UNIT 5

What's Funny?

PREVIEW

A JOKES | Listen to two jokes. Do you find them funny? Can you explain why they make you laugh? Or if you don't find them funny, can you explain why not?

B ZOOM-IN | Read and listen to a conversation about an awkward situation. Notice the featured words and phrases.

UNDERSTAND A VARIETY OF ACCENTS
Grace = American English (standard)
Rachel = French



Grace: Ken asked me whether I knew what happened yesterday at the office. Something about a big brouhaha at lunch. Do you know anything about it?

Rachel: You're kidding. You haven't heard?

Grace: No. I worked from home yesterday. "Take your kid to work" day's always a zoo. I was sure I wouldn't get a thing done. What happened?

Rachel: Well, you know Gloria in the art department? The one who's so prim and proper?

Grace: Right. She's got to be the most polite person I've ever met.

Rachel: Yup. So yesterday she brought her little boy to the office. Cody. And wait till you hear what he did.

Grace: So go on . . .

Rachel: Well, they had this big buffet lunch in the conference room for everyone. Pizza and salad. Good pizza, actually.

Grace: OK. And . . . ?

Rachel: So, Nigel Perkins—that bigshot who heads up the U.K. office—was at the lunch. Apparently, he loved the salad and he kept going back for more.

Grace: So, what's the big deal about that?

Rachel: Well, he was eating and talking and didn't realize he had gotten a ton of spinach stuck in his teeth. His front teeth. I mean like a whole garden. You know how that happens.

Grace: I sure do. I stay away from spinach salad unless I'm alone.

Rachel: Everyone was very polite and acted like they didn't notice. But at one point, he was asked to say a few words to everyone. . . . Gloria's kid, Cody, gets one look at Nigel and starts pointing and yelling: "Look at that man's teeth! He looks like a cow with grass in his teeth." And he starts pointing at Nigel's teeth and laughing. Gloria was mortified, but people couldn't help but laugh.

Grace: Oh, no! How embarrassing for Gloria! What about Nigel?

Rachel: Well, he was a good sport about it. He laughed along with everyone. I'm wondering if he took offense, though.

Grace: You know, Rach, it makes me wonder why we laugh at things like this. Maybe there's a spot of cruelty in us all.



C UNDERSTAND FROM CONTEXT | Paraphrase the following statements that contain featured words and phrases from Zoom-In. Compare answers with a partner.

1 "The one who's so prim and proper?" .....
2 "So go on." .....
3 ". . . that bigshot who heads up the U.K. office . . ." .....
4 "So what's the big deal about that?" .....
5 "He was a good sport about it." .....
6 "I'm wondering if he took offense, though." .....

D LOOK IT UP AND SHARE | Find a word or phrase in Zoom-In that was new to you. Look it up and use it in a sentence. Share your sentence with a partner.

.....

E DISCUSSION | Discuss the questions.

1 Why didn't anyone except Cody tell Nigel he had spinach stuck in his teeth?
2 Why do you think anyone would find what Cody did funny?

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UNIT 5
COMMUNICATION GOALS

Lesson 1 Respond to humor
Lesson 2 Explore the potential benefits of laughter
Lesson 3 Analyze what makes people laugh
Lesson 4 Discuss when joking "crosses the line"

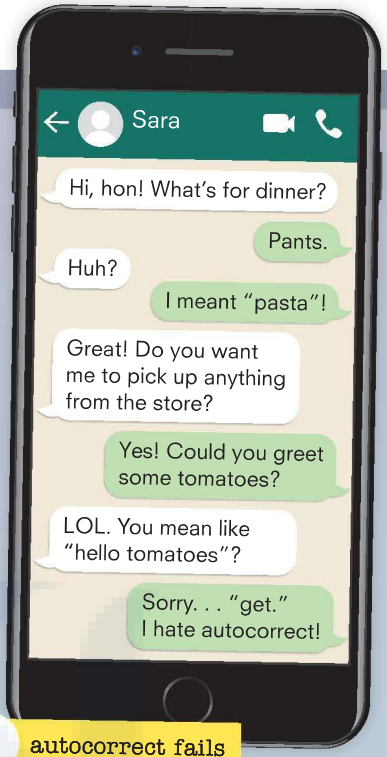
F TALKING POINTS | Take the humor self-test.

What's funny to you?

