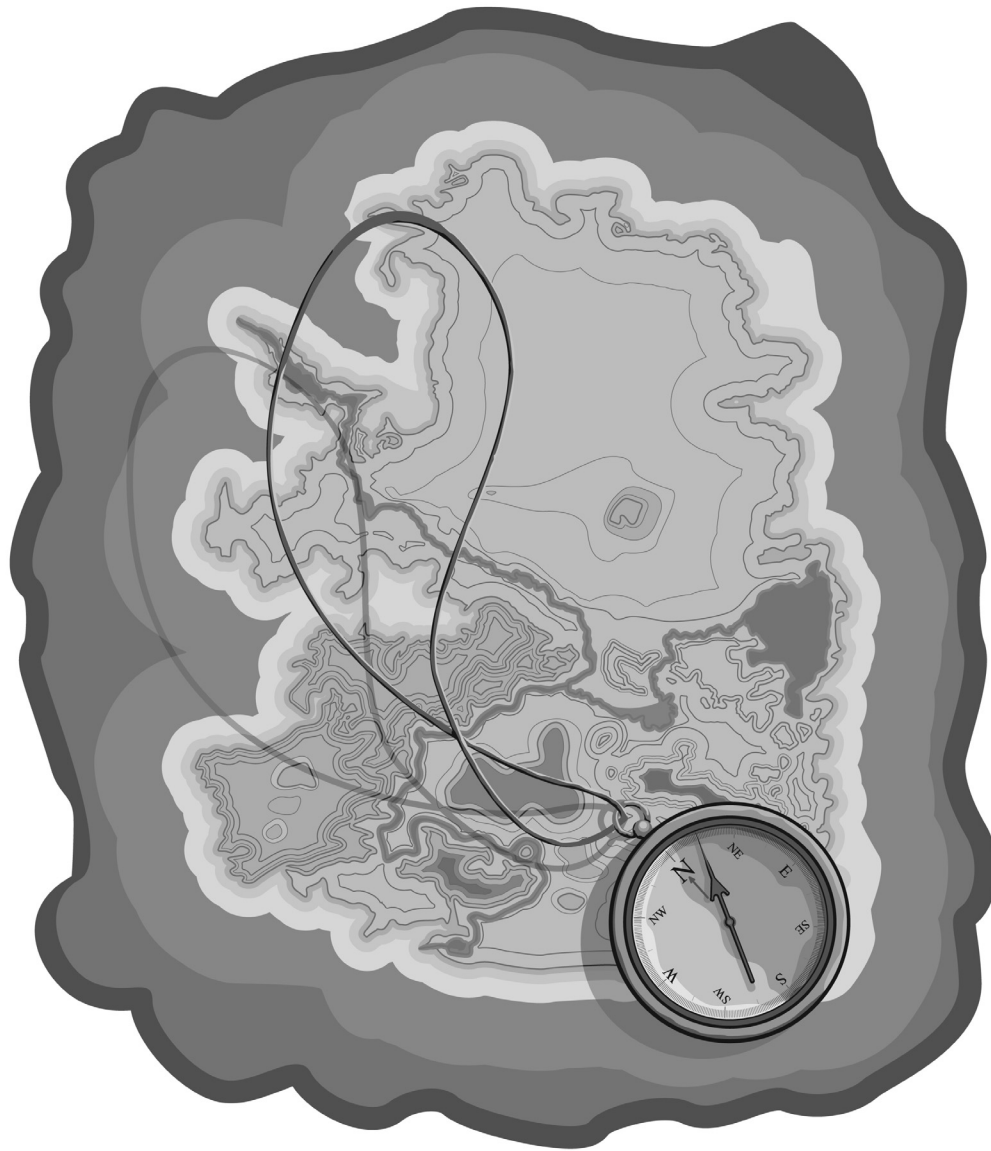


Expeditions in Your Classroom

English Language Arts



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Introduction

We all remember a project we did in school, often with more vivid recall than we can summon for entire courses or years. And for good reason. Projects command attention. They force students to grapple with new information, skills, and technologies in ways that embed learning in memory. They contextualize education and help students truly understand why “I need to know that.”

