TEACHERS—WE NEED YOU TO GET YOUR WHOLE CLASS WRITING COMEDY!

Enter the new comedy writing competition to give your students the chance to have their work made and broadcast by the BBC this autumn.

FULL OF IDEAS AND LESSON PLANS FOR TEACHING LITERACY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Competition open to Years 9 and 10 in England and Wales, Years 10 and 11 in Northern Ireland and S3 and S4 in Scotland.
Welcome to BBC Comedy Classroom

BBC Comedy Classroom is a UK-wide competition for students in Years 9 and 10 in England and Wales, Years 10 and 11 in Northern Ireland and S3 and S4 in Scotland. It aims to provide a fun and inspiring way to engage students by helping your class find the funny side of literacy, and by demonstrating how literacy is the bedrock of good comedy and comedy writing.

Knowing the huge pressures on your time, we have produced a teaching resource pack to help you easily integrate the competition into lessons and ensure the materials can be used flexibly. We’ve also designed the entry categories for the competition to be inclusive, and open to students of all abilities.

This initiative is just one example of how BBC Learning delivers the BBC’s commitment to education, including:

- **Bitesize**: our online curriculum-linked resources for children and young people to support their studies and revision outside the classroom – see [bbc.co.uk/bitesize](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize) to find out more.

- **BBC Live Lessons**: specially produced, fully interactive programmes streamed live into classrooms, supported by curriculum-linked resources. I hope you and your class of budding comedians will be able to tune into the Comedy Classroom Live Lesson scheduled for 12 May – see [bbc.co.uk/livelessons](http://www.bbc.co.uk/livelessons) for more details.

- **Educational campaigns**: our major initiative this year is the **BBC micro:bit**, a personal coding device being distributed to all students in Year 7 (or equivalent) to help them engage with coding – take a look at [microbit.co.uk](http://microbit.co.uk).

I really hope the Comedy Classroom initiative, delivered in partnership with the National Literacy Trust and our colleagues in BBC Comedy, provides some great laughs in your classroom as well as giving your students the opportunity to produce some fantastic entries.

Good luck to all your students.

**Sinéad Rocks**

Head of BBC Learning
BBC Comedy Classroom

We air hundreds of hours of original comedy every year across BBC TV, Radio and Online. A lot of effort and love goes into making people laugh and continuing the rich heritage of finding and developing the biggest names in British comedy. They all started somewhere, usually finding their funny voice at school. I’m thrilled that David Walliams is supporting the project by starring in some of the film resources that accompany this competition. We are also extremely grateful to have support from a wide range of comedians, producers and writers throughout the UK in making this brand new and innovative BBC competition come to life.

While this competition might uncover the next generation of brilliant comedy writers and performers, the main aim is for everyone taking part to have fun and learn about some of the techniques that make great comedy. There is a great sense of authorship in creating comedy and it often involves playing with language, concepts and a degree of lateral thinking. It’s a joyful unifying force when people laugh along together and it can help us to make sense of and reflect the world around us. The British sense of humour is a defining national characteristic and something to be both nurtured and celebrated. This competition will see the winner’s work professionally produced and broadcast, something many writers can only dream of. We need your help as teachers to get your class of comedians motivated and entering in their droves.

My passion for comedy became most intense around the target age group for this competition. Obsessing over comedy classics such as Only Fools and Horses, Fawlty Towers and Porridge; experiencing the thrill of laughing at Billy Connolly records and dreaming that one day I might be lucky enough to be involved in comedy as my career. If this competition had been around back then, I know I would have pestered my teacher to let my class enter. It would have been cringe-worthy probably but, regardless, it would have helped my confidence. I’m sure my friends and I would have loved the opportunity to have a go and learn about comedy writing in school.

Comedy Classroom is a collaboration between our colleagues in BBC Learning and the National Literacy Trust, who have produced specific learning resources to help teachers deliver structured lessons around comedy writing within the classroom. I hope you find them useful and have fun explaining to your students how the art of comedy works – be it funny anecdotes that get turned into monologues, sharp one-liners, comedy characters based on people they know or turning everyday observations into hilarious comedy.

We have devised three different entry categories:

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Each category requires a flash of inspiration, wit and a keen eye. This accompanying handbook is packed full of useful hints and tips about comedy and how you can deliver entertaining and fun lessons with literacy at the core. I hope you enjoy creating and sharing the laughs and really look forward to having my ribs tickled.

Good luck!

Shane Allen
Controller, BBC Comedy Commissioning
Comedy writing - a classroom motivator

The Comedy Classroom competition provides a brilliant framework to explore comedy writing in lessons as well as enjoying plenty of laughter at the same time.

As teachers, we instinctively know when our students are engaged. We also know that when they have a purpose to write they are far more likely to produce work with passion.

The National Literacy Trust has produced this resource pack with the BBC, both to mobilise great writing in the classroom and as a driver to the national Comedy Classroom competition 2016. Our research shows that young people don’t enjoy writing as much as they enjoy reading. We believe that introducing them to comedy writing can change that. Comedy plays with language, content, grammar and audience awareness to create laughs. It can be a great asset in the classroom. A focus on comedy writing is a perfect match for English core requirements across the UK and harnesses many key writing skills.

Although primarily designed for students who are eligible for the 2016 competition (Years 9 and 10 in England and Wales, 10 and 11 in Northern Ireland and S3 and S4 in Scotland) the resources in the pack are easily accessible for lower or upper age ranges and can also be used as a standalone resource to help develop ongoing work across the key stages.

While entries will only be accepted in the year groups mentioned above, that doesn’t stop teachers of other years having fun with the resources in the classroom.

As well as a series of three 60-minute teaching sequences, including student-facing activities that can be launched directly onto the smartboard or printed for homework and extension, the pack also contains top tips from comedy industry producers, writers and performers to help students to write the funniest routines, sketches and comedy captions that they can.