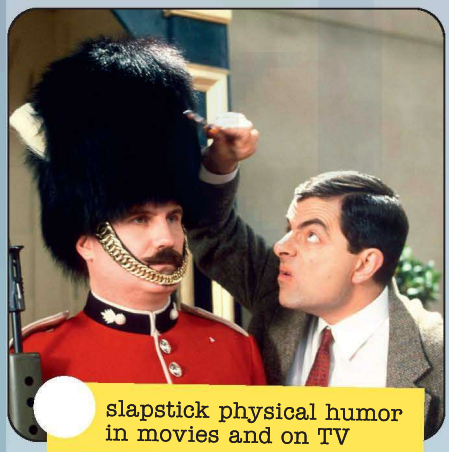
Rate each type of humor on a sliding scale from 1 to 3, with 3 being the funniest to you.

funny online animal video clips





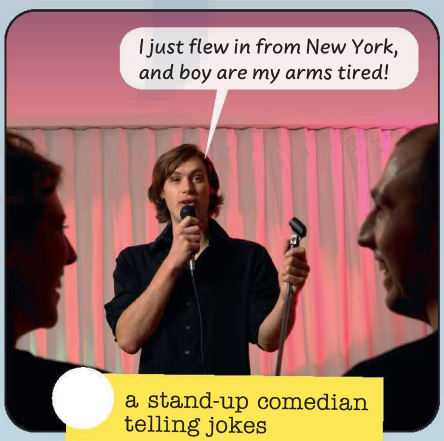
autocorrect fails



slapstick physical humor in movies and on TV



cartoons



a stand-up comedian telling jokes



photos of real people doing ridiculous or dumb things

Where does the General keep his armies?

In his sleevies.

jokes that "play on" words

START TALKING

GROUP WORK Discuss the questions.

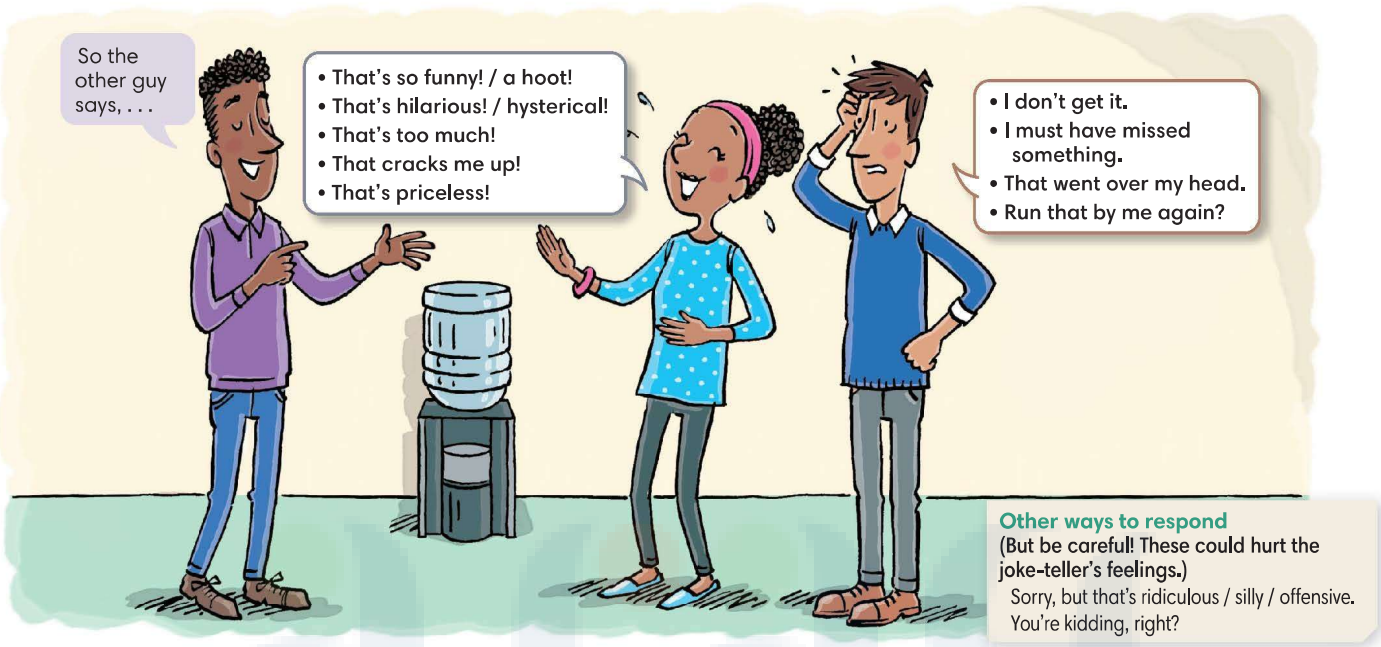
1 What, in your opinion, makes things funny?
2 Do you think there's a little bit of cruelty in some of the things that are funny to us? Explain, using examples of things you or people you know laugh at.

