

Humor

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Professors Don and Alleen Nilson are conducting a study on humor. They have studied many TV comedies to find out why they worked, if they did, and why some failed. They take notes whenever they hear or read something funny, and every year they go to an "Academic Humor Conference" to give presentations about humor.

According to this article there are many features a successful joke or comedy has. The professors have compiled a list of 11 basic humor attributes. Exaggeration, Understatement, Ambiguity, Irony, Situation Insight, Sudden Insight, Superiority, Hostility, Word play, Trick, and Surprise, or Shock. I realize certain people have certain tastes in humor. I, for one hate word play. It just doesn't make me laugh.

Many other things do, however. Here are three of my favorite humorous works and what type of humor they possess:

Dilbert: Dilbert is about life in the business world. It includes Superiority, Irony, and Surprise. Dilbert is funny because many people can relate to it. The stereotypical co-workers, the annoying management, people look at it and say, "I know that guy."

The Simpsons: Yes, The Simpsons. It's a pop-culture phenomenon utilizing Irony, Sudden Insight, and Hostility. It has a strong story line or storylines, and at the same time drops jokes and parodies at the perfect time.

Seinfeld: Seinfeld's style of humor is Irony, Situation Insight, and Exaggeration. Similar to Dilbert, you can relate to the characters and the people they meet. Seinfeld also has three common character personalities The weird guy, the one who does everything wrong, and the one who does everything right, but gets in trouble anyway. You can also relate to the situations characters find themselves in.

Most people take humor for granted, but really it is essential. Without humor, what would get us through the day? What would lift our spirits? What would we laugh at? The study of humor is more complex than it seems on the surface. Don and Alleen have discovered through vigorous studying, how difficult it can be to create a humorous work of art. Now, if you'll excuse me, Seinfeld is on.