This book contains ten projects designed to leave a lasting mark. These projects provide students with authentic tasks involving real problems, real products, and real people, and use themes that hook young people. At the same time, they have teachers thoroughly in mind.

The high-school curriculum is packed, and, as teachers well know, a project can quickly take on a life of its own. *Expeditions in Your Classroom* provides activities and materials that scaffold student tasks, set clear criteria for final products, and offer assessment tools and a detailed outline of project steps so that teachers can focus energy on instruction rather than project management.

About Project-Based Learning

In *Real Learning, Real Work*¹, Adria Steinberg describes the qualities of powerful projects: the six A's.

Authenticity

Students solve problems and questions that are meaningful and real. People outside school walls tackle the same challenges. What students create and do has value beyond school.

Academic Rigor

Students encounter challenging material and learn critical skills, knowledge, and habits of mind essential for success in one or more disciplines.

Applied Learning

Students put their knowledge and skills to work in hands-on ways, and learn how to organize and manage themselves along the way.

Active Exploration

Students go into the field. They investigate and communicate their discoveries.

Adult Relationships

Students connect with adults with relevant expertise. They observe them, work with them, and get support and feedback.

Assessment

Students play an active role in defining their goals and assessing their progress. Adults around them give them ongoing and varied opportunities to demonstrate progress.

¹Steinberg, Adria. *Real Learning, Real Work (Transforming Teaching)*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1998.

Introduction

Project Format and Materials

Each project contains the following materials:

Teacher Pages

- **Overview:** information on project learning goals, prior knowledge or experience needed by students, time needed for the project, and team formation information
- **Suggested Steps:** a day-by-day view of how to deliver project activities
- **Project Management Tips and Notes:** suggestions for how to handle possible issues or information on project options and variations
- **Extension Activities:** suggested activities for extending the project or exploring related areas
- **NCTE/IRA Standards Connection:** a list of standards students will meet through the project
- **Answer Key:** answers for Before You Go and Skill Check questions

Student Pages

- **Expedition Overview:** a description of the project challenge, learning objectives, key vocabulary terms, materials needed, and web resources students use for project activities
- **Before You Go:** lead-in activities designed to review fundamental skills or knowledge needed for the project
- **Off You Go:** activities that support the core project, including guidelines and instructions for final products or presentations
- **Expedition Tools:** handouts and worksheets associated with project activities
- **Check Yourself:** two assessment tools that students use to check skill development (practice problems or questions) and evaluate their project performance overall

An English Language Arts Project Assessment Rubric is also included and can be used with any project.

Comic Literature

Overview

Students learn about literary humor by exploring its history and forms. They evaluate examples of humor in film or television. They create a comic scene based on literature they are reading.

Time

Total time: 12 to 15 hours

- Before You Go—Oh, the Humor: two 55-minute classes and 45 minutes of homework
- Activity 1—Lighten Up the Screen: 30 to 60 minutes of homework and one 55-minute class
- Activity 2—Spoofs and Goofs: three to four 55-minute classes and 4 to 6 hours of homework

Skill Focus

- literary humor
- critical reading
- research
- creative-writing skills
- oral-presentation skills

Prior Knowledge

Some exposure to Greek comedy and tragedy (concepts or actual works) will be helpful.

Team Formation

Initial activities are done as a class, in small groups, or independently. Comic scene is done in teams of two to four students (can vary by team).

Lingo to Learn—Terms to Know

- **caricature:** ludicrous exaggeration of the peculiarities or defects of a person or thing
- **comedy:** a literary work that amuses and ends happily (or ends well)
- **farce:** a play based on a humorous situation (versus character development)
- **humor:** a quality that causes amusement
- **hyperbole:** exaggeration or overstatement; hype
- **irony:** the reverse of what is expected; the contrast between what is said and what is meant

Comic Literature

- **parody:** a literary work that imitates the style of another literary work
- **play on words (wordplay):** turn of phrase with a double meaning, a pun; a humorous use of language
- **rule of three:** technique in humor writing or joke-telling in which you use a pattern of three to structure comedic delivery (e.g., two straight lines/elements to set up the action or joke, followed by the funny element, punch line, or unexpected twist)
- **satire:** literature designed to ridicule the subject of the work; not intended to amuse
- **wit:** intellectual humor or keenness; the ability to express things in an ingeniously humorous way