> "I think we often laugh when people make some kind of mistake, like using the wrong word, or tripping on something."

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1 COMMUNICATION GOAL Respond to humor

A VOCABULARY | How to respond when someone tells a joke or funny story | Read and listen. Then listen again and repeat.



B LISTEN TO ACTIVATE VOCABULARY | Listen to four conversations and complete the chart.

	Did the listener find the story or joke funny?		
	Yes	No	Listen again and write your own response to the story or joke. Say as much as you can.
1	☐	☐	
2	☐	☐	
3	☐	☐	
4	☐	☐	

C PAIR WORK | Compare your responses. Did you both get all the jokes and stories? Which was the funniest (or least funny) to each of you? Explain why.

D RELATE TO PERSONAL EXPERIENCE | Tell your partner about something funny you saw in a movie or on TV. Or tell him or her a joke or a funny story someone told you. Respond to your partner, using the Vocabulary.

E GRAMMAR | Questions in indirect speech

When reporting a question in indirect speech, begin yes / no questions with if, whether, or whether or not. They are interchangeable, and there is no difference in meaning. Remember: In indirect speech, if the reporting verb is in a past form, the verb in the indirect speech usually shifts back.*

Every morning, my kids ask, "Is it hot outside?" → Every morning they ask **if it's hot outside**.

She wants to know, "Do I have to bring a coat?" → She wants to know **whether she has to bring a coat**.

Marina asked, "Did you see the show at the Comedy Club?" → Marina asked **whether or not I had seen the show at the Comedy Club**. (Note the shift from see to had seen.)

Begin information questions with a question word.

Tate asked, "When did you learn to tell jokes in English?" → Tate asked **when I had learned to tell jokes in English**.

My friends always ask me, "How is anyone able to learn a language in such a short time?" → My friends always ask me **how anyone is able to learn a language in such a short time**.

Note: **Indirect questions are a kind of embedded question. Don't use do, does, or did.**

My friend asked **what movie I wanted to see.** NOT My friend asked what movie ~~did I want~~ to see.

* A complete review of backshifts in indirect speech is in Lesson 2.

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F GRAMMAR PRACTICE | **On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite each sentence in indirect speech. Make any necessary backshifts and changes to pronouns.**

1 When no one laughed at her joke, Lily asked herself, "What did I do wrong?"
2 On Saturdays, our children frequently ask, "Can we stay up late to watch *The Crazy Camel* on TV?"
3 Katherine asked David, "Is Facebook your favorite social media site?"
4 Helen's husband will definitely ask her, "What time does the show at the comedy club start?"
5 Peter asked everyone, "Did you really think that joke was funny?"

G GRAMMAR PRACTICE | **On a separate sheet of paper, correct the errors in the embedded questions.**

1 She wanted to know how did I like the cartoons in this week's *New Yorker* magazine.
2 I asked who did he call to get tickets for the comedy show.
3 My boss asked me how long would it take for me to finish the report.
4 Most people want to know when should they arrive in order to get good seats.

PRONUNCIATION LESSON p. 138
Intonation of sarcasm

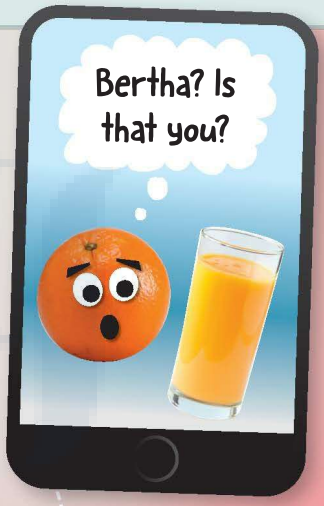
COMMUNICATION ACTIVATOR

Now let's respond to humor.

A CONVERSATION MODEL | **Read and listen.**

A: This is priceless. Come see this.
B: OK. What is it?
A: Look. It's this picture of an orange and a glass of orange juice. The orange is asking the juice if it's Bertha.
B: Wait, what? Run that by me again?
A: You don't get it? Think about it for a minute.
B: Oh, yeah! Now I get it. Hey, that cracks me up, actually.

