

What's So Funny?

"A cheerful heart is good medicine" (Prov. 17:22a)
Pat Nease

☺ What is humor?

Essentially, humor is the unexpected. It can be verbal, visual, or physical.

Root components: being reflective of or imitative of reality
surprise/misdirection, contradiction/paradox, ambiguity...

Importance of Humor - Recent studies have confirmed the therapeutic effects of laughter.

Humor provides relaxation, not only from daily stresses but also from the tension caused by other factors of attention in a story, particularly conflict and suspense. Humor sharpens the mind.

Humor can help you gain and maintain your audience's attention.

One reason for incorporating humor in your stories is to heighten the rapport with your audience. Humor, and the laughter that comes from it, makes the listener a participant in the telling.



Adding Humor to Your Stories:

☺ What makes YOU laugh?

☺ What is it you want to make funny? The humor must come from the characters and the story.
*If it doesn't spring from the situation or move the story forward, leave it out.

☺ **Free Association** – clichés, proverbs, recent/historical events, idioms
Nouns – and their attachments
Noun exercise

☺ **Finding the Twist** – dialog, description, exaggeration, simile, metaphor, funny words, double entendre, malapropism, parodies, puns, sarcasm, anachronism, irony...

So _____ that _____ ...exercise

☺ **Comparisons**: one of the easiest ways to get the listeners to feel exactly what you want them to feel – and a great place for a chuckle.

☺ **Word Play**: fooling around with well-known and well-used phrases as well as Things in Threes, which leads to... Surprise! (My college roommates spent all day, every day, playing video games. I was flabbergasted. I was annoyed. I was third.)

Humor used to express things that people wish they could have said and done is not only well received, but it's also empowering.

☺ **The Importance of Research** – You should know quite a bit about your subject (story) but read about it anyway. Use the internet, library, people, thesaurus, dictionary – anything and everything to add to your store of material. The more material, the more opportunity to find – and say - something funny.

☺ **Attention to Details, Specifics**

A greater wealth of material with which to play!

Music played vs Patty Loveless wailed about being "Busted" on the radio.

Read! Listen! Observe! Write! Organize! DEVELOP YOUR HUMOR MUSCLE!!!

☺ **Know Your Audience**

There's a whole lot of difference in funny for kids and funny for adults.

☺ **When You Think You've Got It...**

Find some victi... I mean, volunteers to hear your story. Maybe more than once. Maybe more than twice. Sometimes your spouse is not the best one to ask...

☺ **Timing, a ticka ticka ticka ticka timing...** (Jimmy Jones, 1960...am I old or what?)

You gotta know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em, know when to walk away, know when to run... (Kenny Rogers, The Gambler. Not sooo old.)

Pauses, looks, voice, pacing, gestures, facial expression, interaction

☺ **Sound Effects ~ Voice**

Sound effects are good, but you'll have more opportunity to evoke laughter by using vocal characterizations. The goal is not just to produce a voice, but to convey a character.

☺ **Faces**

The most expressive part of the human body is the head!

☺ **Movement**

Physical should follow the feeling. Therefore, if you want to move funny you have to feel funny.

☺ **A Sampling of Sources for Humorous Ideas**

Anguished English - Richard Lederer

Diane Goode's Book of Silly Stories and Songs

The Comic Mark Twain Reader - Charles Neider

Curing the Cross-Eyed Mule - Loyal Jones and Billy Edd Wheeler

For Laughing Out Loud: Poems to Tickle Your Funnybone - Jack Prelutsky

Hodgepodge and Hodgepodge Two - J. Bryan, III

Kids Pick the Funniest Poems - Bruce Lansky

Laughter in Appalachia - Loyal Jones and Billy Edd Wheeler

Noodlehead Stories: World Tales Kids Can Read & Tell - Martha Hamilton & Mitch Weiss

Noodles, Nitwits, and Numbskulls - Maria Leach

Random House Book of Humor for Children

A Treasury of Jewish Folklore - Rabbi Tellushkin

Whoppers, Tall Tales and Other Lies - Alvin Schwartz

*Patrick McManus books - funny, outlandish hunting and fishing stories

Pretty Good Joke Book (several editions) Prairie Home Companion

The Monster Stick & Other Appalachian Tall Tales - Paul & Bil Lepp

Fractured Fairy Tales - A. J. Jacobs

The Joy of Lex, How to Have Fun With 860,341,500 Words - Gyles Brandreth

Comedy Thesaurus 3,241 Quips, Quotes, and Smartass Remarks - Judy Brown

TV, Internet, and Newspaper News

*Haunt the used book outlets, the Friends of the Library bookstores, www.cheapbooks.com