

Humorist Study

Part I

The first comedian I chose for this study is the Impractical Jokers group, which was originally composed of four lifelong friends. On their TV show “Impractical Jokers”, the members take part in various challenges performed in public. This makes them nerve wracking to perform but hilarious to watch as a viewer. For example, a challenge could be seeing who could sneak the most pencils into a random person’s pocket at a grocery store. Then, at the end of each episode, the person that lost the most challenges is then subjected to a much more difficult (and more humiliating) task, orchestrated by the other three members. A great example of one of these final challenges is in their 200th episode, where one of the Impractical Jokers had to pretend to be a Tumblr intern. While other interns were presenting about their experiences at the company, the imposter was forced to interrupt repetitively by shouting things in an annoying tone such as “Like a boss!”. This specific joke works so well because of its practical nature. As the joke is carried out, you can visibly see the deteriorating attitudes of the other audience members as the interruptions keep on happening. I also think situational humor plays into the joke’s effectiveness too, because most people are able to relate to a situation where they’ve had secondhand embarrassment. This makes it easier for the viewers to relate to the joke, prompting even more laughs.

The second comedian I chose is Tom Mabe, an American stand-up comedian and video creator that often makes jokes out of everyday things that people dislike, such as telemarketers or high gas prices. But one of his works that I found funny was a hitchhiking prisoner prank on YouTube which he posted over ten years ago. In this video, he’s dressed up in a classic orange prison jumpsuit while standing under a road sign along a highway that literally reads “PRISON AREA DO NOT PICK UP HITCHHIKERS”. As cars pass by, he sticks his thumb out as if he’s attempting to catch a ride. The glaring situational irony of this prank is the main reason why this joke works. It almost seems like you can’t get much more ironic than what Mabe was doing. I also feel like the triviality of this joke makes the peoples’ reactions even more humorous. The lack of seriousness in Mabe’s demeanor and actions in this video make it seem obvious to the viewer that it’s just a joke, but the way some people reacted makes it seem like they were taking it seriously. When this seriousness is contrasted with the lighthearted joke, the result is an enjoyable watch for the viewer.

When compared to each other, it’s pretty clear that the work of both comedians falls into the “practical” category. While carrying out their jokes, they utilize performing in public to garner authentic reactions from unsuspecting people. At the end of the day, I believe that these priceless reactions are the backbone of the humor produced by both comedians. In Mabe’s case, however, he also uses irony to enhance the meaning of the joke. In the Impractical Jokers example, there didn’t seem to be any glaring irony. While the public isn’t in on the joke for either comedian, the irony employed by Mabe makes it somewhat obvious that he’s just joking around, while the Impractical Jokers perform jokes in a way that is much more believable to the unsuspecting eye.

Part II

I wouldn't be able to imagine a world without comedy. It seems to permeate all parts of my life, and for a good reason. It can serve as a great way to socialize and bond with other people, and it's always a great feeling to make others laugh. The saying "laughter is the best medicine" truly holds water.

While humor is definitely subjective, I'm very inspired by practical jokes, specifically those that have been carried out with unsuspecting people around. Upon my recent exposure to the Impractical Jokers, I couldn't stop watching their content. I seemed to laugh at literally every single one of their jokes.

I'm also inspired by the amount of effort people can put into creating elaborate jokes. Some of the best jokes happen when the target is in a situation where they think to themselves "There's no way somebody would go to these lengths just for a prank". Because they think this, they don't expect anything remotely out of the ordinary to happen. But when something does happen and they get fooled, their reactions are so genuine and hilarious from a viewer's perspective. I love the Impractical Jokers segment where they put on an entire play just to prank one of their friends. Now, granted, there's an entire production team behind the TV show, and it's not totally unreasonable for them to pull something like this. But having a real audience watching the fake play and seeing their comedic reactions to the joke was very valuable, which inspires me. For this project, putting on an entire fake play isn't even realistic in the slightest. But, I do think that prompting and capturing the authentic reactions of people that we don't know will help lead to success.