Social language
Ask "Wait, what?" to informally express confusion about what someone has just said.



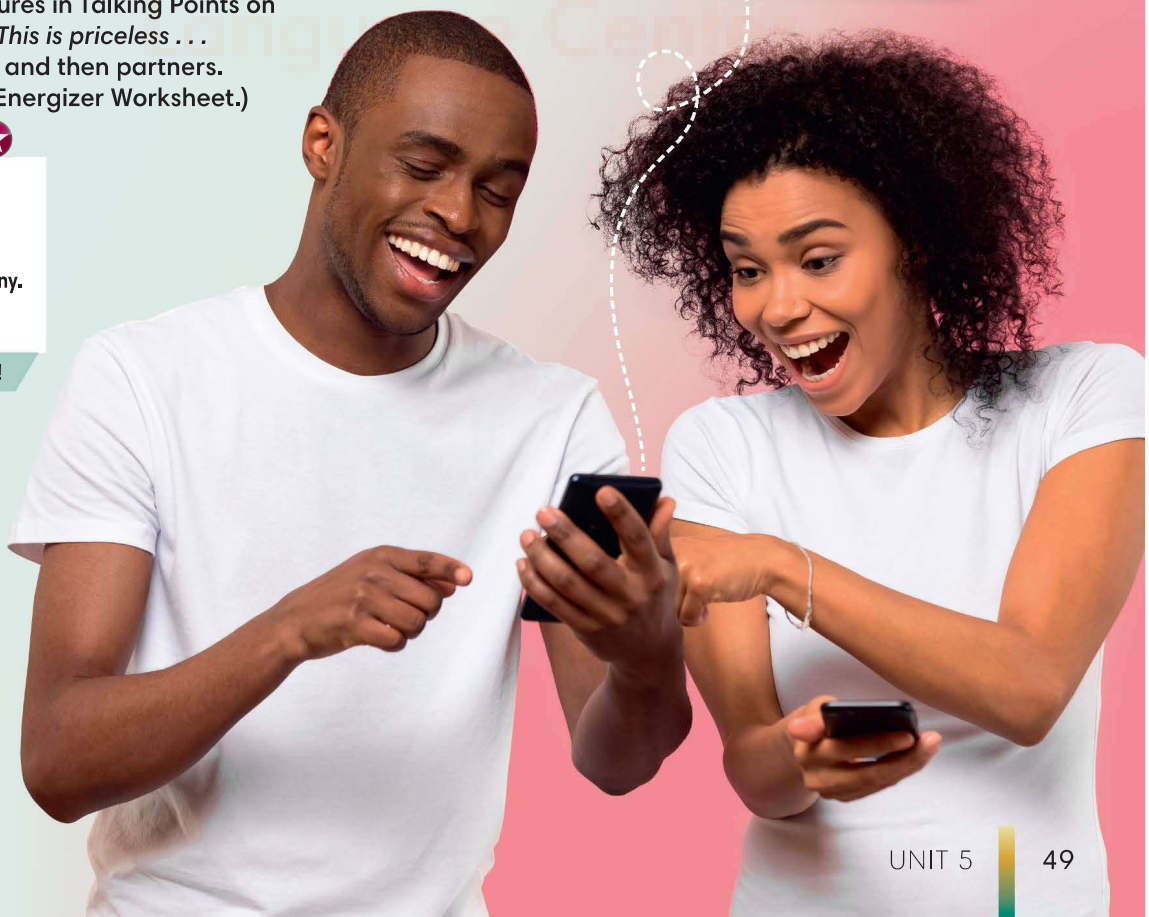
B PRONUNCIATION PRACTICE | **Listen again and repeat. Then practice the Conversation Model with a partner.**

C IN YOUR OWN WORDS | **Create a similar conversation, using your own cartoon, photo, screen shot, or video clip—or one of the pictures in Talking Points on page 47. Start like this: *This is priceless . . .* Be sure to change roles and then partners. (Option: Use the Unit 5 Energizer Worksheet.)**

KEEP TALKING!

- **Tell your partner where you found the cartoon, autocorrect fail, or funny video clip.**
- **Say why you think it's funny.**
- **Talk about another one.**
- **Say as much as you can.**

Watch the video for ideas!



