An Introduction to Satire

Another way to persuade…
Using humor to persuade...

- Beyond arguing, there are other ways to write persuasively. For example...

- Satire: a manner of writing that mixes a critical attitude with wit and humor in an effort to improve mankind and human institutions.
What is a satire?

A literary work that ridicules its subject through the use of techniques such as exaggeration, reversal, incongruity, and/or parody in order to make a comment or criticism about it.
The necessary ingredients…

- **Humor**—Satire is funny!

- **Criticism**, either general criticism of humanity or human nature or specific criticism of an individual or group.

- Some kind of **moral voice**: simply mocking or criticism is not “satire.”
When someone creates a satire, it is...

- Ironic/Sarcastic
- Either good natured criticism (Horatian after Horace) or bitterly cynical denunciation (Juvenalian after Juvenal)
- Always opposed to pretense, affectation, and hypocrisy
- More than a little bit prone to references to things society finds taboo or disgusting
### Examples of Satire in Pop Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject of the Satire</th>
<th>Comment or Criticism Being Made</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Saturday Night Live’s Weekend Update</em></td>
<td>Identification of human flaws and vices related to politics, entertainment, and current events.</td>
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<td><em>The Daily Show</em></td>
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<td>Scary Movie</td>
<td>Exaggerates the techniques used by horror movies to scare audiences.</td>
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<td>Austin Powers</td>
<td>Sexism towards women. Ridicules escapes by the spy and stupidity of the evil villain.</td>
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<td>Political cartoons</td>
<td>The policy decisions and personality traits of elected officials can be flawed.</td>
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<td><em>This is Spinal Tap</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rockumentaries</td>
<td>The excess of modern musicians.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Songs by Weird Al Yankovich</td>
<td>The excess of modern musicians. Simplicity and immaturity of the lyrics in modern music.</td>
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Contemporary Examples

- Our society is saturated with satire.

- For next time, bring in examples of satire.
  - Must be appropriate for school!
  - Be sure to think about what the piece is satirizing and be prepared to share next time.
Satire Vocabulary

- **Caricature**: An exaggerated portrayal of the weaknesses, frailties, or humorous aspects of an individual or group.
Caricatures of the presidential candidates by Saturday Night Live cast members in '03 year actually changed the way that the candidates performed in public.
Satire Vocabulary

- **Overstatement**: exaggeration: making to seem more important than it really is.
- **Understatement**: opposite of exaggeration; a statement that expresses a fact too weakly or less emphatically than it should.

- **Zoolander and the “fashion world”**
- **Weird Al’s “Amish Paradise”**
Satire Vocabulary

- **Verbal Irony**: a writer says one thing and means another.
- **Dramatic Irony**: When the reader or audience knows something the character does not.
Four Techniques of Satire

Exaggeration/Hyperbole

- To enlarge, increase, or represent something beyond normal bounds so that it becomes ridiculous and its faults can be seen.
Four Techniques of Satire

Incongruity
- To present things that are out of place or are absurd in relation to its surroundings.
Four Techniques of Satire

Reversal

- To present the opposite of the normal order (e.g., the order of events, hierarchical order).
Four Techniques of Satire

Parody

- To imitate the techniques and/or style of some person, place, or thing.