dern it!--sho!--
 No? Yes! By Joe!
 Sold!
 Solid! Why, you limb,
 You ornery,
 Derved old
 Long-legged Jim!

"Jim" by Bret Harte (32:11-13)

B. When Calvin Coolidge was Vice-President of the United States, Washington chairmen soon discovered that he promptly accepted all banquet invitations. Once present, however, it was well-nigh impossible to pry a word out of him.

The effervescent Alice Roosevelt Longworth volunteered to draw him out one evening, but she never had a chance. Finally she snapped, "I wonder why you come to all these affairs, Mr. Coolidge, when obviously they bore you so."

"Well," observed the frugal Cal, "a man's got to eat."

(10:309)

C. I saw him once before,
As he passed by the door,
 And again
The pavement stones resound,
As he totters o'er the ground
 With his cane.

They say that in his prime,
Ere the pruning-knife of Time
 Cut him down,
Not a better man was found
By the Crier on his round
 Through the town.

But now he walks the streets,
And he looks at all he meets
 Sad and wan,
And he shakes his feeble head,
That it seems as if he said,
 "They are gone."

But now his nose is thin,
And it rests upon his chin
 Like a staff,
And a crook is in his back,
And a melancholy crack
 In his laugh.

I know it is a sin
For me to sit and grin
 At him here;
But the old three-cornered hat,
And the breeches, and all that,
 Are so queer!

And if I should live to be
The last leaf upon the tree
 In the spring,
Let them smile, as I do now,
At the old forsaken bough
 Where I cling.

"The Last Leaf," by Oliver Wendell Holmes (21:4-5)

- D. "What Do You Mean 'It Was Brillig'" by James Thurber. (60:630-633). See Appendix C of this Workbook.

Answer each of the following questions in the space provided:

1. In the first stanza of Selection A what question does the speaker ask? _____

In the last stanza whom has he found? _____

What are some ways he finally recognizes his friend?

Are any of them complimentary? _____

How does he feel about his friend? _____

2. What, according to Selection B, was Coolidge's most noticeable trait? _____

Why did he go to banquets in Washington? _____

How is Coolidge's reply to Mrs. Longworth humorous? _____

Why do you think people laughed with him as well as at him?

3. What about Della made life difficult for James Thurber?

What about Thurber made life difficult for Della? _____

Which of these expresses Thurber's final attitude towards

Della? (a) She's pretty queer but I suppose we have to keep

her, (b) She's probably having just as much trouble understanding me as I have her, and it's funny, (c) She's an uneducated girl, always mixing her words up and always prying into my affairs, (d) She's had a hard background so it's no wonder she's pretty unbalanced when she talks.

4. What ugly characteristics does the man have in "The Last Leaf"? _____

How do you feel towards him? _____

To whom does the author compare him? _____

Why is the author's laughter sympathetic? _____

II. From the following topics or one of your own choosing, write a paragraph or two showing why you laugh in sympathy with an unforgettable character you have met, either in books or in life. In each case, emphasize both the apparent weakness in the person's make-up and a reason why, although you laugh, you like him nevertheless.

Possible ideas: (1) The person has a crooked nose, lantern jaw, etc., but is always cheerful and can laugh at his appearance, (2) The person is very shy, but laughs when you mention it, (3) The person has very poor handwriting, spelling, table manners, etc., but means well and tries to improve.

Suggested Activities:

1. Sometimes laughter unites an entire group or humanity itself in a common feeling. For example, read David McCord's poem, "History of Education" (32:372). You will need to know that "docent" means "teacher." Other selections are Arthur Guiterman's, "On the Vanity of Earthly Greatness" (32:135), Booth Tarkington's Penrod (55) and Mark Twain's A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (59). Discuss the meaning of what you have read in class.

2. Can you laugh at yourself and enjoy it? Tell the class of an amusing personal experience in which you got into difficulty. In telling it, however, keep a straight face (at least until your classmates smile!).

3. Perhaps you would enjoy watching Art Linkletter's program "Kids Say the Darndest Things" or a show by Bob Hope or other comedian, or listen to a comedy hour on the radio. You may wish to collect the jokes on themselves that the comedians tell.