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2 COMMUNICATION GOAL Explore the potential benefits of laughter

A GRAMMAR CLOSE-UP | Read about laughter and health. Notice the featured grammar.

Laughter and Health

In the sixteenth century, humanist educator Richard Mulcaster said that because laughter produced warmth in the body, it might be a good remedy for colds. Other scientists of his time noted that laughter increased the rate of breathing, boosted muscle tone, and exercised the body's internal organs, and they claimed that those effects were good for colds, too.

Three centuries later, in his classic 1956 book *The Stress of Life*, Hungarian scientist Hans Selye insisted he had proven that biological stress has negative effects on health. This laid the foundation for the theory that the absence of stress could have positive effects.

Later, in 1976, American editor Norman Cousins—a non-scientist suffering from a life-threatening illness, who was familiar with Selye's research—theorized that if the stress of negative emotions could cause illness, positive emotions should be able to exert a healing effect. So, he spent his time watching funny movies and asked his friends to tell him lots of funny jokes. He recovered, and his 1979 bestseller, *Anatomy of an Illness*, described what had happened.

Although no one can state definitively that laughter cured Norman Cousins, the concept of laughter therapy for both physical and emotional problems such as anxiety and depression has gained popular acceptance, and an Internet search of laughter therapy returns numerous hits for resources to access it.

B CRITICAL THINKING | People smile and laugh when they feel happy. Do you think it's possible that the act of smiling or laughing itself can actually cause us to feel happy? Explain your reasoning.

C GRAMMAR | Indirect speech | Statements: backshifts in tense and time expressions

The backshifts that occur when direct speech becomes indirect speech are made to preserve the meaning of what the person said. Review the changes that normally occur in indirect speech statements.

Direct speech	Indirect speech
She noted, "Negative emotions **are** harmful and **cause** illness."	She noted (that) negative emotions **were** harmful and **caused** illness.
I argued, "But Cousins **hasn't proved** anything."	I argued (that) Cousins **hadn't proved** anything.
My cousin said, "Jokes **cured** me."	My cousin said (that) jokes **had cured** him.
We wrote, "She **isn't practicing** laughter therapy."	We wrote (that) she **wasn't practicing** laughter therapy.
He claimed, "We **were telling** the truth."	He claimed (that) they **had been telling** the truth.
People admitted, "We've **learned** from Cousins's book."	People admitted (that) they **had learned** from Cousins's book.
He told her, "I'll **check** to see how you're feeling later."	He told her (that) he **would check** to see how she was feeling later.
Pam told us, "I **can't understand** what **happened**."	Pam told us (that) she **couldn't understand** what **had happened**.
He told me, "You **have to see** this funny movie."	He told me (that) I **had to see** that funny movie.
The nurse told the little girl, "You **must rest**."	The nurse told the little girl (that) she **had to rest**.

However, when a reporting verb is in the simple past tense, backshifting is optional if it refers to something just said, something that's still true, a scientific fact, or something generally known to be true.

Ella just texted. She said that the plane **is** (or **was**) late. [= something just said]
Melanie told me she **wants** (or **wanted**) laughter therapy. [= still true]
He reminded us that colds **aren't** (or **weren't**) caused by air conditioning. [= scientific fact]

Common reporting verbs

admit	insist	suggest
argue	note	theorize
claim	report	think
complain	state	write

Do not make changes to present or perfect forms of the modals should, could, may, might, would, and ought to when converting from direct to indirect speech.

Make the following changes to time (and place) expressions to preserve the speaker's meaning.

Sam told me, "The accident was last week." → Sam told me the accident **had been the week before**.

now	→	**then**	this year	→	**that year**
today	→	**that day**	last week	→	**the week before**
tomorrow	→	**the next day**	next month	→	**the following month**
yesterday	→	**the day before**	here	→	**there**

GRAMMAR EXPANDER p. 125

Indirect speech: review and expansion
- Imperatives in indirect speech
- Changes to pronouns and possessives
- Say, tell, and ask
- Other reporting verbs

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D NOTICE THE GRAMMAR | Find one example of indirect speech in Grammar Close-Up where the verb in the reported speech is in the present, even though the reporting verb is in the past. With a partner, explain why the verb in the reported speech is in the present tense.

E GRAMMAR PRACTICE | On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite each sentence twice in indirect speech—once with a backshift and once without. Tell your partner the reason why you believe the backshift is optional.