The teaching sequences give you a taster of how you might access each area of the competition but remember, this really is only a guide. With the comedy captions sequence, you may choose the ideas in here as a starter activity or as a way to engage learners who struggle with extended writing. You may of course choose to develop a whole series of sketches or to expand the stand-up comedy work into an entire learning cycle.

The pack is designed to be used by anyone from specialist English teachers to supply cover, with differentiation built into each of the three competition categories. What better way to kick-start the summer term than with a raft of accessible and uplifting writing activities?

To get the comedy writing juices flowing look out for a special Comedy Classroom Live Lesson broadcast for schools in May.

Jonathan Douglas
Director, National Literacy Trust

go online for supporting material and films on
how to write for comedy
bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom

Welcome to Comedy Classroom from David Walliams

We all love to laugh, and we all love a competition. Welcome to the BBC’s comedy competition where your class of comedians can share their comedic ideas with the nation.

I was 12 when I first started writing and performing comedy sketches in my school. They were simple spoofs of TV shows at the time, but immediately I discovered that there’s no better feeling in the world than making people laugh.

So whether your class is full of budding performers, or they’re bursting with brilliant ideas for new comedy sketches – BBC Comedy Classroom is for you and your students.

This booklet is crammed full of great ideas to help you plan lessons and understand the essential skills that go into creating comedy. Along with this printed resource pack, I’ve made some short films which help explain each of the entry categories.

Comedy can be hard work at times, but you should have a laugh thinking up ideas that will make other people laugh.

Good luck
David Walliams

BBC COMEDY CLASSROOM

HAVING A WRITE LAUGH // COMPETITION CLOSES 24 JULY
BBC Comedy - making people laugh for over 50 years

Ever since the BBC began broadcasting to the nation, the word “entertain” has been pretty high up on the agenda. As Britain blinked its way out of the darkness after the Second World War, it turned to the fledgling BBC to bring a smile back to the nation’s faces. With early radio programmes such as The Goon Show or Hancock’s Half Hour proving to be a huge success with the nation, the stage was set for comedy writers to bring us a huge range of television comedy programmes, from sketch shows like Monty Python’s Flying Circus, French and Saunders and That Mitchell and Webb Look to shows featuring stand-up comedy such as Mock the Week, Live at the Apollo and Russell Howard’s Good News.

An introduction to comedy writing

One of the most important ways we communicate is by making each other laugh. Telling someone a good joke makes everyone feel good – the person who hears the joke feels good, and the person who tells it does too. We share jokes amongst our school friends, at home with our family and as adults in the workplace.

Comedy writing is all about using words and language to make people laugh. If you tell a joke to your friends, only you and your friends get to hear it. However, if you write some jokes that are published or broadcast, then they’re out there for the whole world to see – and everyone has the opportunity to laugh along.

Comedy writers take a lot of care over their work. They try to choose the best words to put on the page. They use particular skills and techniques to make their jokes as funny as possible. By trying those skills and techniques for ourselves, we can increase our confidence with words and language, as well as coming up with comedy writing that everyone can enjoy.

There are many different kinds of comedy writing, but our resources and competition will focus on three main categories:

- **Stand-up comedy** – the writer performs words that put across their own particular view of the world.
- **Sketch comedy** – the writer turns a funny idea into a scene that people can perform.
- **Caption comedy** – the writer looks at an image and creates a funny line to go with it.

![I can’t believe there’s a competition for being funny at school. When I tried to be funny at school I got told to shut up and stand in the corner, and that was when I was in teacher training! As a teacher I’d have welcomed a competition that engaged the class clowns.](https://example.com)

**Micky Flanagan Comedian**

BBC.co.uk/comedyclassroom

**About this resource**

The teaching sequences in this pack are primarily designed for students who are eligible for the competition (Years 9 and 10 in England and Wales, 10 and 11 in Northern Ireland and 53 and 54 in Scotland) but they are easily accessible for lower or upper age ranges and can also be used as a standalone resource to help develop ongoing work.

While entries will only be accepted in the year groups mentioned above, that doesn’t stop teachers of other years having fun with the resources in the classroom.

Each of the three sequences focuses on a scaffolded route into a different area of comedy writing (stand-up, sketch comedy and captions) and builds on the key reading, writing and speaking skills below. Forms and stimulus material are there as suggestions and can be adapted to suit needs and writing levels. Sequences are student-facing and supported by the following:

- **Key objectives**
- **Literacy outcomes**
- **Starters and main activities**
- **Plenaries**
- **Extension activities**

Separate downloadable student-facing activity slides to accompany this pack are available at bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom.

By using the resources in this pack and by taking part in the competition, students will be able to address the following generic literacy outcomes which have been drawn from the National Curriculum in England, the Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland, The Northern Ireland Curriculum and the Curriculum for Wales.
The competition and how to enter

What better summer term motivation than to explore comedy with your students and enter them into the BBC Comedy Classroom competition, where they could see their work made and broadcast this autumn?

Teachers can upload students' entries from 19 April until 24 July 2016 at bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom.

There are three categories that you can enter your students’ work into: Class Joker (stand-up), Class Act (sketch writing) and Class Comic (caption writing). Each category requires the writer to use a different skill and challenges students to use a range of techniques found in the comedy toolbox provided in this pack.

Category 1: Class Joker. Entrants are required to submit both a written script of their stand-up routine and an accompanying filmed recording of the performance. The script should be typed on A4 sized paper and no longer than 400 words. The performance should be a maximum of two minutes in duration, using the exact same wording as in the script. A team of up to four people can work together on the script but the stand-up routine must be performed by one person.

Category 2: Class Act. Entrants are required to submit a written script of their unique sketch. It must be based in a single location, and have no more than four characters. The typed script submission should be on A4 sized paper and no longer than 450 words, including stage directions.

Category 3: Class Comic. Entrants are required to view the four images provided on the downloadable template on the website, and type appropriate captions into the spaces provided for each image. Each caption should be no more than one sentence in length, with the correct punctuation, and fit in the space(s) provided on the template. The submission template for this category should be downloaded from the BBC Comedy Classroom website, completed and then uploaded back to the website.

