## Funny bones

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**Parody**

*Parody* means imitating someone or something in order to make fun of them. Popular subjects of parody are famous people, books, films and works of art, and the way people behave.

Parodies aim to make people laugh at themselves and at the world around them. Sometimes this is just for fun, but often parodies also make people aware of something that needs changing in themselves or their society. For example, the TV comedy series *Kath and Kim* parodies life in suburbia, presenting it as a place where bad taste, selfishness and materialism rule. *Frontline* is another famous Australian parody, which targeted tabloid TV current affairs programs that exploit people’s personal tragedies and distort the truth just to win ratings.

**Macbeth**

Andy Griffiths looked for a fun way of introducing Shakespeare to young people. The result is *Just Macbeth!*, a lighthearted parody of *Macbeth*.

*Macbeth* deals with serious issues such as how ambition can destroy people, and how one person’s actions can have terrible effects on others. It is about an ambitious Scottish nobleman, Macbeth, who wants to be king and is excited when three witches predict that this will happen. Encouraged by his wife, Lady Macbeth, Macbeth murders King Duncan and becomes King. More bloody killings of men, women and children follow as Macbeth struggles to keep power and hide his crimes. He even arranges for the murder of his friend, Banquo, whose descendants, the witches predicted, would be kings. In the end, Lady Macbeth commits suicide and Macbeth is killed. Macbeth’s ambition causes chaos in Scotland and brings terrible events to the country.

Here is an extract from *Macbeth*, followed by Griffiths’s parody of it, in which Andy and his friends Danny and Lisa have mixed up the contents of the witches’ cauldron and landed in the world of *Macbeth*.

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**All hail, Macbeth!**

3 WITCH: All hail, Macbeth, thou shalt be king hereafter!

BANQUO: [To the witches] ... I’ the name of truth, Are ye fantastical, or that indeed Which outwardly ye show? My noble partner You greet with present grace and great prediction Of noble having and of royal hope, That he seems rapt withal: to me you speak not. If you can look into the seeds of time, And say which grain will grow and which will not, Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear Your favours nor your hate.

1 WITCH: Hail!

2 WITCH: Hail!

3 WITCH: Hail!

1 WITCH: Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

2 WITCH: Not so happy, yet much happier.

3 WITCH: Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none: So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!

from *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare
THIRD WITCH: All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be King hereafter.

ANDY: Thane of Cawdor? King?

DANNY: Andy’s going to be a king?

ANDY: Cool!

DANNY: Imagine how rich you’ll be … imagine how much Wizz Fizz you’ll be able to buy!

ANDY: Yeah … I can just eat Wizz Fizz all the time—breakfast, lunch and dinner—and there’ll be nobody who can tell me not to because I’m King. And imagine how impressed Lisa will be when she finds out that I’m the King. She’ll want to be my girlfriend then, that’s for sure. And even if she doesn’t then I can just command her to, because kings can do that … Kings can do … anything!

DANNY: [aside] He gets all the luck!

FIRST WITCH: Ah, Banquo!

DANNY: Banquo?

ANDY: [aside to Danny] Macbeth’s best friend! They think you’re Banquo.

DANNY: Okay, whatever. [to witches] Well? Am I going to be a king too?

FIRST WITCH: You will be lesser than Macbeth, and greater!

DANNY: Oh.

SECOND WITCH: Not so happy, yet much happier.

DANNY: Huh?

THIRD WITCH: Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none.

DANNY: That sucks! How come Andy gets to be King and I don’t? And how can I be lesser but greater? Or not so happy, but happier? And for that matter, why have you got beards?

FIRST WITCH: No more questions. Ooh! Look over there!

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**Exercise 2.1 Macbeth and Just Macbeth!**


2. Which lines from Macbeth are parodied in Just Macbeth?

3. In your groups, summarise what happens in each extract and compare how the different people behave. How are the characters in the two extracts similar? How are they different?

4. Andy Griffiths wrote Just Macbeth! as a way of introducing young people to Shakespeare in a fun way. Do you think that he succeeded? Why?

5. What is the ‘Guide to Scottish phrases’ cartoon parodying about Scottish culture?

6. The cartoon about the witches looks like school students’ doodles in the margin of their textbooks when they’re bored with studying Shakespeare. Create another frame to add to the cartoon about the witches.
Summer Heights High

Summer Heights High is an Australian television mockumentary (a mock documentary) series that parodies high school life through characters such as privileged private school student Ja’mie King, who attends a public school as an exchange student.