1 Silas told us, "I've been to Japan, but I've never been to the top of Mt. Fuji."
2 The teacher texted, "I want every student to tell a favorite joke to the class."
3 The documentary movie explained, "The introduction of an alien species into a new habitat can cause an environmental catastrophe."
4 My daughter claimed, "Mr. Martin is the best Spanish teacher I've ever had."
5 Our history textbook said, "Many people perished in the San Francisco earthquake of 1906."

F GRAMMAR PRACTICE | On a separate sheet of paper, write what the people actually said, using direct speech.

1 My sister told me she had read an article about meditation and it had changed her outlook.
2 Polly told me she had been watching sitcoms in order to reduce her general anxiety.
3 Scientists theorized that if depression could make you sick, laughter might be able to make you well.
4 They admitted they never would have taken a cruise if they had realized they would be exposed to so many viruses.

G PAIR WORK | With a partner, take turns restating each of the following in indirect speech, using a backshift where possible.

1 Researchers reported, "We have a new set of test results in this month's *Medical Therapy Digest*."
2 Physical therapist Mark Kline admitted, "I've never referred a patient to a laughter therapist before today."
3 Psychologists have suggested, "Some anxious patients may be helped by laughter therapy."
4 "I'll tell you the results of the therapy after I finish the first two sessions," my father said.

COMMUNICATION ACTIVATOR

Now let's explore the potential benefits of laughter.

A TALKING POINTS | Read the introduction to an article about the theoretical basis of laughter therapy. Discuss the idea of laughter therapy with a partner.

> "I think laughter therapy makes sense, especially as a complementary therapy. I mean, it couldn't hurt!"

Therapeutic Laughter

It's backed by science!

Can laughing and smiling cause us to become happy? There's evidence that it can. In fact, it has been said that when you laugh during a stressful situation, your brain releases endorphins, the natural chemicals of happiness. Our clinic now offers our patients laughter therapy. These are therapeutic exercises that exploit laughter to reduce anxiety, depression, and pain as well as other symptoms.

B ROLE PLAY | Imagine that you and your partner are a physical therapist and a psychologist. Together, invent a patient who has a problem or a condition, and then create exercises using humor or laughter to help the patient. Use the ideas about therapeutic laughter from Talking Points for support.

Name:
Condition and problems:

Physical therapist's exercise	Psychologist's exercise

C GROUP WORK | Tell the class about your "patient" and explain or demonstrate the exercises you've created for him or her. Describe how the exercises will help.

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3 COMMUNICATION GOAL Analyze what makes people laugh

A READING | Read an article about what makes us laugh. Find an example of a story, a picture, or a joke that demonstrates one of the theories.

Theories of Humor

People of all ages and from all cultures laugh. Although there are many factors that make something funny, these three theories are often cited.

The Superiority Theory

The Superiority Theory holds that we tend to find people's small misfortunes and verbal or behavioral mistakes funny. Two examples of the kind of misfortunes often depicted in funny movies and comedy routines are people falling down or bumping into things. Similarly, hearing someone use the wrong word or mispronounce a word makes us laugh, as do the ridiculous mistakes that result from automatic spell-check programs. According to this theory, the reason why we laugh at the misfortunes or mistakes of others is that they make us feel superior (and happy that the mistakes and misfortunes are theirs, not ours!).

The Incongruity Theory

The Incongruity Theory suggests that humor arises from unexpected, inappropriate, or illogical situations—such as this one:

> A man goes to a psychiatrist and says, "Doctor, I'm worried about my brother. He thinks he's a chicken." "That IS serious," says the doctor. "Why don't you put him in a psychiatric hospital?" So the man says, "I would, but I need the eggs."

According to the Incongruity Theory, a joke becomes funny when we anticipate that one thing will happen or be said, but something else does instead. When the joke goes in the unexpected direction, we experience two sets of incompatible thoughts and emotions—the ones we had as we were listening and the ones revealed at the end. This incongruity makes us laugh.

The Relief Theory

According to the Relief Theory, humor is the feeling of relief that comes from a sudden removal of tension. When tension is high, we need a release, and laughter is a way to cleanse our system of the built-up tension. This theory holds that there are certain things we feel tense about, such as bodily functions, physical attractions, and shame about how we look. It is believed that the large number of jokes about those subjects come from our need to laugh about them and thus relieve or reduce our tension about them.