4. Why do we laugh? See what the leading funny men of our time have to say (Eastman, Enjoyment of Laughter, 14:329-343). Select three of the definitions which mean most to you, with one or more examples to illustrate each (see Cerf, The Life of the Party, (10), Try and Stop Me, (11), Untermeyer, A Treasury of

Laughter, (6), etc.). If possible, get pictures of people to accompany the statements. Paste them on large sheets of colored construction paper or in a scrapbook to be exhibited at a school fair or hung on the walls of the classroom.

5. You may wish to make cartoons of your own! Try making a series with captions, poking fun at some political or social development of our time. Keep your fun good-natured, if possible!

6. Make a scrapbook history of humor in the United States, illustrating your text by pictures of humorists from Abraham Lincoln to the present and, when possible, newspaper or magazine clippings to exemplify their fun-making.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Summary

In a world in which the unexpected or the terrible on the international scene threatens today's youth and values are changing rapidly, a sense of balance is essential. Teaching children to adjust pleasantly to life's surprises through understanding and expressing humor is no mean aim. Such abilities are highly prized socially.

Through study of the meaning and traditions of humor in literature teachers today can gain insight into its role in our culture. Studies of adolescents' growth in appreciation of humor and their preferences in reading provide knowledge of ways they may be further motivated. Furthermore, suggestions arising from classroom experience show how to create the necessary atmosphere indispensable to the recognition of the mirth-provoking. Workbooks, units and tests of humor specifically aimed at improving tastes in humor have been constructed in recent years.

This Workbook endeavors to expose students to many types of humor and to develop skills both in appreciating and in expressing humor.

Suggestions for Further Study

Developing appreciation of humor apparently needs further professional study, such as:

1. One or more units integrating humor with study in vocabulary, in regard to puns, colloquialisms and other peculiarities of language.
2. Construction of unit-material relating British and American humor to the humor of other nationalities.
3. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the direct teaching of the appreciation and expression of humor.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

WHY THERE ARE NO TREES ON THE DESERT by Glen R. Rounds

For many years in his spare time Ol' Paul had fooled around cross-breeding plants in a small way. At first he tried to cross an apple tree, a yellow pine, and a sawmill to get a tree that would keep the best features of all three. The idea was that if he could have a tree that would grow lumber already cut, the boards hanging like apples, he could get rid of all his loggers and hire apple or apricot pickers instead. Which of course would be a big saving, as everyone knows that fruit pickers work cheaper than lumberjacks, and feed themselves, which in itself is no small item. Besides that, he could deal direct with the consumer, as the Plankavos, as he hoped to call them, would do away with the sawmills, except for the few needed to provide sawdust for butcher shops and saloons.

I don't know exactly what ever happened to the Plankavo, but while he was fooling around he somehow accidentally crossed a Douglas fir, a California redwood, and a desert cactus. The tree he got was as tall as a redwood, the wood couldn't be told from fir, and it grew well in the driest desert. The main trouble was the fact that it had thorns seventy feet long, instead of branches. This made Ol' Paul sore, so he didn't breed any more trees. However, a great many years later these trees had grown to a great size, covering the desert with a deep forest.

One day Ol' Paul gets a letter from the Government telling him he'll have to log the desert off. It seems that the Tired Eastern Business Women going out there for their vacations, were complaining that they couldn't see the desert because of the trees, and the cowboys on the dude ranches were all the time coming home with their clothes snagged up by the thorns. Along with the letter is a hand-painted picture, showing him what the Government thinks a desert should look like.

As soon as Paul gets the letter he hitches Babe to the south end of the section of land the camp is on, and hauls it down to Nevada. He often moved camp this way as it was quicker than any other, and besides, the men never got homesick for the old camp.

Next morning he takes a look at the timber and knows he's in for plenty of trouble for sure, on account of those seventy-foot thorns. At first they try to tunnel under the thorns and cut the trees off at the roots, but the thorns keep the trees from falling over even after they're cut off.

Then he decides to dynamite, and what a job that is! First they dig out a powder chamber under the roots, then carry in four thousand five hundred and four cases of dynamite and two thousand and four cans of giant powder. The idea is to blast off a township at a time. All the time the heat is affecting the men something fierce, so they can only work in four-hour shifts. Even working shifts day and night and holidays, it takes three weeks and nine days to get the giant blast ready. The last case of dynamite is packed, the percussion caps are wired, and the men all move back out of danger. Ol' Paul looks around and hollers: "Let her go!"