Suggested Steps

Preparation

- Choose two or three literary passages or poems that use humor as examples for students. Alternatively, select short pieces the class can read together to kick off the project. For instance, choose a literary piece (an essay, a short story) and a humor column (by Dave Barry, Art Buchwald, and so forth). See Possible Literature Connections.
- Write forms of humor on strips of paper. Place them in a cup, a hat, or an envelope for students to choose from. See Before You Go: Oh, the Humor.
- Review Before You Go: Oh, the Humor. Be prepared to lead a discussion on the questions.
- Consider how students will form groups.

Day 1

1. Give an overview of the project and review project materials.
2. Begin Before You Go: Oh, the Humor. Ask students if they can name different types of humor.
3. Form groups of two or three students. Allow each group to choose a type of humor from a cup, a hat, or an envelope. Have students try to define their words.
4. Review definitions as a class.
5. Ask each group to demonstrate their form of humor. Give each group a role-play scenario or let them choose.
6. Begin to discuss questions on Expedition Tool: Literary Humor.
7. Assign more in-depth humor research for homework.

Comic Literature

Homework

Have students research humor types and search for an example.

Day 2

1. Discuss research findings and examples. Continue discussion of Literary Humor questions.
2. Share your own examples.
3. Have students swap examples and read them.
4. Assign Activity 1: Lighten Up the Screen for homework. Alternatively, you might show and discuss scenes from film or television together as a class.

Day 3

1. Discuss film or television examples.
2. Explain Activity 2: Spoofs and Goofs (final product). Review comedic scene guidelines.
3. Divide students into teams or allow students to create their own.
4. Give due dates for the draft, final script, and performance. Indicate whether students will work in class, at home, or elsewhere.

Day 4 through Performance Day

1. Give students an opportunity to “workshop” their drafts in class. They can do this within their teams, or one team could support another.
2. Outline any performance requirements (specify if props are okay, if there is a time limit, if students should memorize lines or work with scripts, and so forth).
3. Watch performances.
4. Ask students to provide feedback using the Comedic Scene Feedback form. Discuss results.
5. Allow students to revise final scripts if desired and collect.

Comic Literature

Final Day

1. Have students complete the Skill Check questions.
2. Check and review answers.
3. Have students complete the Check Yourself! Self-Assessment and Reflection worksheet and submit it (optional).

Project Management Tips and Notes

You could spread this project out over a semester or a year; for instance, have each group sign up to do a comedic scene for one of the novels the class will study. Space presentations out accordingly. This might provide some welcome comic relief from typically heavy high-school literature reading.

Possible Literature Connections

Aristophanes: *The Frogs* or *Clouds*

Aristotle: *Poetics* (Part V on humor)

Isaac Asimov: *Isaac Asimov's Treasury of Humor* or *Asimov Laughs Again*

W. H. Auden: "For the Time Being" (poem)

Jane Austen: *Pride and Prejudice* (Mr. Collins proposing to Elizabeth)

Stephen Vincent Benét: *The Devil and Daniel Webster*

Lewis Carroll: *The Hunting of the Snark* or any work

Miguel de Cervantes: *Don Quixote*

commedia dell'arte

Joseph Heller: *Catch-22*

O. Henry: "Confessions of a Humorist" (short essay)

Marietta Holley: "Samantha" books

Langston Hughes: *The Best of Simple*

Menander (Greek New Comedy): *Dyskolos* (*The Grouch*)

Moliere: *The School for Wives*

Ogden Nash: any poem

Comic Literature

Expedition Overview

Challenge

Can you picture Aristotle laughing so hard that he spits out his *kykeon* (barley water)? While we don't know if that really happened, we do know that Aristotle gave humor plenty of thought. He called humor "educated insolence"—meaning that humor is a bit subversive and inextricably linked to knowledge. To poke fun at the world, you have to know it. During this project, you will explore the roots of humor in history and literature and then put your own comedic powers to the test.

