

CATEGORIES OF HUMOR

1. **Exaggeration**, making use primarily of an obvious over- or understatement of such things as size, numbers, proportions, facts, feelings, deeds, experiences, etc.
2. **Incongruity**, associating two generally accepted incompatibles; it is the lack of a rational relation of objects, people, or ideas to each other or to the environment.
3. **Surprise**, exploiting the occurrence of the unexpected -- whether fact, thought, feeling, or event; in its more sophisticated form it becomes *irony*.
4. **Slapstick**, the form of humor that depends for its effect on fast, boisterous, and zany physical activity and horseplay . . . often accompanied by broad obvious rowdy verbal humor.
5. The **Absurd**, that which obviously lacks reason, which is foolish or ridiculous in its lack of good sense, includes *nonsense*, the nonsensical use of logic and language; the *preposterous*, arising from the incongruity of reality and fantasy; and *whimsy*, a fanciful or fantastic device, object, or creation especially in writing, art, or decoration.
6. **Human predicaments**, featuring situations in which a character appears foolish or bested, includes the humor of *superiority* and *degradation*, which is based on self-aggrandizement or the release of hostility through the discomfiture, failure, or misfortune of others, and *comic predicaments*, which is based on an attitude of sympathetic acceptance of the human predicament and can be seen in situations in which either oneself or someone else appears foolish or bested by life for the moment; in this case, however, no hostile feelings are intended to be aroused or expressed.
7. **Ridicule**, primarily the teasing and mockery of others or oneself, can be seen expressed, for example, in the mockery of adults, their world and its customs and institutions, etc. *Negative ridicule* finds its source in feelings of self aggrandizement or the release of hostility through the mockery of others. *Playful ridicule*, on the other hand, is based on the sympathetic acceptance of human foibles. *Satire* is primarily a sophisticated artistic form of humor arising from both types of ridicule.
8. **Defiance**, primarily the release of hostility or aggression through rebellion, includes the violation of conventions, the perpetration of situations socially unacceptable to adults, the expression of forbidden ideas, and the violation of adult authority.
9. **Verbal humor**, the manipulation of language through word play, puns, jokes, sarcasm, wit, name-calling, and the like, may contain either a positive or negative emotional content but differs from the other forms in being a verbal rather than a situational form of humor.

Katharine H. Kappas, "A Developmental Analysis of Children's Responses to Humor," *Library Quarterly* 37 (Jan. 1967): 68-69. Boldface added.