Regardless of the theory, in order to be able to appreciate a situation or joke as funny, some detachment is always necessary; that is, we have to feel uninvolved with the situation. For example, we can often laugh at our own past mistakes because, with the passage of time, we have become detached. Conversely, if the joke or situation is too familiar or realistic, it may "hit too close to home" and evoke sadness instead of laughter. To understand a joke—to "get it"—we might also need some knowledge of cultural, economic, political, or social issues, without which some jokes are impossible to understand. Although humor is universal, there is no universal joke.

B UNDERSTAND MAIN IDEA | Which statement summarizes the main idea of the article?

- ☐ 1 There are three popular theories that explain what makes something funny.
- ☐ 2 For a joke to make us laugh, it must exhibit the characteristics of all three theories.
- ☐ 3 It's hard to "get" a joke unless we understand the cultural factors it describes.



C UNDERSTAND FROM CONTEXT | Complete each sentence about words in the article.

1 A "misfortune" is ..... event.
   a a lucky b an unlucky

2 "Anticipating" a result means ..... it.
   a expecting b proving

3 Two ideas that are "incompatible" ..... each other.
   a don't support b support

4 A "detachment" from a situation suggests a lack of ..... .
   a involvement b appreciation

5 Begin a sentence with "Conversely," when you will ..... an idea.
   a present more support for b present information that contradicts

6 If a joke "evokes" laughter, it ..... it.
   a prevents b causes

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D IDENTIFY SUPPORTING DETAILS | Look at pictures of situations that are often the basis of jokes and cartoons. With a partner, discuss the theory that explains why people find them funny. (You may choose more than one.) Then discuss whether you find any or all of them funny.

- Superiority Theory
- Incongruity Theory
- Relief Theory



COMMUNICATION ACTIVATOR

Now let's analyze what makes people laugh.

A TALKING POINTS | Read three jokes. Write a plus sign (+) for those you think are funny. Write a minus sign (-) for those you don't.

☐ Joke 1

A woman gets on a bus with her baby. The driver says, "Wow! That's the ugliest baby I've ever seen."

The woman walks to the back of the bus and sits down. She says to the man in the next seat, "Did you hear that? The driver just insulted me!"

The man says, "You go up there and tell him off. I'll hold your goat for you."

☐ Joke 2

"How much do you charge?" a woman asks a lawyer.

"I get $300 for three questions," the lawyer answers.

"That's awfully steep, isn't it?" says the woman.

"Yes, it is," replies the lawyer. "Now what's your final question?"

☐ Joke 3

A man sees a sign on a house that reads "Talking Dog for Sale." He knocks on the door to find out about it. The owner of the house brings the dog to him. "So, what have you done in your life?" he asks the dog.

"I've led a very good life. I ran a food bank for people in poverty. I was a volunteer in our town's fire department. And now I spend my days reading to the residents of an old-age home."

The man is amazed. He asks the dog's owner why on earth she would want to sell a dog as incredible as this.

The owner replies, "Because he's a liar! He never did any of that!"

B DISCUSSION | Compare your reactions to the jokes in Talking Points with your classmates. Explain which ones you think are funny or not funny. Use the Vocabulary.

> "I loved the punchline of Joke 2. It was funny because it was so surprising to hear a professional person like a lawyer say something so ridiculous. I guess it's an example of the Incongruity Theory."

Vocabulary for discussing a joke
the setup: the way the story introduces the joke
the punchline: the funny part, usually at the end

C PAIR WORK | Tell your partner a favorite joke. Together, explain why it makes you and others laugh. Use the Theories of Humor in your discussion. (Option: Use the Unit 5 Soft Skills Booster, p. 158.)

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4 COMMUNICATION GOAL Discuss when joking "crosses the line"

A VOCABULARY | Common types of jokes | Read and listen. Then listen again and repeat.

a verbal joke	a joke that uses language in such a way that the language itself becomes funny
a political joke	a joke about a political candidate, party, opinion, government, or government official
an ethnic joke	a joke about all the people of a particular ethnic background (often considered in bad taste or offensive)
a sexist joke	a joke about men or women in general (often considered in bad taste or offensive)
a dirty joke	a joke about sex or with sexual content (often considered in bad taste or offensive)
a practical joke	an action that causes someone to be laughed at by others



Do you like practical jokes?

B ACTIVATE VOCABULARY | With a partner, discuss whether you know a joke of each type described in the Vocabulary. Without necessarily telling the joke, do you consider any of them offensive?

C LISTEN FOR DETAILS | Listen to the program *You Decide*. Mark each of the following statements T (true) or F (false), based on what the people say.