Although Chris Lilley created Summer Heights High as popular entertainment, he also wanted to comment on the attitudes, behaviours and language of high school teachers, parents and students. He encourages the audience to think about and question aspects of high school life such as social clichés, bullying, friendship groups and teenage slang.

Parodying people

In parody, writers copy the way people speak, their body language and appearance, what they talk about, their values and attitudes, and how they treat other people. Parodies exaggerate real-life people, and they are funny because they are so exaggerated. The tone of a parody can, however, be cutting when it exposes false or insensitive behaviour.

Ja’mie is a parody of those self-obsessed young people who are insensitive to the feelings of others, and who care more about shallow popularity than genuine friendships. Here Ja’mie is introducing herself at assembly to the students at her exchange public school.

Ja’mie at the school assembly

Thank you Mr Cameron for your welcome and thank you to the traditional land owners of Summer Heights, the Waranji people. My name is Ja’mie. J ,A, apostrophe, M, I, E. A weird name I know, but you’ll get used to it.

Yes I come from one of the most expensive private girls’ schools in the state, but I’m actually really cool. Please don’t be intimidated by me. People always go, private schools create better citizens, but I would say they create better quality citizens. Studies have shown that students from private schools are more likely to get into uni and end up making a lot more money, while wife-beaters and rapists are nearly all public school educated. Sorry no offence, but it’s true.

from Summer Heights High created by Chris Lilley
Chapter 2 • Funny bones

Parodying a speech

On the surface Ja’mie’s speech is a good one.

- **Formal opening:** ‘Thank you Mr Cameron.’
- **Welcome to nation:** ‘Thanks to the traditional land owners of Summer Heights, the Warangi people.’
- **Well-organised, balanced sentences:** ‘Yes I come from one of the most expensive private girls’ schools in the state, but I’m actually really cool.’
- **Making a connection with the audience:** ‘Please don’t be intimidated by me.’
- **Quoting experts to support a point of view:** ‘Studies have shown …’
- **Sincerity and friendliness:** ‘I’m actually really cool’ and ‘Sorry no offence but it’s true’.
- **Politeness:** ‘Thank you’, ‘Please’ and ‘Sorry’.

However, what Ja’mie says breaks many of the rules of good behaviour. So, in creating this parody, Chris Lilley has set up a contrast between how Ja’mie speaks, and what she actually says.

Exercise 2.3 The serious side of parody

1. What would you expect an exchange student to say in an introductory speech at a new school?
2. How should exchange students behave at their exchange school? What responsibilities do they have to their home school and their exchange school?
3. In what ways does Ja’mie not meet these responsibilities?
4. What is Lilley parodying in this speech? Think about society’s attitude to education and people’s behaviour towards each other.
5. If you were able to ask the author what he wants you to learn from listening to Ja’mie’s speech, what do you think he would say?
6. How do you feel about Ja’mie’s speech? For example, are you amused, annoyed or embarrassed by it? Explain why you feel this way.
7. Think of a well-known personality or celebrity in the media or in politics. Describe the person—their behaviour, attitudes and values, body language and appearance. Then create a character that is a parody of that person. Write a speech that your character would make.
Cohesive texts

A text is like a piece of knitting or fabric. Separate words, phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs are woven together to create meaning. This is called cohesion. Reference items and ellipsis are two ways of creating cohesion throughout texts.

Reference items
Reference items, or referring words, are words that take their meaning from other words in the text. The most frequently used reference items are pronouns:

- I, me, my, mine, myself; we, us, our, ours, ourselves; you, your, yours, yourselves;
- he, him, his, himself; her, hers, herself; they, them, their, theirs, themselves; these, this, those; that, which

Reference items create cohesion in a text by linking to other words for their meaning.

Jackson was determined to find an interesting game to play during his holidays.
The game he wanted had to have lots of action. He tried local games stores but they had nothing he wanted. ‘This is hopeless,’ he said to himself.

Ellipsis
Ellipsis means leaving out words or phrases that do not need repeating, because readers or listeners can fill in the meaning from what they have read or heard elsewhere in the text.

Ellipsis creates cohesion by guiding readers and listeners to connect with other parts of the text. Read this passage and see where ellipsis has been used. The words shown in square brackets are not needed in the text, but their meaning is understood to be there.