Individual and group entries are permitted in each category. A group entry is a submission by four students or less. Teachers are required to upload all entries via the website bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom.

Students can enter a maximum of two categories only: as an individual entering one of the categories and as part of a group entering a different category that is separate from their individual entry. Students can’t enter each category more than once.

Please remember, teachers are responsible for uploading and submitting entries on behalf of students and should make sure any students working in groups haven’t entered already as part of another group.

The competition is open to all students in the school year groups 9 and 10 in England and Wales, Years 10 and 11 in Northern Ireland and S3 and S4 in Scotland on the closing date of Sunday 24 July 2016.

PLEASE NOTE All entries must be written in English. There must be no mention of real school names or locations, and no use of the real names of individual people from the student’s real life, including teaching staff and students.

Full terms and conditions of entry are available at bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom.

How will we judge it?

In each of the categories, all entries will be judged anonymously. We will have a panel of judges who will read every entry and select those that fulfil the judging criteria the best. The panel will be made up of representatives from the BBC, the National Literacy Trust and of course comedy industry experts who know better than anyone what it takes to get a good laugh out of an audience.

The panel’s criteria for judging the entries will be as follows.

Funny – Each entry will be judged on its comedic merit and whether it’s funny or not. All entries must have comedy at the core of the writing with a clear punchline or joke that the audience can understand. Sounds obvious, but sometimes the simplest things can be the easiest to forget!

Originality and creativity – The entry must be unique and it must not replicate or be directly copied from any existing characters, gags or sketches, unless the work is a deliberate parody or spoof. The entry must show creativity, be imaginative and distinctive.

Characterisation – Each entry should demonstrate fully the characterisation of the roles that have been created in the submitted works. Don’t leave anything to chance, give us a clear idea of who your characters are and what you want us to know about them.

Well written – The competition is also about improving literacy skills and competency, so good writing is really important and will be considered when judging. Judges will also be looking for work that demonstrates a good understanding of the rules of comedy writing for the category in which the work has been entered.

Teachers who submit an entry that reaches the short-list will be contacted by the BBC in September as part of the entry verification process.

Final judging will then take place and the winning and highly commended entries will be revealed in the autumn.

WHAT CAN YOU WIN?

Winners in each category will have their written work made and broadcast by the BBC this autumn, and the chance to visit the BBC to see it filmed. The winning entry will receive a Comedy Classroom trophy, a signed certificate and a visit from a BBC Comedy comedian to your school.

There will also be a number of highly commended entries who will receive a signed certificate and expert feedback on their written work.

What to do next...

The next three pages include fact sheets on each of the three competition categories with plenty of writing tips that you can share with your students. We’ve also provided a comedy toolbox and comedy glossary for you to photocopy and give to students to refer to whilst working on their entries.

Having a write laugh // Competition closes 24 July
Russell Howard, Kevin Bridges, Sarah Millican, Omid Djalili, Michael McIntyre – some of Britain’s most popular TV celebrities are stand-up comedians.

In our Class Joker category, we’re looking for the funniest people in your classroom. We want them to get their best jokes down on paper before turning them into a filmed performance. Does your school contain some budding stand-ups?

**STAND-UP TIPS FOR STUDENTS**

- Stand-ups make it look like they’re coming up with everything on the spot, but in fact they prepare carefully for every performance.
- It may look like they’re just talking naturally, but stand-ups use many elements from the comedy toolbox in their performances. Misdirection, metaphor and repetition are particularly important to stand-ups.
- All great stand-ups have their own distinctive way of approaching their material. Some prefer to prepare carefully and arrive with a fully explored routine, while others perform more spontaneously. Decide if you want to use a microphone as a prop or to help with your performance. If you do, will you use it in a stand-up routine? Things like this can matter if you intend to move into a filmed performance.

**PERFORMANCE TIPS:**

- Try to make eye contact with as much of your audience as possible. If there is a connection between you, they are more likely to laugh. Encourage them to see your point of view verbally.
- Be understandable. The audience needs to follow what you are saying, so remember to slow down, try to relax and pronounce your words as clearly as you can.
- Think about the order you are telling your story or joke in. Consciously and deliberately decide what information is going to be left in or out.
- Delivery is really important. Don’t forget, it’s not just what you say, but how you say it that can make an audience laugh. Your facial expressions, timing and tone are all important. Can you “do the voices” of the characters in your routine? Have a play with it.
- The golden rule of stand-up is – be as funny as possible. If there is a connection between you, they are more likely to laugh. Encourage them to see your point of view verbally.
- As the great comedian Bill Bailey says when writing jokes: “Start with a laugh and then work backwards from there.”
- A stand-up routine can involve telling a story, discussing a particular subject, simply telling jokes or a mixture of these. Every stand-up needs to think about what approach works best for them.
- Decide if you want to use a microphone as a prop or to help with your performance. If you do, will you use it in a stand-up routine? Things like this can matter if you intend to move around on stage.

**PAUSES:** Using pauses in stand-up helps to hold the audience’s attention.

**PACE:** Going faster in some places and slower in others can help make a routine more interesting.

**PRACTICE:** The more times you perform a routine, the funnier it gets.

From Walliams and Friend to Horrible Histories, we all love sketches. For a sketch, what you need is one big funny idea that you can turn into a scene, then pack it with big characters, plenty of action and, of course, jokes.

In our Class Act category, we want to read some brand new sketches about anything you wish. Think of weird scenarios, unusual characters or crazy things going on in life. Fire up the imagination and give us a new situation that no one’s ever seen before.

**THE SKETCH**

**SKETCH TIPS FOR STUDENTS**

- All the best sketches start with one great idea. That’s the acorn from which the comedy tree grows. Brainstorming is a good way to come up with that great initial idea. You may come up with twenty before you settle on the one you want.
- Try to identify where the laughs are likely to come in your sketch. You only have a short amount of time so try to cram in as many opportunities for laughter as you can.
- Sketches often involve strong characters who speak and behave in interesting or unusual ways. Thinking about funny characters can help when coming up with ideas for sketches.
- Thinking of interesting and unusual situations is another good way of coming up with sketch ideas. Are there particular places or times when funny things might be more likely to happen?
- A sketch should start with a good idea and build towards an unexpected ending. The ending is particularly important in a sketch because everyone loves a great punchline.