Anna Powell

..... 1 Anna Powell likes ethnic and sexist jokes.
..... 2 She says dirty jokes are taboo.
..... 3 She believes the saying that words can never hurt you.
..... 4 She says not all people are able to be good sports when a practical joke is played on them.

Arthur Oakes

..... 5 The Bargain Burger Restaurant sells tiny hamburgers at a low price.
..... 6 Scott asked the restaurant manager if he could pre-pay for super-size burgers for a lunch later that day.
..... 7 Bennett was convinced that the Bargain Burger charged very little for enormous burgers.
..... 8 Bennett was a good sport about the joke.

Melinda Hunter

..... 9 Melinda had been working for the store for a year when the practical joke was played.
..... 10 Noelle played a joke on her.
..... 11 Melinda got fired from her job.
..... 12 Melinda didn't mind being the butt of the joke.

D LISTEN TO PARAPHRASE | What's the difference between a practical joke and other types of jokes, according to Anna Powell?

E LISTEN TO SUMMARIZE | Summarize one of the stories to your partner. Your partner summarizes the other one. Use indirect speech in your summaries. Listen again if necessary.

"In the first story, Scott told the restaurant manager he'd bring a guest to the restaurant for lunch . . ."

"Noelle told Melinda she was supposed to walk around the store . . ."

F DISCUSSION | Did either of the practical jokes "cross the line"? Explain your opinion. How would you have reacted if either of these jokes had been played on you?

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Now let's discuss when joking "crosses the line."

A TALKING POINTS | Read the summaries of four practical jokes. Rate each one.



First joke

You start getting lots of phone calls from people who want to buy your house, even though you have no intention of selling it. It turns out that a friend played a joke on you by posting an online real estate ad offering your house at a very low price.

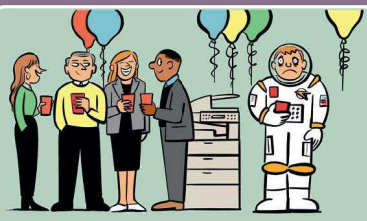
Rating –



Second joke

Someone in your family has placed a very real-looking fake crocodile in a kitchen cabinet. You open the cabinet and the crocodile leaps out at you.

Rating –



Third joke

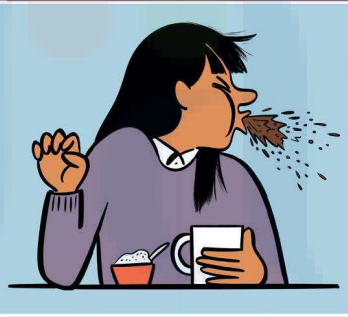
Some colleagues invite you to an office party, explaining that it's a costume party. So you decide to go dressed as an astronaut. However, when you arrive, everyone is dressed in regular clothes. You realize your colleagues played a joke on you.

Rating –

Fourth joke

Your brother has handed you a cup of coffee. When you take the first sip, it tastes shockingly bad, so you spit it out violently all over the table. Then you realize that he put salt in it instead of sugar.

Rating –



Rate the jokes

? = I don't get it.

1 = It crosses the line.

2 = It's sort of silly.

3 = It's really pretty funny.

4 = It's a hoot!

B PAIR WORK | Compare your ratings of the practical jokes in Talking Points. Do you agree? Then, for each joke, compare how you would have responded if you had been the butt of the joke. Would you have been a good sport? Or would you have been hurt?

C DISCUSSION | Discuss one or more of the questions.

1. Have you ever played a practical joke on someone? Have you ever been the butt of one? Have you ever seen or heard about one? What was the joke and what happened?
2. When do you think a practical joke "crosses the line"? Provide an example and explain your opinion.
3. When a person is the "butt" of a practical joke, should he or she simply be "a good sport" about it, even if it has been a really hurtful or embarrassing experience? What should or could a person do in that case?

WRITING HANDBOOK p. 148
- **Skill:** Writing dialogue
- **Task:** Write a story with dialogue

KEEP TALKING!
- **Ask your partner to explain his or her opinions.**
- **Provide more examples.**
- **Say as much as you can.**

Watch the video for ideas!

RECYCLE THIS LANGUAGE

It was hilarious! / so funny! / hysterical!
It was a hoot! / too much.
It cracked me up.
That's priceless!

I must have missed something.
That went over my head.
I don't get it.
Run that by me again?
You're kidding, right?

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