I have great respect for people that are able to make almost any situation comical, or increase a situation's comedic level. Whether it be through witty remarks or some other method, the ability to capsize or boost the mood in a matter of seconds could be something very valuable to bring to this project. The thing about this, though, is that it can't be forced. It has to come naturally in order for it to be successful. This is precisely why it's a huge inspiration for me. It also varies on a case-to-case basis, and it's crucial you make sure that it's carried out during an appropriate time. In comedy, you really don't want someone ending up hurt or offended.

Along a similar line, I find it admirable how people can make jokes out of everyday things, like what Tom Mabe is commonly known for. Once, he messed around with a telemarketer and pretended that "Tom Mabe" was dead, and that the telemarketer had just called a crime scene. The ability of these people to bend the commonly accepted perspective on a subject is impressive to me.

I'm also inspired by the potential use of laughter as a unifying method. Since laughter is a universal language, there are a lot of ways to go about accomplishing this. At the moment, I'm not entirely sure how a practical joke could be employed to help people come together, but it's undoubtedly something intriguing to think about.

Works Cited

“Impractical Jokers 200th Episode: 200 Min of Punishments | TruTV.” YouTube, YouTube, 13 Feb. 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ger6gU_9v9A. Accessed 5 May 2023.

Mabe, Tom, director. How to Deal with a Telemarketer by Tom Mabe. YouTube, YouTube, 26 May 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7OgWcwgB50>. Accessed 5 May 2023.

Mabe, Tom, director. Prison Break Prank - by Tom Mabe. YouTube, YouTube, 16 May 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVbq0WHwgjk>. Accessed 5 May 2023.

Part 2 – Description of Proposed Project

Provide a detailed description of your project, including what you intend to develop (the form of humor, topic/content, techniques you plan to use, how many people you'll need to deliver the performance, visual aids/props, time, and any other details that will help to give me a picture of what you're planning to create. *This section is worth 25% of the grade for this assignment.*

1.) Are you collaborating with others? Yes* or No

Yes. Nick T, Harry, Uch.

2.) Which form of humor are you planning to develop? (See [menu](#).)

Reality and practical comedy, like "Impractical Jokers".

3.) What is the subject (or, in the case of satire, the target)? Why did you choose this subject?

The subject/target is the member of our group that is being told what to do. We chose this subject because we are heavily inspired by the Impractical Jokers, where the comedy comes from telling someone what to do and the reactions that come from random people.

4.) Which comedic [tools/techniques](#) do you plan to use, and why? (List at least 3 main ones and explain briefly how you plan to use them):

- *Blunder: make the person receiving instructions to look foolish or silly in public, which is what "Impractical Jokers" is all about*
- *Epigram: the poetic nature of these remarks could be used to make the person receiving instructions to look foolish in public, as people do not talk like this normally. If I randomly heard someone saying something like "Here lies my wife: here let her lie! Now she's at rest — and so am I" without any context, it would definitely make me turn my head.*
- *Practical Joke: this is the essence of "Impractical Jokers", our main inspiration. The practical aspect will come from carrying out something comedic in public.*

5.) Why do you think this is the right humor project for you? (If you have a group, can you assure me that everyone is invested in this idea and you won't have trouble

getting everyone to contribute meaningfully?) What makes you excited about this idea? What are some potential pitfalls you wish to avoid?

I think this is the right humor project for me because it's about getting out of your comfort zone. This project excites me because it would mean trying something completely new. All of our group members are on board with this idea, and some pitfalls we need to be careful about are not doing anything too outlandish or dangerous.

6.) If you get approval, what's your next step?

Discussing the finer details as a group, such as videotaping and how we want to structure our project. We need to come up with ideas for good prank ideas that are realistically doable for us. It would be a good idea to make sure we are all aware of what's allowed or not.