Well sir, the shock throws every man in camp flat on his back, knocks the cupolas off three barns in Iowa, and the smoke and dust go up in a column thirty-four miles high. When the air clears somewhat the men see there's nothing left but the holes. The trees've been blown clear out of sight. As it's nearly supper time, Ol' Paul says they might as well knock off for the day, but first he reaches up and feels around on top of the smoke column, which is still standing. He finds half a wagon load of wild ducks up there.

It seems that a big flock had been flying over when the blast went off. It has shot the air full of sand the exact size of bird shot and killed them all instantly, except one drake who was flying well in the lead. The sand missed him, but the force of the blast put a curl in his tail feathers that has never come out.

That night the men go to bed with their stomachs full of roast duck, and naturally very well satisfied. But the next morning when they go out, they find the trees fallen back to the ground, right side up and in the holes where they were before!

There seems to be nothing for Paul to do but give the men a day off and figure what to do. The trees couldn't be cut down. They couldn't be blasted down. They had been fire-proofed the Year of the Dry Rains, and couldn't be burned down. Ol' Paul chews his nails down to the quick and still can't figure what to do. He thinks and thinks. He thinks standing up, then he thinks sitting down, but this isn't so good as the ground is too hot. So he goes and sits down in the shade of the blacksmith shop and starts whittling.

He whittles a full-rigged clipper ship, full size, and tries all afternoon to get it inside a beer bottle, like the old sailors do. He gets so interested in this business that he forgets about his real problem until near supper time, and never does get the blamed thing into the bottle. So the next morning he gives the men another day off and goes into his office and thinks without whittling. Even so, it is three days before he comes tearing out with his arms full of blueprints, hollering for the straw bosses to get the men together. He's going to make a speech.

"Boys," he says, "the Gov'ment's dependin' on us. If we fail, them plans is blowed higher'n Gilroy's kite. We'll build the biggest pile-driver ever seen. And by the Great Ringtailed Catamount, we'll drive them trees down like tent pegs!"

You see, this idea would make a story to be told in every camp this side of Mexico. Ol'Paul liked to do a job like that occasionally, even if there was no profit in it, just to remind folks he was no ordinary logger.

For thirty-nine weeks they work on the great pile-driver. It stands so high that the clouds going by are all the time knocking the upper half off, so he puts a hinge in the middle and lets the upper half down when he sees a cloud coming. For a weight he uses one of the Rocky Mountain peaks. (When he gets done he tosses it up into Colorado, where it sets to this day, right behind Colorado Springs.)

When everything is ready, they set the machine up over a thorn tree, and Babe, grunting mightily, hauls the weight to the top. It comes down and strikes with a crash that is heard for one hundred and three miles. The tree is driven clear to bed rock, its top being sixteen feet below the ground.

Ol' Paul reckons that'll do, and they go to work in real earnest. The noise and dust are terrific, as they drive a tree every three minutes, and Babe is sweating from every pore. The sweat pours down off his sides and down his legs and runs in streams across the desert. It washes big gullies in the soft soil that can be seen to this day. These streams running every which way hinder the work, so Paul grabs a shovel and digs a ditch for them to drain into. This is now known as the Grand Canyon. After Paul left the country the Government ran the Colorado River through it.

As soon as he gets the pile-driver crew working smoothly, Paul goes back to camp to catch up with a number of smaller problems that've piled up while he's busy with the cactus trees. On account of the heat, the men want ice tea every meal, and the cooks need ice to keep the meat from spoiling. But there's no ice to be had.

Suddenly Ol' Paul remembers something. That, by the way, was one of the secrets of his success, that habit of remembering things even when they didn't seem worth remembering at the time.

It seems that while they had been building the pile-driver, Babe had been allowed to run loose, and had come back from Alaska with a small snowstorm snagged on one horn. Paul had taken it off, and having no use for a snowstorm round camp at the time, had put it in an old sheep pen in a dry lake-bed a few miles from camp, and forgotten it completely.

