

Humorist Study

Analysis

The two humorists I chose to study were Trevor Noah and a group called the Impractical Jokers. Trevor Noah's comedy consists of social/political commentary through his witty and satirical jokes and life stories. His book, *Born a Crime*, was a very effective way at conveying serious social commentary through his funny and absurd life stories. For context, Trevor Noah grew up in South Africa during apartheid. Due to the discrimination he faced, he was forced to work odd jobs in order to make money. In one part of his life, his friend had convinced him to become a DJ since he had been illegally downloading music from the internet onto a CD he had. A custom for his DJing gigs was bringing a dancer along to hype up the crowd. Unfortunately for him, this particular gig was at a Jewish high school and the dancer's name was.... Hitler. So, after cheering "Go Hitler!" on the stage repeatedly, he and his friend were promptly kicked out. It's a funny story that makes you chuckle, but within the context of the larger situation, it was one of the only jobs he *could* do due to apartheid and discrimination he received. I thought that his style of comedy was very effective at shedding light on very real issues in a humorous way.

The second humorist(s) that I chose to analyze are a group called the Impractical Jokers consisting of comedians, Joe Gatto, Sal Vulcano, James Murray, and Brian Quinn. They are famous for their TV show *Impractical Jokers* in which they engage in idiotic and nonsensical public challenges given to each other by the other "jokers". On top of the funny challenges, each of the comedians has their own personalities and ways of dealing with the challenges given to them which is why it makes them so fun to watch. For instance, when completing challenges, Joe usually goes all in and doesn't care what anybody thinks about him but Sal gets embarrassed easily and usually has trouble completing the challenges. The real kicker comes at the end of the show with "tonight's big loser". The joker who fails the most challenges is the big loser of the episode. This is when they have to endure crazy punishments like skydiving or going to a children's painting class and drawing big Xs over all the canvases. Another reason why this is so funny is that the punishments are sometimes catered to each of the Joker's fears or general dislikes. For example, forcing Murr (James Murray) to skydive plays on his fear of heights. Or forcing Sal, who is an extreme germaphobe and ailurophobe, in a "broken" elevator with a sick person and a woman with her cat. It's extremely entertaining to watch their reactions in all of the challenges and punishments.

These two types of comedy are wildly different. Trevor Noah's comedy always has a meaning behind it. He uses his comedy as a tool to inform and entertain. The Impractical Jokers, however, are... impractical. There really is no rhyme or reason to their comedy. They just do whatever they think is funny to embarrass their friends. Despite their major differences, both types of comedy are successful in making people laugh, which is the most important part.

Reflection

Humor has always been a part of me. The types of humor that I enjoy the most are sarcastic humor and conversational humor. A good example of this comes from the show, *The Office*. A dynamic that I like is between the characters Dwight Schrute and Jim Halpert. Dwight always seems unaware of his absurd actions to which Jim always responds to with a sarcastic quip and then a deadpan look at the camera. I like this specific instance of humor because it is not only funny to the characters, but by looking at the camera, it invites the audience in on the humor.

Another group of people that capture conversational humor well are content creators. Unlike *The Office*, most content creator humor is not scripted. The content creators I like to watch play games with their friends and make funny jokes just as normal friends would do. When they banter with each other, the jokes flow naturally and I think that's really funny. It's like bantering with your friends, where you can roast each other in good faith and no feelings are hurt. At the end of the day, you can all laugh together.

Humor has also helped me to get out of some stressful situations. Sometimes when your friends get in arguments, you might not know what to do. This is where you can introduce humor to try to diffuse the situation and it often works. It's kind of like when there's a heckler at a comedy show and the comedian makes jokes to deflect the heckler's criticisms.