**TOP SKETCH TIPS:**

- Each sketch should have a BIG IDEA
- A beginning, a middle and an end
- Dialogue
- Action (as stage directions)
- JOKES!

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**HA! HA!**

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- Action (as stage directions)
- JOKES!
You might have seen comedy captions on TV, in shows like *Mock The Week* or *Have I Got News For You?* It’s a great way to get a big laugh from an unexpected combination of words and pictures.

In our Class Comic category, we’re looking for some fantastic laugh-out-loud captions to go with each of the four images we’ve supplied on the website.

**Caption Tips for Students**

- The best comedy captions make us look at the pictures they describe in a whole new way. The obvious is not always that funny.
- One good way of coming up with a funny caption is to decide what the people in the picture are really thinking. Do they have secret thoughts they wouldn’t want us to know about?
- Metaphor can also be a useful tool in writing a comedy caption. Does the picture remind us of anything else? Can we use that idea to come up with a funny caption?
- A comedy caption might take the form of a headline describing what’s going on in the picture or it might be a line of dialogue from one of the people in the picture.

**Top Tip on Drafting and Redrafting**

As with any piece of work, first thoughts and ideas are not always the best. Go back to your work and get others to give you feedback on what works well and what needs improving. Even the most experienced comedians will try out new material on a test audience before they go out on tour, so you should do the same.

**Top Caption Tips:**

- Comedy writers will come up with lots of alternative captions for a single picture, then spend time editing their favourite one. Can you convey your comic idea in fewer, plainer words?
- With the growth of social media, memes have become a popular way of telling jokes through the Internet. If there are any memes you have seen, what made them effective and made you laugh?
- Great comedy captions tend to be short. They make a strong and funny point using as few words as possible. Try to get everything across in the space of a single sentence.

**Comedy Glossary**

Alongside the definitions in the Comedy Toolbox, here are some really useful words that you might find helpful for assembling your own pieces of comedy writing.

- **Call-back**
  A call-back is when a comedy writer refers back to an earlier joke to get a second or even third laugh from the same joke.

- **Caricature**
  This is a character that uses a distorted or exaggerated version of a person’s features or personality to create a comic effect.

- **Deadpan**
  A type of comic delivery with all the usual emotion taken out. Usually a deadpan comic will also keep their facial expressions to a minimum.

- **Dialogue**
  A scene which has at least two characters speaking to each other.

- **Escalation**
  The process of turning a small joke into a bigger and funnier story, usually with an exaggerated and over-the-top conclusion.

- **Farce**
  A fast-paced piece of set comedy that involves a lot of slapstick and usually contains people entering and exiting quickly or mistaking character identities.

- **One-liner**
  A joke which is a single sentence but packs the punchline in straightaway. Hedgehogs – why can’t they just share with everyone else?

It’s easy to make your friends laugh, they know you and get you, that’s why they are your friends. When you make a stranger laugh though, WRITE IT DOWN! Take a notebook everywhere, don’t be shy, chat to people outside your friendship group. Say the funny thoughts in your head out loud. Loads of it will be funny. Keep them!

Shappi Khorsandi
Stand-up Comedian
The Comedy Toolbox

As any good comedian will tell you, there is more than one way to get a belly-aching, side-splitting laugh from your audience. We have brought together some of the many different techniques that can be used to create a fantastic piece of comedy. Just like when you are building something, you’ll need to use a variety of comedy tools for different comedy jobs. All comedians use these tools – and they should come in handy when you are writing for all the categories in our competition. We have coloured them to match the learning sequences we explore in this pack.

**Repetition**
This is when you use the same word or phrase over again to make what people say sound funnier.

“I like beans. Runner beans, broad beans, kidney beans, baked beans, big beans, small beans, even washed-up old has-beens. I like beans.”

**Metaphor**
This is when you describe something as being like something else – and if you choose the right metaphor, you can get a very funny result.

“It’s an hour of torture in the most brutal prison known to man. Or as I like to call it, double physics.”

**Misdirection**
This is when you lead an audience to expect one thing, and surprise them with an unexpected ending.

“I used to throw up every day on the school bus. That’s when I realised I wasn’t cut out to be a driver.”

**Absurdity**
This is when you get a laugh by doing or saying something completely unexpected – in fact, something completely random.

“Teacher: What is the capital of France? Student: Badgers?”

**Put downs**
Being cheeky can sometimes be funny, as long as we don’t make the jokes too personal. Put downs are often used in dialogue when one person thinks they are more important than the other.

“Right now, you’re about as much use to me as a snowman in a heatwave!”

**Juxtaposition**
This is when you combine two things that don’t normally go together and the unexpectedness of the combination makes it funny.

“My name is James Bond 007, licence to kill. I used to work for MI5, but now I run my own shoe shop.”

**Sarcasm**
This is when you say something that isn’t true, and everyone listening knows that you don’t think it’s true.

“Oh joy! Oh fun! Another Maths test! Hooray Hoorah!”

**Inversion**
This is where you take a normal situation, and make it the opposite of what it usually is.

“If this business deal is to go well, we have to look utterly professional – so I’ve brought us all skin tight bumblebee costumes to wear to the interview.”

**Slapstick**
This is when you use physical humour – falling over, dropping something, bumping into someone – rather than dialogue to get a laugh.

“The headteacher is walking down the corridor. She sees a banana skin on the floor, steps round it, and carries on walking. Then she slips on a huge patch of grease and falls backwards with her legs in the air.”

**Spoof**
This is when you make your own funny version of a TV show, film or situation that already exists.

“Welcome back to the eggs factor! Where we find out if chickens really can sing!”