Jackson gave up on finding the video game and [Jackson] went to the library instead.
He looked for a book with a good story and [he looked for a book with] lots of action.

How cohesion works
This extract is from Danny Katz’s short story ‘Grandpa turns seven’, in which the child narrator reflects on the youthfulness of his grandfather at his seventieth birthday party.

Introducing Grandpa
My grandpa’s three years younger than me. He just turned seven years old.

Well, actually he turned SEVENTY years old, but he acts just like a little kid so everyone’s crossed off a zero from his age and pretends he’s seven. Grandma says she can’t wait till he reaches his teens, so she can have a proper conversation with him—and maybe then he’ll start wearing long pants to restaurants.

Grandpa is the weirdest, funniest and CRAZIEST old guy I’ve ever met. Last weekend, we had his big seventieth birthday party and he wanted balloons and lollies and Ribena and party hats. It was just like a seven-year-old’s birthday party, except with the worst behaviour from the birthday boy.
Here's another extract from ‘Grandpa turns seven’. In this extract the family put together a birthday party for Grandpa.

**Grandpa’s party**

Now it was time for the main birthday event. Everyone in the family had put together a funny little birthday show for him with funny songs and dances and everything, so we all hurried off to get our costumes and props, and left him sitting on the couch in his party hat, with a balloon still stuck to the back of his head with electrostatic energy. But when we came back in to do our show—the couch was empty. Grandpa had … vanished.

from ‘Grandpa turns seven’ by Danny Katz

**Exercise 2.5 Ellipsis**

1. What happens to Grandpa?
2. What words have been left out before:
   - ‘left’
   - ‘with a balloon’?
3. Find three places where ellipsis has been used instead of repeating words unnecessarily.
4. Ellipsis can also be a punctuation mark that indicates that something has been left out. For example, ‘Grandpa had … vanished.’ Rewrite this sentence, replacing the punctuation ellipsis with a few words that add detail and describe the narrator’s feelings about Grandpa vanishing.
5. Describe how Grandpa might have vanished from the couch without his family noticing. Use reference items and ellipsis (in both the grammar and punctuation senses). Then, write a paragraph in which you explain how your ideas are linked by the cohesive devices that you used.
Connecting ideas

Conjunctions connect words, phrases or clauses. The word ‘conjunction’ comes from two words meaning ‘join with’. There are two types of conjunctions: coordinating conjunctions and subordinating conjunctions.

Coordinating conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions connect two words, phrases or independent clauses. The most common coordinating conjunctions are:

- and, but, so, or

Example: Samantha scored three goals, but Johnny scored only one.

The coordinating conjunction ‘but’ joins one independent clause, ‘Samantha scored three goals’, with another independent clause, ‘Johnny only scored one’.

Subordinating conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions connect dependent clauses with independent or other dependent clauses. Subordinating conjunctions make connections about time (when), place (where), manner (how), cause (why) and condition (if, whether).

Time (when): John left the house before Jane arrived.

Place (where): Wherever the mother went, the child would follow.

Manner (how): The audience laughed as though they would never stop.

Cause (why): The party will be fun because all our friends are going.

Condition (if, whether): Max will jump in the swimming pool if Jenny does too.

Exercise 2.6 Working with conjunctions

1 Conjunctions are missing from the following jokes. Rewrite the jokes, adding the conjunction that makes sense to you. Decide what type of conjunction (coordinating or subordinating) you have used and explain why.

a Q: What do you do ________ your chair breaks?
   A: Call a chairman.

b Q: Why did the snowman call his dog Frost?
   A: ________ Frost bites.

c Q: What do you get ________ Batman and Robin get smashed by a steam roller?
   A: Flatman ________ Robin.

d Q: A man went outside in the pouring rain with no protection, ________ not a hair on his head got wet ... How come?
   A: He was bald.

2 Think of a joke or riddle that contains conjunctions. (There are many kids’ jokes on the internet.) Write it down. Identify the conjunctions in the joke. What types of conjunctions are they?
Using conjunctions in complex sentences

Writers and speakers use conjunctions in complex sentences when they are presenting complicated or difficult interrelated ideas. By using conjunctions you can:

- **Establish an idea:** The party will be fun and exciting.
- **Add new ideas:** The party will be fun and exciting because all our friends are going.
- **Create more complex ideas:** The party will be fun and exciting, even if we have a curfew, because all our friends are going.

The two jokes below are written in simple sentences that do not contain any conjunctions.

