

LOL Lit: Unpacking Humor in Stories

Grade Level: 4

Time Allotment: 45-60 minutes

Lesson Procedure:

Introduction: What Makes Us LOL? (5 minutes)

Ask the student: "What does 'LOL' mean? Why do we say or type it? Think about something you read recently that made you laugh or smile. What was funny about it?" Briefly discuss their answer, guiding them to think about **why** it was funny.

Explain: "Just like people tell jokes or act silly to make us laugh, authors use special tricks in their writing to make stories funny. Today, we're going to become humor detectives and figure out some of these tricks!"

Meet the Humor Toolkit (10 minutes)

Introduce a few common humor techniques with simple explanations and examples:

- **Exaggeration (Hyperbole):** Making something seem much bigger, smaller, better, worse, or sillier than it really is. *Example: "The backpack weighed a ton!" or "He snored so loudly, the windows rattled!"*
- **Surprise/Unexpected Twist:** Something happens that the reader wasn't expecting, often catching them off guard in a funny way. *Example: A tough-looking biker carefully pets a tiny kitten.*
- **Wordplay (Puns, Silly Names):** Using words that sound alike but have different meanings, or creating funny-sounding names for characters or places. *Example: "Why don't scientists trust atoms? Because they make up everything!" or a character named Professor Poopenshtinken.*
- **Situational Irony:** When the outcome of a situation is the opposite of what you'd normally expect, often in a funny way. *Example: A firefighter's house burns down. A dog named 'Tiny' that is actually huge.*

Discuss each one briefly. Ask the student if they can think of any other examples they've seen in books, movies, or even funny online videos (described simply).

Humor Detectives: Guided Practice (15 minutes)

Read a short, funny text excerpt together. Choose one known for its humor.

Pause during or after reading and ask guiding questions:

- "Did anything seem exaggerated or over-the-top here? What was it? Why is that funny?"
- "Did anything surprise you? What were you expecting to happen instead?"
- "Are there any funny names or silly words used?"
- "Is this situation the opposite of what you might expect?"
- "Why do you think the author wanted to make this part funny? (e.g., just to entertain, to show a character's personality?)"

Help the student identify the specific techniques used in the text.

Create Your Own LOL Moment! (10-15 minutes)

Challenge the student: "Now it's your turn to make something funny! Think about one or two of the humor techniques we learned (like exaggeration or surprise). Your task is to either:"

1. Write a short paragraph (3-5 sentences) describing a funny scene or situation using at least one technique.
2. Draw a picture of a funny scene that uses exaggeration or surprise, and maybe add a funny caption.

Offer prompts if needed: "Imagine a character trying to do homework but... (add exaggeration/surprise)." or "Think about an animal doing something unexpected..."

Share and Review (5 minutes)

Have the student share their creation (reading their paragraph or explaining their drawing). Ask them which humor technique(s) they tried to use.

Review the main techniques discussed (Exaggeration, Surprise, Wordplay, Situational Irony). Ask: "What's one trick authors use to make their writing funny? Why is understanding humor in stories useful? (e.g., helps us enjoy reading more, understand the author's message)."

Differentiation/Extension:

- **Support:** Focus on only one or two techniques (e.g., just exaggeration). Provide sentence starters for the writing activity ("It was so funny when the character exaggerated by saying..."). Use simpler texts with very obvious humor.
- **Challenge:** Introduce more subtle humor types like understatement or sarcasm (if appropriate). Ask the student to analyze longer texts or compare how two different authors use humor. Have them write a slightly longer humorous story.