So now he decides to go and see how it's getting along. He sort of expects to find it pretty much wilted from the heat, but instead he finds the dry lake frozen from bank to bank. In the center of it the snowstorm's dug a burrow, and is as happy as a clam. Paul breaks off a piece of the ice and finds that it's much colder than ordinary ice, and when it melts it leaves a dry spot. This puzzles him for a bit, then he sees that it's dry ice. Naturally, if you freeze a dry lake you can get nothing but dry ice from it--it stands to reason. So Paul keeps the snowstorm there all the time he's logging off the desert, and the cooks never have to worry about the icebox pans running over.

APPENDIX B

CRISTOFER COLOMBO: A COMEDY OF
DISCOVERY

by Donald Ogden Stewart
(In the manner of James Branch Cabell)

In fourteen hundred ninety two
In the city of Genoa
---Old Song

They of Genoa tell with a shrug how in the old days Cristofer Colombo whom men called the Dreamer left Dame Colombo to go in search of the land of his imagining.

.....

...and the tale tells how on Walburga's Eve he came to the court of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabel. And as he entered one met him who was not unpleasing to the eye, and she was weeping. And, as it was somewhat dark, Colombo decided to comfort her.

"Now, do you tell me, my dear", said Colombo, after an interval, "why it is you weep, for I'm Colombo whom men call the Dreamer, and I go in search of the land of my imagining, and I think", said Colombo, "that you have most remarkably lovely eyes."

"Oh messire", said the lady, "I weep because it is this evening that I am to entertain the ladies of our Progress Literary Club, and Donna Margarita whom men call the Spanish Omelet, but who really, messire, has a lovely voice, was going to sing "The Rosary" and now she has a cold and cannot sing, and King Ferdinand is coming, and oh, messire, what", said the lady, "shall I do?"

"Why now, truly", said Colombo, "in Genoa it was the judgment of all the really musically intelligent ladies, except perhaps my wife, that I sang not an unpleasing baritone, and while I do not know the song to which you refer, yet I have devoted most of my life to the composition of a poem concerning the land of my imagining which might well be sung and besides that", said Colombo, "I can do a most remarkable egg trick."

So it was that Colombo became for a short time not undeservedly the life of the Progress Literary Club party. And the tale tells how, after a paper by Donna Violet Balboa on "Spanish Architecture--Then and Now", Colombo sang to them the song of the land of Colombo's imagining. And poignantly beautiful was the song, for in it was the beauty of a poet's dream, and the eternal loveliness of that vision which men have glimpsed

in all ages if ever so faintly. And when he had finished, the eyes of Colombo were wet with tears, for into this poem had he woven the dreams of his disillusionment. And somewhat ironical to Colombo was the applause of those fine ladies who did not at all understand.

"Now that is a pretty song", said King Ferdinand, "and do you tell us, Colombo, how one may get to this land, so that I may extend the borders of my most Catholic Kingdom and spread the teachings of the true faith, for to bring the world under the blessed influence of my religion is my only purpose, and really now", said King Ferdinand, "is there as much gold there as you describe?"

"Ah, King Ferdinand", replied Colombo, "there is more gold than ever I can tell, and I see only too plainly how grievously you suffer to think that perhaps these people are living in ignorance of the true faith. And I could ask nothing better than that King Ferdinand give me ships in which I may sail to the westward and come at last to the land of my imagining. This I would do in order that the blessed soldiers of King Ferdinand who will follow me may show to the inhabitants of my discovered land the grievous errors of their ways and bring them at last to a realization of the true faith which has been so helpful to our own dear Spain, and", added Colombo, "our gracious sovereign Ferdinand."

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"Well, now", said King Ferdinand, "of course, to fit out such an expedition would require great expense, my dear Colombo--great expense. And, of course, you know, Colombo, that when investors can buy Inquisition 4 1/4's for 89 it would be extremely difficult to raise the money for such a speculative project--oh, extremely difficult. And then you must consider the present depression--tell me now, Colombo", said King Ferdinand, "how long do you think this depression will last, for I seek, above all things, a return to healthy normalcy."

"Well, truly", replied Colombo, "that would be most difficult to say. "

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Next the tale tells how there came to Colombo on Michaelmas Eve one sent by Queen Isabel. And when Colombo had buckled on his sword Impavide he followed the messenger through winding corridors and came at last to the chamber of the Queen. And as he knelt before her it seemed to Colombo that never before had he seen such unforgettable beauty as shone in the eyes of Queen Isabel. Yes, truly, this was the loveliest girl that Colombo had ever imagined.