Objectives

- To explore types of literary humor and the history of humor in literature
- To analyze the use of humor in writing, television, and film
- To write and perform a scene that uses elements of literary humor

Project Activities

Before You Go

- Oh, the Humor

Off You Go

- Activity 1: Lighten Up the Screen
- Activity 2: Spoofs and Goofs

Expedition Tools

- Literary Humor
- Comedic Scene Feedback form

Other Materials Needed

- computer with Internet access
- television/DVD player (optional)
- Other materials will vary by project (for example, props for comedic scenes).

Lingo to Learn—Terms to Know

- caricature
- comedy
- farce
- humor
- hyperbole
- irony
- parody
- play on words/wordplay
- rule of three
- satire
- wit

Comic Literature

Expedition Overview

Helpful Web Resources

- About.com: Humor—Funny or Laughable Literature
http://classiclit.about.com/od/humo1/Humor_Funny_or_Laughable_Literature.htm
- American Comedy Institute: The Art and Craft of Comedy
www.comedyinstitute.com/comedyblog.html
- Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Sense of the Comic
<http://etext.virginia.edu/cgi-local/DHI/ot2www-dhi?specfile=/texts/english/dhi/dhi.o2w&act=text&offset=3476469&query=humor&tag=SENSE+OF+THE+COMIC>
- Emerson College: American Comedy Archives
www.emerson.edu/comedy
- The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: Library of Southern Literature—Humor in Literature
<http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/humor.html>
- MSN Encarta: The Funniest Jokes in History
http://encarta.msn.com/column_humormain_tamimhome/The_Funniest_Jokes_in_History.html
- The Paris Review: Interviews
www.theparisreview.org/literature.php

Comic Literature

Before You Go

Oh, the Humor

Goal:	To learn about the history of humor in literature and the types of literary humor
Materials:	computer with Internet access
Tools:	Literary Humor worksheet

Directions

1. Choose one of the following types of humor from the container provided by your teacher: satire, parody, farce, hyperbole, irony, or caricature.
2. Try to define the term you chose. Have you heard it before? Review definitions as a class.
3. Use one of the following scenarios to demonstrate your form of humor. Take a few minutes to sketch out your scene and then perform it for the class.
 - a conversation between a parent and a child
 - a case of mistaken identity
 - an encounter with a landlord
 - meeting an international visitor or traveling to a foreign country for the first time
 - a patient visiting the doctor
 - an advertisement for a product
4. Use your Expedition Tool: Literary Humor to guide you in researching your type of humor. Find out more about its etymology and history, as well as about writers of this form and humor in general.
5. Find an example of your form of humor in literature. Consider which writers are masterful at writing using this form. Select a passage that shows the form in action. Read it carefully and bring a copy to class. Be prepared to explain why it is a great example.

Comic Literature

Expedition Tool

Literary Humor

Use your classroom discussions, web resources, and reading to answer the questions below.

1. What makes something funny? What do funny books and movies have in common? Why can something be funny to you and not to someone else?

2. What are common forms of humor? Are there forms of humor that were used in the past that are less popular today? What are some outdated forms of humor? Why do you think they are less popular today?

3. What are some archetypal comic characters?

4. Has the idea of comedy changed through the ages? Why does comedy vary from culture to culture?

Comic Literature

Expedition Tool

5. What are the origins of the word *humor*? _____

6. How do the classic notions of “comedy” and “tragedy” in literature compare?

7. What form of humor did you research? What is the definition? How did its name originate? Give highlights from its history.

8. Compare your findings with classmates. What examples of humor did you and other students find? List authors, titles, and humor types in the chart below.

Author	Title	Humor Type

Comic Literature

Off You Go

Activity 1: Lighten Up the Screen

Goal: To analyze humor in a favorite movie or television show

Materials: television/DVD player

Directions

Go watch television! Choose any film or television show that you find funny. Analyze the comedic elements of one scene or the show as a whole. Answer the questions below.

Film/show title: _____

Brief overview (summarize the plot):

1. What's so funny? Describe the scene below.

2. What is the structure of the comedy? What is the situation? How is it set up?
How does it unfold or resolve?

Comic Literature

Off You Go

3. What forms of humor are used? Give specific examples.