**The family of tomatoes**

A family of three tomatoes are walking downtown one day. The little baby tomato starts lagging behind. The big father tomato walks back to the baby tomato. He stomps on her. The big father tomato squashes the baby tomato into a red paste. He says, 'Ketchup!'

**A string in the tale**

Two pieces of string meet one day in the park. One goes on the slide. The other goes on the swings. They’re having a great time. One string decides to go on the roundabout.

The string goes around on the roundabout. He feels really dizzy. The string falls off. He scrapes across the tarmac. The string makes a tangled mess of one end. He falls in a heap. The second string looks at him. He sighs, ‘You’re not very good on that roundabout are you!’

The first string looks at himself. He says, ‘I’m a frayed knot.’

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**Exercise 2.7 Connecting ideas with conjunctions**

1. Rewrite the jokes using conjunctions to create more complex sentences. Use a mix of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions.

2. How have the conjunctions helped to make the jokes work better?

3. Imagine that you are either Andy in *Just Macbeth!* or Ja’mie in *Summer Heights High*. Write a short recount (about 200 words) of what happened to you. Use a variety of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions.
Features of spoken texts

Effective speakers choose subject matter and words that suit their audience. They know the people in the audience and bear in mind where they are speaking—at a public rally, in school, in the playground, at assembly, at home, or on the phone. They also know whether their main aim is to entertain, inform or persuade. For example, when a child is frightened after having a nightmare, a parent uses calming words and voice to make the child feel more secure. A kindergarten teacher uses simple words when teaching a class how to play soccer.

Anecdotes

People enjoy sharing personal anecdotes about daily events in their lives, and telling jokes. However, humorous spoken texts are like any other spoken text—you need to take into account your audience, purpose and the situation you are in.

Here a friend is telling another friend a personal anecdote in the playground. The speaker wants to amuse her friend with a story about something the speaker did.

The other day I was walking down the street with Carla. She was telling me about this great book she was reading. I was listening to her—Carla is a great storyteller—and so didn’t see the telegraph pole that—well, it must have jumped out in front of me. Bang! I slammed into it, bounced off and fell splat on the concrete path. Gosh, was I embarrassed! We both fell about laughing—even though I had a sore head.

This speaker must know her friend well because she feels comfortable telling an embarrassing story about herself. Because this is an informal situation, she feels free to use colloquial language—‘fell about laughing’, ‘Bang!’ and ‘splat’.

Exercise 2.8 Anecdotes for different audiences

1. Write an anecdote that you might tell your friend about something funny that happened to you. Write it as you would speak, using colloquial language and making your anecdote entertaining.

2. Rewrite your anecdote so that it is more serious in tone; this time you are speaking to someone older and in authority. Your language should be more formal and your sentences carefully formed.

3. Write about the different decisions you made about word choice and sentences, and describe the differences between your two pieces of writing.
Humour and sadness

The following extract comes from Two Weeks with the Queen, a play by Mary Morris, based on the novel by Morris Gleitzman. The main character, Colin, and his mother are talking about Colin's younger brother, Luke, who is in a Sydney hospital. Colin's father has asked Colin to look after his mum back home while he and Luke are away in Sydney.

This dialogue has a dual audience—the characters in the play are talking to each other, and the playwright is writing for the theatre audience viewing the play.

Taking care of Mum

Colin: Mum, stop worrying. You’ve seen those Sydney hospitals on telly; they got everything. They could cure a horse with its head on backwards down there. Come on, eat your curry.

Mum: Good on you Col.

Colin: ’Member that show they had on every week about operations and stuff? That was from Sydney. ’Member the kid who swallowed her Dad’s record player—not all at once, just bits of it and you could see all the bits on the X-ray and then they opened her up and found all the things her Mum and Dad had been lookin’ for all year? Then there was that man whose heart went bung and they put a new one in, and the surgeon had it in his hand all bloody and beatin’ all by itself—and remember the bloke who cut his foot off with the lawnmower and had it sewn back on? You’re not eating your tea.