"Now do you rise", said she, "and you and I shall have a nice chat alone here together, and you can tell me all about geography of which I am oh, frightfully ignorant. In truth, said she, "I have tried to get Ferdinand to instruct me, but I fear", said Queen Isabel, "that Ferdinand does not understand me."

So Colombo instructed Queen Isabel in the fundamentals of geography. And after a while he spoke.

"Now many people", said Colombo, "believe that the earth is flat, but", said Colombo, "such is not at all the case."

And after an interval Colombo said, "There, my dear, do you not see how ridiculous it is to suppose that the earth is anything but round?"

"Why surely, sire", said Queen Isabel, "you make it appear very round. And I wonder that I had not thought of that before. And I think", said Queen Isabel, "that geography is a most fascinating subject and oh, messire Colombo", said the Queen, "you must come and instruct me often."

Thus it was that Colombo became Royal Geographer. And the tale tells how after a while various whisperings came to King Ferdinand of his queen's curious enthusiasm for study.

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And the tale tells how that afternoon Colombo stood before King Ferdinand. And very strange to Colombo was the enthusiasm which burned in the King's otherwise, somewhat fishlike eye.

"For know you, Colombo", the King was saying, "that God has spoken to me and commanded me to save from the fires of hell the inhabitants of those golden lands of which you sang. And to you, my dear Colombo, is to be given the chance which you so ardently desire. For I have this day purchased three ships which await your command, and within a week you should be well on your way on this glorious mission for God and for Spain, and", said the King, "I might add that the Queen, too, is much interested in this voyage and has even been persuaded to dispose of her jewels in order that you may make haste."

"Such instant obedience to the will of God", said Colombo, "and such fine enthusiasm to further His kingdom on earth, does your Majesties great credit. And I shall indeed congratulate the inhabitants of this to-be-discovered land for their good fortune in obtaining such a devout King."

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And so it was that Colombo sat alone in the cabin of the ship which carried him towards the land of his imagining. And strange and somewhat fearsome it was to the sailors to see their captain sitting thus motionless night after night, for already had they left the Canaries far behind and some there were who said that a madman commanded their ship, and others who whispered of horrible monsters in these western seas.

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And the tale tells that as Colombo started for the deck in order that he might give the signal for the return to Spain, there came across the water from one of the other ships the faint cry of a sailor. And the sailor was waving his hat and shouting, "Land Ho!"

Thus it was that Cristofer Colombo became the discoverer of the land of his imagining.

APPENDIX C

WHAT DO YOU MEAN IT WAS BRILLIG? by James Thurber

I was sitting at my typewriter one afternoon several weeks ago, staring at a piece of blank white paper, when Della walked in. "They are here with the reeves," she said. It did not surprise me that they were. With a colored woman like Della in the house it would not surprise me if they showed up with the toves. In Della's afternoon it is always brillig; she could outgrabe a mome rath on any wabe in the world. Only Lewis Carroll would have understood Della completely. I try hard enough. "Let them wait a minute," I said. I got out the big Century Dictionary and put it on my lap and looked up "reeve." It is an interesting word, like all of Della's words; I found out that there are four kinds of reeves. "Are they here with strings of onions?" I asked. Della said they were not. "Are they here with enclosures or pens for cattle, poultry, or pigs; sheepfolds?" Deila said no sir. "Are they here with administrative officers?" From a little nearer the door Della said no again. "Then they've got to be here," I said, "with some females of the common European sandpiper." These scenes of ours take as much out of Della as they do out of me, but she is not a woman to be put down by a crazy man with a dictionary. "They are here with the reeves for the windas," said Della with brave stubbornness. Then, of course, I understood what they were there with: they were there with the Christmas wreaths for the windows. "Oh, those reeves!" I said. We were both greatly relieved; we both laughed. Della and I never quite reach the breaking point; we just come close to it.

