Satires and Spoofs—History and Hot Topics

Objectives
Students will learn to identify satire and a satirical point of view in text by distinguishing between what is directly stated in a text and what is really meant. They will also apply the technique in their own writing. (This works well with Kurt Vonnegut, Joseph Heller, etc.)

The Satires and Spoofs lesson and handouts are adaptable for grades 9-12.

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Students will learn to identify satire and a satirical point of view in text by distinguishing between what is directly stated in a text and what is really meant. They will also apply the technique in their own writing. (This works well with Kurt Vonnegut, Joseph Heller, etc.)

Materials: Internet access and local or regional newspaper or newscast; Satires and Spoofs Worksheet; cartoon examples (included).

Procedures:

Activity One: Political Cartoons
1. Introduce definition of satire. Common Core glossary defines it as “a literary art of diminishing a subject by making in ridiculous and evoking attitudes of amusement, contempt, indignation or scorn. It differs from comedy in that comedy evokes laughter as an end in itself.”
2. Use Civil War envelope “Secessionists leaving the Union” found within the cartoon examples to introduce satire. Contrast the text used with the image. What is the point of view of this illustration? Who or what is being ridiculed?
3. Have students read a newspaper, magazine, or other source independently and identify a political cartoon. They may do this in class with resources you provide or it may be assigned as homework. Using examples from the cartoon, students should write a minimum of two to three paragraphs explaining the literal meaning of the cartoon and contrasting it with the intended meaning.
4. Have students create a list of current events they want to satirize. Students should choose one and create their own political cartoon based on current events. Drawing skills are not a priority. They could also create a collage from magazines for the illustration. Emphasis is on the text.

Activity Two: Satirical Essay
1. As a class read an example of a satirical essay (e.g. Jonathan Swift’s “A Modest Proposal” or another of your choice). Identify the point of view, the literal meaning, the intended meaning, examples the author uses to support this position, and language used to reinforce the intended meaning.
2. Use the Satire and Spoofs Worksheet to help the students understand satire and its role in presenting information.
3. Have each student read a history article using the attached worksheet and provided links. The Mississippi History Now website contains articles about a variety of key events in the state’s history.
4. Using the history article, have students write their own satirical essay. Length determined by teacher. Essay should include a topic, point of view, examples that support the literal meaning as well as the actual position, and accurate language to reinforce the intended meaning.
**Extension: Newscast Spoof**

1. Have students apply understanding of satire to broadcast news. Show clips from current satire news shows (*The Daily Show, Weekend Report on SNL, or The Colbert Report*).
2. Assign students to watch the nightly regional newscast.
3. Divide the class into groups, and have each team create a news show in the same vein as current satire news shows (*The Daily Show, The Weekend Report on SNL, or The Colbert Report*).
4. Use the attached worksheet to help the students understand satirized newscasts.

**Satire and Spoofs Online Resources:**

Satirical Newscasts:

http://www.thedailyshow.com/
http://www.colbertnation.com/

Essay Reference:

http://www.theonion.com/
http://mdah.state.ms.us/timeline/
http://mshistorynow.mdah.state.ms.us/

Political Cartoon Websites:

http://www.cagle.com/politicalcartoons/#.US6EMoYYXj1U
http://thecomicnews.com/
Satires and Spoofs Worksheet

1. What is necessary to understand the humor behind satirical newscasts, political cartoons, and other forms of journalism?

2. What is necessary to successfully satirize current events and information from history?

3. How can satirizing controversial current events and events from history be an effective tool for presenting information?

4. How can satire be a harmful tool for presenting information?
The Grip Leaves Thousands in Its Path

Weak, Nervous, Dyspeptic, Cataract Wrecks.

LIKE A PHOENIX the Grip has risen from the ashes and is setting the world on fire with its surging strength. It has put thousands in its path, and left behind it a trail of destruction.

The Grip has caused thousands of deaths, and has been responsible for the destruction of millions of dollars in property. It has destroyed railways, bridges, and buildings, and has left a trail of destruction behind it.

The Grip is a disease that has been with us for many years, but it has now reached a point where it is almost uncontrollable. It is a disease that is spread by contact with infected persons, and it can be prevented by taking proper precautions.

The Grip is a disease that is difficult to treat, and it can be very dangerous. It is important to take proper precautions to prevent the spread of the disease, and to seek medical attention if you suspect you may be infected.

The Grip is a disease that is caused by a virus, and it can be transmitted from person to person through direct contact. It is important to practice good hygiene, such as washing your hands frequently, to prevent the spread of the virus.

The Grip is a disease that is preventable, and it is important to take proper precautions to prevent the spread of the disease. If you suspect you may be infected, it is important to seek medical attention as soon as possible.

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A Three-I

Cartoons of Rulers
Suppressed by France

The heavy hand of the French government has suddenly swept down on and put out of business the publisher of a series of cartoon postal cards which, although cleverly drawn and of a humorous character, are alleged to hold some of the crowned heads of Europe up to ridicule. All of the stock in trade of these cards, which were in possession of the publisher at the time were confiscated when above the picture postal card of himself which has just been placed on the black list.

In an age when the private mail cannot even be considered, when the mail is a dozen light and the bag of his glory untied, to a sudden death only by the merest chance was saved a distinguished man. Whose heart was of gold was I not sore hurt and was laid up in a hospital for a time.

There are many things that make a life interesting and one of the greatest is to be a strong man.

And the trifling events quite frequently happen.

And let me tell thee, my friend, let it all

For he lived in a state with a man, with sense.
His scientific training, and had

The great man's secret was to be

He never was a secret to me.
Nothing that was a matter of fact was a secret to me.

And the public did not care, and was not a secret to them.

And lo! I tell thee that the man

Life's Pla
...
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY LESSON PLANS
TEACHER EVALUATION
COMPLETE BOTH SIDES AND PLEASE MAIL OR FAX TO THE ADDRESS ON THE NEXT PAGE. THANK YOU!

TEACHER NAME

SCHOOL NAME & ADDRESS

EMAIL (OPTIONAL)

TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS GRADE LEVEL

LESSON TITLE

1. In your opinion, did this unit elicit better than average student response; if so, how?

2. Which segments of the unit exceeded your students’ attention span?

3. Will this unit be of assistance to you in developing future classroom activities; if so, how?

4. How did this unit add to your earlier teaching on the same subject?

5. Would this teaching unit be handier to use as a:
   ___ multi-day unit   ___ multi-week unit   ___ other

6. Were the activities and lessons appropriate for your students? How?
Please rate the following lesson materials and activities by circling the appropriate number.

4 = excellent, 3 = good, 2 = average, 1 = inadequate

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We would appreciate any additional comments on this teaching unit and any suggestions for improvement. Comments may be entered in the space below.