Mum: Sorry love, I’m not very hungry. Tired I expect.

from Two Weeks with the Queen: The Play by Mary Morris

Exercise 2.9 Dialogue

1. Where does this scene take place? What are Colin and his mother doing?
2. The audience would laugh when they hear Colin describe the operations. What is funny about his recounts?
3. What is Colin trying to do?
4. Colin’s mother says that she’s not eating because she’s tired. What do you think the real reason is? Why does she not say this?
5. Why might the playwright want the audience to laugh in a sad play about a sick boy?
6. Dialogue has to sound realistic, so writers copy the way people speak. They abbreviate words, use long sentences, write in sentence fragments (‘OK’ or ‘Whatever you reckon’). Find an example of a long sentence and a sentence fragment in the extract.
7. Write the dialogue between a parent and a child about a humorous incident, TV show or film. Describe the context for the dialogue—both the situation in which the two characters find themselves, and how you want the audience to react to the dialogue. Make the dialogue interesting and realistic.
Features of visual texts

Many things shape the meaning of an image, such as:

- what is included in the image and what is left out
- how the items are arranged, for example, what is in the foreground and background
- the colours and lighting used
- the context in which the image appears
- the words and sounds that accompany the image, and where it is viewed
- who is viewing the image and why: how much effort and knowledge the viewer brings to reading the image, what attitudes the viewer has towards the subject of the image, how the viewer is feeling at that moment, whether the viewer is looking at the image to be entertained or persuaded about something.

This picture shows young people somersaulting on a beach at sunset in Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory.

**Colour and lighting:** The soft natural colours of the sand and the dull blue/grey of the ocean capture the beauty of the time of the day—sunset. The sunlight reflecting off the water backlights the young people who are clearly silhouetted against the water and sky.

**Composition:**

- The somersaulting figures suggest fun, freedom and happiness.
- The wide shot takes in the calm stillness of the beach surrounding the somersaulting figures.
- The photograph is cropped to place the young people in the centre of the frame and make the photograph ‘about’ them.

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### Exercise 2.10 Reflecting on the shark

1. Look at the two images of a shark on the opposite page. Image 2 contains details missing from Image 1. How do these details alter the impression that viewers get of the shark and what it is doing?
2. Why do you think that the filmmaker has used blue instead of the real colour of a shark?
3. What sort of shot is used in both images—close up, medium shot or long shot?
4. What is it about these images that suggest they are from a children’s film?
The girl and the duck

Exercise 2.11  Shaping meaning

1. What is happening here?

2. How many connections can you see between the two figures? For example, ‘They are both underwater’.

3. How many differences can you see between the two figures? For example, ‘The duck is a toy and the girl is human.’

4. What in the photograph suggests movement?

5. How is this a well-balanced photograph?

6. Write a caption for the photograph.

7. Imagine that you have cut the photograph in two and created two separate photographs—one of a duck and one of a girl. Select one of your new photographs and write a text to accompany it. Your text should give your photograph a different meaning from its meaning in the original photograph. Decide on your audience and create an advertisement, news report, web page, book cover or page of a picture book.

8. Write a paragraph explaining the decisions you made when creating your text, including what you did to appeal to your audience.
Assessment tasks

**WRITING**

Pretend that you are the principal of Summer Heights High. Write a formal letter to the principal of Ja’mie’s private school. Explain what Ja’mie said and why you find her comments offensive and unacceptable, and suggest the action that you expect the principal to take.

You will be assessed on how well you express and support your point of view and how well you link the ideas and arguments in your letter.

**READING AND WRITING**

Read this extract from *Two Weeks with the Queen*. Colin is in England, getting help to cure his brother, Luke.

*COLIN is shouting down the phone to his Mum in Australia.*

Yes, yes, Auntie Iris said I could, just this once ... No, no you get used to the cold. How’s Luke? ... Oh ... Well, it won’t be for much longer ... No, you don’t understand. See, I got great news ... No ... Yes ... Mum, listen to me a minute ... Listen! I’m going to see one of London’s top cancer doctors. Tomorrow. Luke’s going to be cured ... Are you there? Mum? Your voice sounds funny ... Did you hear what I said? I’m fixing it up tomorrow. It’s all going to be alright now ... Don’t cry ... Let go of what? I can’t understand a word you’re saying.

—from *Two Weeks with the Queen: The Play* by Mary Morris

Copy out Colin’s part of the conversation and write what you think his mother is saying or doing where an ellipsis signals that Colin is listening to her.

You will be assessed on your ability to interpret Colin’s words and draw conclusions about what his mother is saying or doing throughout the conversation.

**SPEAKING**

You have been asked to speak at the school assembly on the topic of what makes a good school. Plan, rehearse and revise your speech.

You will be assessed on how well you structure your speech and how well you express yourself in a formal speech.