**Having a Write Laugh // Competition closes 24 July**
TEACHING SEQUENCE 1 – STAND-UP (60mins)

Key Objective
To create a short comic story that can be performed as a stand-up comedy routine.

Description
In this lesson students will work in pairs to identify opportunities from their own experience that they can develop into a piece of stand-up comedy for a family audience.

Literacy Outcomes
- Presenting ideas in list and diagram form
- Using metaphor, descriptions of physical comedy and sarcasm in writing
- Presenting confidently in front of an audience

Teacher Notes on Delivery
This lesson is very much about challenging students to observe the world around them and then transform what they know into stories that will make a family audience laugh. Students may be nervous about sharing their work at the end of the lesson, so it is important to nurture a supportive audience environment that is non-judgemental. A simple round of applause before and after the sharing of a routine can work wonders in building student confidence.

The “microphone” and stand at the end of the lesson is simply a useful prop to help give focus to the performance. A working sound system would be a bonus, but is not a necessity.

Resources
- Clip: Josh Widdicombe – Live at the Apollo
- Comedy toolbox sheet
- Microphone and stand prop (a bonus if it’s working, but not compulsory)
- Student-facing activity slides

Differentiation
Those students who struggle to access traditional texts should enjoy being able use their own experience as a stimulus, while those who are already confident with developing narrative work have the opportunity to use a range of techniques from the comedy toolbox to produce a quality piece of comic writing.

STARTER (15 MINUTES)

- On your own, make a list of locations you are likely to see on your journey home from school this evening (public buildings/shops/parks/houses/others).
- Share your list with the person sitting next to you. Are there any places that you have a shared experience of? Choose one that you think the other people in the room would also understand about.
- Now make a spider diagram of any activities or events that might happen at your chosen place, including even the most mundane of tasks. For example, if your choice is a take-away restaurant, you might see staff cooking meals, using the till or mopping the floor, or customers queuing and ordering their food.
- Again, choose one of these activities or events to focus on in your work – which one do you think has the most comic potential? Could something go wrong that would make the activity funny?

MAIN ACTIVITY (30 MINUTES)

As a class, watch the stimulus clip of Josh Widdicombe talking about doing a charity walk in Wellington boots filled with hot custard. View the clip online at bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom on the Class Joker – Stand-up page. As you watch, try to identify where Josh has used the techniques of metaphor, sarcasm and slapstick in his routine. When the technique is finished, discuss this with the class.

Josh’s story takes one aspect about something we all understand (charity fundraising events) and uses a variety of comedy tools to explain to us how funny his Wellington boot experience was.

- Take your chosen location from the starter activity. Write an exaggerated metaphor that describes your chosen location. “I was in X the other day. It was like being in...”
- Now write down a slapstick funny incident that could have happened in your location that you think might cause people to laugh. Try to describe the event in two or three sentences that are punchy and get straight to the point.
- Finish your short routine with a sarcastic comment that you think sums up how you felt about the whole situation.
- Now practice speaking your routine with your writing partner. Try to give each other tips and advice about moments where you think that the audience will laugh and where you might use your own gestures and facial expressions to make it even funnier.

PLENARY (15 MINUTES)

- Q&A: What makes a piece of performance suitable for a “family audience”? Encourage students to check their work doesn’t contain any bad language and isn’t likely to be offensive to anyone watching. Also, talk about what makes a quality, supportive audience and creates the right atmosphere for a stand-up to feel comfortable.
- Share some of the short routines with the rest of the class using a microphone and stand at the front of the class if you would like to. After each routine, ask the class to pick out moments they think worked well in the story and moments they think have an opportunity to improve. See as many as will fit into the remainder of the lesson to give students a chance to compare and contrast the work.

HOMEWORK/EXTENSION

Develop your routine further by using other techniques in the comedy toolbox. Is there a way that your routine could include absurdity? Could you misdirect the audience to think one thing then tell them another? Perhaps you can lead into a second story in your routine. Try to lengthen your routine to two minutes in length in preparation for your competition entry.

TOP TECHNICAL TIPS

You can record your film (with sound) using the equipment you may already have in school such as a tablet or smartphone, compact stills camera or camcorder. If possible use a tripod to keep your camera steady as this will ensure better results.

If you are using a recording device with a built in microphone, remember to stand close to the microphone for best sound results, and don’t forget to do a sound test.

Top technical tips
When you are happy with your finished stand-up routine, don’t forget to enter your work into our competition. It doesn’t have to be in the form of observational comedy, it can take any form of stand-up that takes your fancy. Remember to type your script up in no more than 400 words and teachers can upload it along with a two-minute filmed version of the performance at: bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom.

Who knows, this may be our winner.

Having a write laugh // Competition closes 24 July

Josh’s story takes one aspect about something we all understand (charity fundraising events) and uses a variety of comedy tools to explain to us how funny his Wellington boot experience was.

- Take your chosen location from the starter activity. Write an exaggerated metaphor that describes your chosen location. “I was in X the other day. It was like being in...”
- Now write down a slapstick funny incident that could have happened in your location that you think might cause people to laugh. Try to describe the event in two or three sentences that are punchy and get straight to the point.
- Finish your short routine with a sarcastic comment that you think sums up how you felt about the whole situation.
- Now practice speaking your routine with your writing partner. Try to give each other tips and advice about moments where you think that the audience will laugh and where you might use your own gestures and facial expressions to make it even funnier.

PLENARY (15 MINUTES)

- Q&A: What makes a piece of performance suitable for a “family audience”? Encourage students to check their work doesn’t contain any bad language and isn’t likely to be offensive to anyone watching. Also, talk about what makes a quality, supportive audience and creates the right atmosphere for a stand-up to feel comfortable.
- Share some of the short routines with the rest of the class using a microphone and stand at the front of the class if you would like to. After each routine, ask the class to pick out moments they think worked well in the story and moments they think have an opportunity to improve. See as many as will fit into the remainder of the lesson to give students a chance to compare and contrast the work.