Della is a New England colored woman with nothing of the South in her accent; she doesn't say "d" for "th" and she pronounces her "r's." Hearing her talk in the next room, you might not know at first that she was colored. You might not know till she said some such thing as "Do you want cretonnes in the soup tonight?" (She makes wonderful cretonnes for the soup.) I have not found out much about Della's words, but I have learned a great deal about her background. She told me one day that she has three brothers and that one of them works into a garage and another works into an incinerator where they burn the refuge. The one that works into the incinerator has been working into it since the Armitage. That's what Della does to you; she gives you incinerator perfectly and then she comes out with the Armitage. I spent most of an hour one afternoon trying to figure out what was wrong with the Armitage; I thought of Armistead and armature and Armentieres, and when I finally hit on Armistice it sounded crazy. It still does. Della's third and youngest brother is my favorite; I think he'll be yours, too, and everybody else's. His name is Arthur and it seems that he has just passed with commendably high grades, his silver-service eliminations. Della is delighted about that, but she is not half so delighted about it as I am.

Della came to our house in Connecticut some months ago, trailing her glory of cloudiness. I can place the date for you approximately: it was while there were still a great many fletchers about. "The lawn is full of fletchers," Della told me one morning, shortly after she arrived, when she brought up my orange juice. "You mean neighbors?" I said. "This early?" By the way she laughed I knew that fletchers weren't people; at least not people of flesh and blood. I got dressed and went downstairs and looked up the word in the indispensable Century. A fletcher, I found, is a man who makes arrows. I decided, but without a great deal of conviction, that there couldn't be any arrow-makers on my lawn at that hour in the morning and at this particular period in history. I walked cautiously out the back door and around to the front of the house--and there they were. I don't know many birds but I do know flickers. A flicker is a bird which, if it were really named fletcher, would be called flicker by all the colored cooks in the United States. Out of a mild curiosity I looked up "flicker" in the dictionary and I discovered that he is a bird of several aliases. When Della brought my toast and coffee into the dining room I told her about this. "Fletchers," I said, "are also golden-winged woodpeckers, yellowhammers, and high-holders." For the first time Della gave me the look that I was to recognize later, during the scene about the reeves. I have become very familiar with that look and I believe I know the thoughts that lie behind it. Della was puzzled at first because I work at home instead of in an office, but I think she has it figured out now. This man, she thinks, used to work into an office like anybody else, but he had to be sent to an institution; he got well enough to come home from the institution, but he is still not well enough to go back to the office. I could have avoided all these suspicions, of course, if I had simply come out in the beginning and corrected Della when she got words wrong. Coming at her obliquely with a dictionary only enriches the confusion; but I wouldn't have it any other way. I share with Della a form of escapism that is the most mystic and satisfying flight from actuality I have ever known. It may not always comfort me, but it never ceases to beguile me.

Every Thursday when I drive Della to Waterbury in the car for her day off, I explore the dark depths and the strange recesses of her nomenclature. I found out that she had been married for ten years but was now divorced; that is, her husband went away one day and never came back. When I asked her what he did for a living, she said he worked into a dove-wedding. "Into a what?" I asked. "Into a dove-wedding," said Della. It is one of the words I haven't figured out yet, but I am still working on it. "Where are you from, Mr. Thurl?" she asked me one day. I told her Ohio, and she said, "Ooooh, to be sure!" as if I had given her a clue to my crazy definitions, my insensitivity to the ordinary household nouns, and my ignorance of the commoner migratory birds. "Semantics, Ohio," I said. "Why, there's one of them in Massachusetts, too," said Della. "The one I mean," I told her, "is bigger and more confusing." "I'll bet it is," said Della.

Della told me the other day that she had had only one sister, a beautiful girl who died when she was twenty-one. "That's too bad," I said. "What was the matter?" Della had what was the matter at her tongue's tip. "She got tuberculosis from her teeth," she said, "and it went all through her symptom." I didn't know what to say to that except that my teeth were all right but that my symptom could probably be easily gone all through. "You work too much with your brain," said Della. I knew she was trying to draw me out about my brain and what had happened to it so that I could no longer work into an office, but I changed the subject. There is no doubt that Della is considerably worried about my mental condition. One morning when I didn't get up till noon because I had been writing letters until three o'clock, Della told my wife at breakfast what was the matter with me. "His mind works so fast his body can't keep up with it," she said. This diagnosis has shaken me not a little. I have decided to sleep longer and work less. I know exactly what will happen to me if my mind gets so far ahead of my body that my body can't catch up with it. They will come with a reeve and this time it won't be a red-and-green one for the window, it will be a black one for the door.

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