

How to Write Parody

A parody is a “new version” of an old story that pokes fun at or comments on the original work. Parody requires funny, and your sense of humor is the first thing you need to assess before undertaking the task of writing the next big hit.

Examples: the 1987 science fiction spoof *Spaceballs* pokes fun at the original Star Wars. *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1974) pokes fun at the original story of *King Arthur*. *Scary Movie*, *Not Another Teen Movie*, and *Date Movie* are all current parodies of original horror and date films. In music, Weird Al Yankovich wrote a parody for Michael Jackson’s “Bad.”

Steps:

1. Choose a Subject

In order to have a successful parody you must determine what it is you will be writing about. That means choosing a subject that is familiar to audiences. In addition, you must know the story well enough to follow it, yet change it appropriately.

2. Build Your Characters

Spaceballs by Mel Brooks was a hit when it first arrived in theaters on June 24, 1987, and it has continued in its popularity over 20 years later. The film endures because it so masterfully spoofs the characters from Star Wars, one of the most successful film franchises of all time.

Dark Helmet, the Darth Vader knockoff, is an evil nerdy dictator. He wears the imposing garb of Vader, but it looks too big on him, and of course, there is the open face in contrast to Vader’s mask.

Why?

Because Helmet wears glasses, and he needs to be able to see.

Other familiar characters...Lone Starr, a Luke Skywalker/Han Solo hybrid; Barf, the half-man/half-dog Chewbacca fill-in; Dot Matrix, the dainty C3PO clone; and Princess Vespa, the tough but beautiful Princess Leia stand-in.

Each of these characters are familiar enough for audiences to realize their origin in the source material, yet each also possesses exaggerated qualities unexpected enough to induce laughter. Give it a look and take notes on how Brooks dramatizes these qualities.

3. Exaggerating the Story – Add a Heavy Comic Element

Once you’ve chosen a subject that will resonate with your audiences, and you’ve come up with original reinterpretations of familiar characters, turn to the story itself. It’s true that some of the work has already been done for you, but audiences will not be happy with a rehash of the same material.

As with your characters, there must be exaggerated qualities to help your work stand apart while also staying familiar enough to the source material for audiences to connect. In *Top Secret*, a spoof of hard-nosed war and spy films, one character fires his machine

gun wildly into a crowded roomful of Nazis without hitting one of his own men, despite the close proximity.

This is a clever poke at a familiar genre, handled broadly enough that the audience has no trouble getting the joke.

And ultimately, the audience is who you're writing for. Because if they're not laughing, it's not funny; and if it's not funny, it's no parody.

How to Write Satire

A satire is a piece of work that pokes fun at human vices, abuses, follies, or shortcomings that are usually censured by society. Although a satire is supposed to be funny, it is usually sarcastic and biting.

Examples: TV Shows: The Simpsons, American Dad, South Park, the Colbert Report, Family Guy, The Office, Curb Your Enthusiasm, Da Ali G Show. Movie: the *Shrek* trilogy. Newspaper: *The Onion*.

Examples from *The Onion*:

Study: Shoving, Yelling Makes Things Go Faster 76% Of Time

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TUCSON, AZ—Researchers at the University of Arizona released a study Monday showing a causal relationship between raising one's voice, pushing people in the chest, and getting what you want more quickly. "These results certainly go against common wisdom," said visibly bruised and flustered sociologist Renée Pfaff, who found that subjects in the so-called "jerk group" received rewards an average of 45 seconds faster. "Once we ran out of the rewards, the participants began shaking down our research assistants for money." The study also concluded that gratuitous swearing accelerated the process by as much as 40 percent.

Area Woman Wants To Be Singer Or Actor Or Whatever

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AKRON, OH—Ever since she was a little girl, Candice Huza, 22, has dreamed of someday becoming a popular singer, or actress, or some kind of famous celebrity or whatever. "Getting to sing, or maybe model, or receive some kind of huge acting award for whatever has always been a passion of mine," said Huza, leafing through an issue of *Us Weekly*. "I guess I was just born to be one of those people you see on television, or in the theaters, or on some huge billboard somewhere. Or a magazine. It's my calling." According to sources close to her, Huza is in fact destined to become a Wal-Mart cashier, or maybe an office receptionist, or a bitter and unhappy housewife of some kind.

Report: Music Industry Made \$18 In 2009

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NEW YORK—The Recording Industry Association of America announced Tuesday that the combined revenue brought in by Warner, Sony, EMI, Universal, and countless independent music labels in 2009 totaled \$18. "The music industry is back," RIAA

representative Doug Fowley said. "Not only was Kenny Chesney's Greatest Hits CD purchased at a Knoxville, TN Borders for \$12.99, but we also had two songs downloaded through iTunes, and our ringtone sales reached three." Fowley added that as long as no one returns or exchanges the CD, the music industry would continue to be a vital and creative force in American culture.

Steps:

1. **Be Knowledgeable**

Know your topic and the current events and people about which you are writing. In order to poke fun at an event or person, you must first know what qualities or human errors you are targeting.

2. **Choose your subject wisely.**

No matter who your audience is, they need to have heard of the person you're talking about or the event you are describing.

3. **Identify the human error, vice, folly or abuse that you want to target.**

Consider why this vice is so ridiculous. Why does it rile you up? What annoys you about these human behaviors? For example, does the lack of face-to-face communication between teens annoy you?

4. **Exaggerate the problem until it is ridiculous.**

Given the example above, consider what would happen if kids only spoke via text messages and the Internet. How strange would relationships be between teens? Would they even know how to speak verbally to each other? Would they speak in "texting" language?

5. **Keep it simple**

It must be absolutely clear who or what your intended target actually is. As obvious as this is, you must focus on your intended audience. Are they going to be able to understand what you're attempting to do with your writing?

6. **Choose a good title**

A headline or title is the second most important thing for grabbing your audience's attention. Spend a good amount of time thinking of your title – more so, if it doesn't immediately spring to mind.

7. **Take your time & Pace yourself**

Most satire writers are very deliberate, steady working people. Whenever one writes it is obviously important to ensure that it is to the highest possible standard. So, in order to ensure a good standard, you must **re-read your work**. Over and over. Then read it again!

(From teacherweb.com/MA/Holliston/.../How-to-Write-Parody-and-Satire)