HOMEWORK/EXTENSION

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Who knows, this may be our winner.

Having a write laugh // Competition closes 24 July
TEACHING SEQUENCE 2 – SKETCH COMEDY (60mins)

Key Objective
To understand how to create a spoof version of a popular BBC TV show

Description
This lesson encourages students to engage with television genres and then invert their knowledge of them to find a fresh, comic angle. By the end of the lesson they will have produced the basic mechanics of a short spoof sketch.

Literacy Outcomes
*Identifying genres and conventions
*Understanding features of a piece of script
*Presenting as a character

Resources
*That Mitchell and Webb Look “Numberwang” sketch clip and script
*Comedy toolbox sheet
*Flipchart paper and pens
*Sticky tack
*Student-facing activity slides

Differentiation
By pooling student ideas at the start, lower ability students will be able to easily access the discussions regarding television genres. They should then be able to create a simple piece of script based on one of the four suggested genres. If teachers find it useful, they can expand or reduce the number of genres available depending on class size.

Teacher Notes on Delivery
This lesson leans heavily on students’ prior knowledge of television genres and the conventions which they use within their programmes. We have chosen genres such as a TV show from BBC One, such as Citizen Khan. The starter section focuses on collaborative learning to pool ideas. By using different coloured pens, teachers should be able to easily observe if any groups are struggling with generating ideas at an early stage in the lesson.

With the stand-up session, which also focused on performance, it is important to remember that students may feel uncomfortable sharing their work at first and that creating a supportive environment among students is paramount in helping those who may be nervous about performance.

MAIN ACTIVITY (30 MINUTES)

After each performance, members of the audience can report back on parts they found funny and suggest ways that the sketch could be developed further.

In your pairs, share your sketches with the class. Audience members can try to spot where misdirection, put-downs and inversion have been used.

Divide the class into four groups, each with a different coloured pen, and ask them to rotate around the room, noting down on the flipchart paper the things they would expect to see when watching those types of programmes. Groups should have one minute at each station and change scribe each time.

Quickly summarise the conventions the groups have noted down and stick these to the wall as a reference using sticky tack.

PLenary (10 MINUTES)

In your pairs, share your sketches with the class. Audience members can try to spot where misdirection, put-downs and inversion have been used.

After each performance, members of the audience can report back on parts they found funny and suggest ways that the sketch could be developed further. Are there any new jokes you could add in? What about extra characters?

HOMework/extension

With the comedy toolbox as a reference, discuss how the sketch used misdirection, inversion and put-downs to help generate plenty of comedy lines. Keep your script to a maximum of two characters for now, so that you will be able to perform it with the person sat next to you, finishing with a big punchline at the end of the scene.

Develop a sketch that you might want to use in the Comedy Classroom competition. Use other comedy techniques from the comedy toolbox to develop your sketch, which can include up to four characters and focus on any subject that you please.

IVER: 18

Did you know I slept with Mr. Bean aka Rowan Atkinson? It’s true. Growing up almost every night I would listen to his comedy while in bed. You have to live and breathe this stuff, let it enter your pores. My top tip for writing and performing comedy is find your favourites and listen, watch, listen, watch, listen and watch again!

Adil Ray
Comedy writer, performer and star of BBC One sitcom Citizen Khan

www.bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom

Having a write laugh // Competition closes 24 July

Will yours be the sketch that makes our sides split?
Numberwang

Written by Mark Evans and James Bachman
The idea was thought of by Mark Evans, James Bachman and David Wolstencroft

Numberwang is a good example of a parody sketch of a popular genre of TV show but not a specific programme. It resonates with people as they recognise what you’re doing, but you don’t need to know anything about a specific show. Parody is tricky that way, you might be able to lovingly parody a show you like, but if it’s not really well known, no one’s going to get your jokes.

Mark Evans
Co-Writer, Numberwang sketch

This sketch was very much based on Countdown – there’s a numbers board and a Maths-undrum. The main idea we had was that the phrase “That’s Numberwang!” repeated over and over and seemingly randomly would be funny, which it turned out it was. There appear to be rules that it’s assumed everyone knows. The sketch ‘world’ should have assumed rules that mean what happens is kind of normal. So there appear to be rules in Numberwang even though there are of course none!

James Bachman
Co-Writer, Numberwang sketch

EXAMPLE SCRIPT

This is how your written script should be laid out...

MUSIC: AN UPBEAT SLIGHTLY MAD THEME
THE SET IS A BRIGHTLY LIT GAMESHOW SET
BUT WITH NUMBERS EVERYWHERE

HOST
Hello and welcome to Numberwang, the maths quiz that simply everyone is talking about.
Our contestants tonight are Julie from Somerset and Simon from Somerset. Okay, if you're ready, let's play Numberwang.

DRAMATIC MILLIONAIRE STYLE MUSIC

JULIE
Three.
SIMON
Nine.
JULIE
Sixteen.
SIMON
Twelve.
JULIE
Err… Eight point two.
SIMON
Four.
HOST
That's Numberwang! Round two, Simon to play first.
SIMON
Twenty seven.
JULIE
Thirty.
SIMON
Nineteen.
JULIE
Eighty four.
HOST
That's Numberwang! Let's go to the Maths Board. Julie.

THERE IS A BOARD. IT HAS LOTS OF NUMBERS ON IT

JULIE
I'll take the four… the six… and the three point four.
HOST
That's Numberwang! We love those decimals, Julie. Simon?
SIMON
I'd like the root fourteen… and the twelve.
HOST
That's Numberwang! Round three. Julie to play first.

A DIFFERENT BOARD APPEARS. IT IS STILL JUST FULL OF NUMBERS. EVERY TIME A CONTESTANT SAYS A NUMBER, AN UNCONNECTED ONE LIGHTS UP ON THE BOARD

JULIE
Eight minus four.
HOST
That's Numberwang! Simon?
SIMON
A hundred and nine times seventeen.
HOST
That's Numberwang.

JULIE
Forty seven…
TEACHING SEQUENCE 3 – CAPTIONS (60mins)

### Key Objective
To understand how to create short, effective comedy captions.

### Description
This lesson requires students to engage with a series of images that will help them to develop the skills needed to write comedy captions.

### Literacy Outcomes
*Identifying genres and conventions
*Understanding features of a piece of script
*Presenting as a character

### Resources
*Starter pictures and descriptions
*Countdown timer
*Comedy toolbox sheet
*Handouts of pictures with space for captions
*Student-facing activity slide

### Teacher Notes on Delivery
This lesson concentrates on creating short, punchy writing which is designed to quickly engage a reader. Ideally the pace of the lesson should reflect this, in order that students do not “overthink” their responses when answering the questions. The session contains a number of verbal question and answer tasks, both led by the teacher and student to student, so you may wish to consider appropriate pairings if you know this may cause issues with less confident students.

### Differentiation
As stated above, this session contains a large number of short tasks as the intended product is a single sentence. This leaves teachers free to amend the time spent on each task as they see fit. Lower ability students may spend more time enjoying the initial activity of muddling up definitions, and only focus on creating a caption for a single image in the main body of the lesson. Students who are more confident with the task will be able to develop a greater number of “story” examples for the pictures and gain greater experience of editing their paragraphs down to a single caption.

### Starter (10 Minutes)
- On the student-facing slides, look at the five images of everyday items and their descriptions (saxophone, elephant, toilet brush, bobble hat, banana). Discuss whether any of them are inherently funny. (Expect a frank conversation about bananas and their comic value.)
- In your writing pairs, rearrange the definitions of the pictures to see which combinations you find the funniest. For example, an elephant... something you put on your head to keep yourself warm. Write down your three best findings.
- Report back. Discuss why juxtaposition and absurdity can make what is usually an ordinary statement funny for an audience.

### Main Activity (30 Minutes)
- On the student-facing slides, look at picture A. Try to forget any information that you may know about the show Doctor Who or its characters. Pretend this is just an ordinary scene with ordinary people. What are they doing? Why are they here? When did they arrive? Where are they going? How did they get here?
- Write down your finished caption underneath your picture.
- Using the absurd answers you were given by your partner, write a short paragraph explaining who the characters are, what is happening, when it takes place etc.
- Give the class one minute to ask their six questions to their partner, noting down their answers. Be strict with time so that they give short answers and do not think for too long about their response. Remember that we are aiming for comedy so the more absurd, the better. After a minute, swap over with your partner and ask the questions from the other member of the pair.

### Plenary (15 Minutes)
- Using sticky tack, create a gallery around the edge of the room of all the pictures and captions in the class. Students can write down three caption ideas for each of the four images in the competition. Look at the space provided for each image it could be a line of dialogue or a caption headline, and type the words into the template. Try bringing in other techniques from the comedy toolbox that may draw out the humour in the pictures. Perhaps you could test them at home to see what kind of reaction you get and help you to choose which caption to have as your entry to the competition.

### Homework/Extension
Teachers can download the Class Comic entry template from the website. You can find this under the Teachers Resources tab at bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom. Students can write down three caption ideas for each of the four images in the competition. Look at the space provided for each image it could be a line of dialogue or a caption headline, and type the words into the template. Try bringing in other techniques from the comedy toolbox that may draw out the humour in the pictures. Perhaps you could test them at home to see what kind of reaction you get and help you to choose which caption to have as your entry to the competition.

### Competition
Once you are happy with the captions for the four images, (which should be no more than one sentence each and typed in the space provided) teachers can upload the completed template and submit the entry into our competition at bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom.

Could you be our King or Queen of the one-liner?

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bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom

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**Student-facing activity slide**

**Picture A**

**Handouts of pictures with space for captions**

**Teacher Notes on Delivery**

This lesson contains a number of verbal question and answer tasks, both led by the teacher and student to student, so you may wish to consider appropriate pairings if you know this may cause issues with less confident students.

**Countdown timer**

**This leaves teachers free to amend the time spent on each task as they see fit. Lower ability students may spend more time enjoying the initial activity of muddling up definitions, and only focus on creating a caption for a single image in the main body of the lesson. Students who are more confident with the task will be able to develop a greater number of "story" examples for the pictures and gain greater experience of editing their paragraphs down to a single caption.**

**Differentiation**

As stated above, this session contains a large number of short tasks as the intended product is a single sentence. This leaves teachers free to amend the time spent on each task as they see fit. Lower ability students may spend more time enjoying the initial activity of muddling up definitions, and only focus on creating a caption for a single image in the main body of the lesson. Students who are more confident with the task will be able to develop a greater number of "story" examples for the pictures and gain greater experience of editing their paragraphs down to a single caption.

**Resources**

*Starter pictures and descriptions
*Countdown timer
*Comedy toolbox sheet
*Handouts of pictures with space for captions
*Student-facing activity slide

**STARTER (10 MINUTES)**

- On the student-facing slides, look at the five images of everyday items and their descriptions (saxophone, elephant, toilet brush, bobble hat, banana). Discuss whether any of them are inherently funny. (Expect a frank conversation about bananas and their comic value.)
- In your writing pairs, rearrange the definitions of the pictures to see which combinations you find the funniest. For example, an elephant... something you put on your head to keep yourself warm. Write down your three best findings.
- Report back. Discuss why juxtaposition and absurdity can make what is usually an ordinary statement funny for an audience.

**MAIN ACTIVITY (30 MINUTES)**

- On the student-facing slides, look at picture A. Try to forget any information that you may know about the show Doctor Who or its characters. Pretend this is just an ordinary scene with ordinary people.
- Write down six speculative questions to ask your partner, one for each of the question types. Eg. Who is this? What are they doing? Why are they here? When did they arrive? Where are they going? How did they get here?
- On the student-facing slides, look at picture A. Try to forget any information that you may know about the show Doctor Who or its characters. Pretend this is just an ordinary scene with ordinary people. What are they doing? Why are they here? When did they arrive? Where are they going? How did they get here?

**Literacy Outcomes**

*Student-facing activity slide

**Resources**

*Starter pictures and descriptions
*Countdown timer
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**DIFFERENTIATION**

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**Start Activity:**

- Set the starter pictures and definitions for the class to work with.
- Provide the countdown timer to help with timing.
- Ask students to work in pairs and discuss the questions.

**Main Activity:**

- Use the comedy toolbox sheet to generate ideas for captions.
- Ask students to write down their captions underneath the images.

**Plenary:**

- Display the pictures and captions around the room.
- Ask students to discuss which captions they think are the funniest.

**Homework/Extension:**

- Students can practice writing captions for the images at home.

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**COMPETITION**

Once you are happy with the captions for the four images, (which should be no more than one sentence each and typed in the space provided) teachers can upload the completed template and submit the entry into our competition at bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom.

Could you be our King or Queen of the one-liner?
Once you have completed your competition entries, why not take it further?

- Create a classroom display of your comedy captions. Try and find some pictures in magazines and newspapers and give them a comedy twist too! Fill your walls with fun!
- Perform an assembly or run a lunchtime comedy club showing off some of your best sketches and stand-up routines. You could even create a whole show filled with hilarious skits and scenes to share after school with other staff or parents – a great way to bring everyone together and celebrate.
- Think cross-curricular. Is there a way that other subjects could use comedy to develop their learning? What about writing some historical sketches? Or performing some stand-up about science experiments that went wrong? Perhaps Business Studies could run your comedy club for you.

Once you have completed your competition entries, why not take it further?

TAKE IT FURTHER – USEFUL LINKS

Create a classroom display of your comedy captions. Try and find some pictures in magazines and newspapers and give them a comedy twist too! Fill your walls with fun!

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Think cross-curricular. Is there a way that other subjects could use comedy to develop their learning? What about writing some historical sketches? Or performing some stand-up about science experiments that went wrong? Perhaps Business Studies could run your comedy club for you.

GET IN TOUCH

Please let us know about the fun you’ve been having in class. Teachers can use #ComedyClassroom on social media and email us at comedy.classroom@bbc.co.uk if you have any questions or a great story to share about the work you’ve been doing with your class.

Visit the website for FAQ’s and more classroom resources, including downloadable student facing slides and posters. Check back regularly as we’ll be posting new comedy writing hints and tips online at bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom.

Look out for a special Comedy Classroom Live Lesson broadcast online for schools in May. For more information visit bbc.co.uk/livelessons.

Remember to watch the films and resources online.

“Good Luck!”
David Walliams

Make sure you laugh every day, it’s as important as breathing! Be as observant as possible, people tell you funny things all the time in passing so write them down. If you see something hilarious write it down, never stop writing!

Nathan Bryon
Comedian, actor and writer

The wonderful thing about writing comedy is that the best jokes and stories come from truth and real life situations. Imagine! A project where the only revision is watching what happens around you. You can write surreal skits, physical set pieces or political rants about what the future holds. Comedy is the best way I can express myself, I hope it works for you too!

Susan Calman
Stand-up Comedian

DATES TO REMEMBER

19 April Comedy Classroom competition opens.
Teachers can submit entries online at bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom.

12 May The Comedy Classroom Live Lesson will broadcast online to secondary schools around the UK. Get involved at bbc.co.uk/livelessons.

24 July Comedy Classroom competition closes.
Don’t forget to upload your entries before the closing date!

September Teachers of shortlisted entries will be contacted by the BBC in mid-September for verification before final judging takes place.

October Teachers of the winning entry in each category will be contacted by the BBC in early October to arrange filming.

November The winners and highly commended entries in each category will be announced.

Remember to watch the films and resources online.

“Good Luck!”
David Walliams
Alongside the clips used in the accompanying lesson plans, there are a host of clips in the BBC comedy archive to help your students understand the mechanics of both stand-up and sketch comedy. There are also examples of how captions can be used to turn an ordinary picture into a comedy gem.

**STAND-UP**

For stand-up examples visit bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom and click on the Class Joker – Stand-up tab.

**CHARACTERISATION AND PERFORMANCE**
Noel Fielding
Michael McIntyre’s Comedy Roadshow, BBC One
Open Mike Productions
Written & Performed by Noel Fielding

**SATIRE OF MODERN CELEBRITIES**
Katherine Ryan
Live At The Apollo, BBC Two
Open Mike Productions
Written & Performed by Katherine Ryan

**OBSERVATIONAL COMEDY**
Rhod Gilbert
The Royal Variety Performance 2008, BBC One
BBC Productions
Written & Performed by Rhod Gilbert

**THE SKETCH**

For sketch writing examples visit bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom and click on the Class Act – The Sketch tab.

**REPETITION AND SPOOF**
That Mitchell and Webb Look, BBC Two
BBC Productions
Preformed by David Mitchell
Written by David Mitchell and Robert Webb

**INVERTING EXPECTATIONS**
Goodness Gracious Me, BBC Two
BBC Productions
Written by Richard Pinto and Sharat Sardana
Performed by Sanjeev Bhaskar and Kulvinder Ghir

**SPOOF & CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES**
The Javone Prince Show, BBC Two
BBC Productions
Writing team includes Phil Bowker, Javone Prince, Jon MacQueen, Akemnji Ndifornyan, Samson Kayo and Brian Bingwa.
Performed by Javone Prince, Samson Kayo, Ann Akin and Akemnji Ndifornyan

**CLEVER CAPTIONS**

For examples of caption comedy visit bbc.co.uk/comedyclassroom and click on the Class Comic – Clever Captions tab.

**CAPTION**

Have I Got News For You, BBC One
Hat Trick Productions
Writing team includes Kevin Day, Dan Gaster, Ged Parsons, Shaun Pye, Colin Swash and Natt Tapley
Performed by Charlie Brooker and Paul Merton

Due to copyright restrictions, some of the archive clips referred to in this resource may not be available to view on the Comedy Classroom website after the competition ends.