

TITLE OF LESSON

American Literature Unit 1 Lesson 21 – Twain's Tools: Satire
What is Satire?

TIME ESTIMATE FOR THIS LESSON

One class period

ALIGNMENT WITH STANDARDS

California – Eng 11-12: R1.0-3, 2.0, 3.0-5, W1.0-5, 1.9, 2.0, 2.2, 2.4, W/O1.0-3, L/S1.0-5, 2.3

MATERIALS

“Only a Nigger” – Reading
Political Cartoon – Student Page (1 per group)
Political Cartoon Content Analysis sheet – Student Page (2 per group)
Evaluation Essay 1 Instructions – Student Page
Evaluation Rubric – Student Page

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- To define satire and give examples
 - To analyze a satirical cartoon
 - To draw connections between the cartoon and the Twain reading
 - To revise a partner's essay
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FOCUS AND MOTIVATE STUDENTS – WARM-UP ACTIVITY

- 1) Homework Check – Stamp/initial all complete homework assignments (Step 2 of **Evaluation Essay 1 Instructions**).
- 2) **Daily Log** – Tell students to copy the Daily Log below.

Date	Journal	Lecture Discussion	Activity	Readings	Homework
		What is Satire?	1. Satire Definition 2. Cartoon Analysis 3. Peer Revision (Step 3 on Essay Instructions)	Political Cartoon	1. Second Draft of Evaluation Essay 1 (Step 4 on Essay Instructions). 2. Prepare Book Talks. 3. Study Vocabulary.

ACTIVITIES – INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP

1. Ground Rules for Discussions – Remind students of the ground rules for discussions involving potentially offensive language.
2. Definition and Examples – Ask for a volunteer to remind the class of the definition of satire (one of their previous vocabulary words). Tell the volunteer to read the definition from the vocabulary list. Their dictionary definition will say something like this: *literary work in which vices and follies are held up to ridicule and contempt* (Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, 1979). Write the following definition on the board (from Abrams Glossary of Literary Terms): *Satire can be described as the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation. It differs from the comic in that comedy evokes laughter mainly as an end in itself, while satire 'derides'; that is, it uses laughter as a weapon, and against a butt existing outside the work itself. That butt may be an individual (in 'personal satire'), or a type of person, a class, an institution, a nation,*

or even ... the whole human race. Tell students to think beyond this definition. Besides literary work, is there any kind of medium where people's flaws are ridiculed and criticized? Where do they see human errors made fun of? (To encourage the discussion, tell the students to think about any kind of medium that makes them laugh. They will probably answer with T.V. shows, movies, and comics. Tell them to be specific.) This is only a brief discussion, in order to provide an understanding of the definition. The students do not need to take notes, but tell them to add the expanded definition of satire to their vocabulary lists. Spend about five minutes, total, going over the definition and offering a few examples.

3. What is Satire? – After several students have offered names of shows, movies, books (and so on) that make fun of human folly, tell them that there are two ways to ridicule something: directly and indirectly. If you were going to criticize racist laws directly, you could make a statement such as this: “Throughout history, due to racist laws, African Americans have faced difficulty in exercising their rights to participate in American Democracy.” Or you could find a way to criticize racism indirectly, by using humor, by pretending to say one thing, but meaning another. The humor is derived from the difference between what is said and what is meant. Satire is often used to make an important point, or to deal with difficult and painful issues. Remind them of the new definition. The laughter is a weapon, against an individual, a type of person, a class, an institution, a nation, or even the whole human race. The use of humor helps people to understand certain issues in a different way. This strategy, of critiquing something indirectly, is what you will discuss today.
4. Political Cartoon Analysis – Tell the students to choose *Group Roles* (see below). Distribute **Political Cartoon** and the **Political Cartoon Content Analysis Sheet** to each group. Tell them that they will work in groups to complete the **Political Cartoon Content Analysis Sheet** for the political cartoon. They should discuss the content of the cartoon, what they think it means, and then fill out the sheet. Give them five minutes to do this.
5. Present – Call on the presenters from each group to share the information from their **Political Cartoon Content Analysis** sheets. Make sure to discuss why the cartoon is funny and why it is serious. Were there people who did not think it was funny? Why? Spend five minutes discussing this.
6. Twain Essay Content Analysis – Distribute another **Political Cartoon Analysis** sheet. Tell the groups to use the sheet to analyze the Twain essay from last night. They should replace “cartoon” with “essay” wherever it appears on the sheet. Instruct them to bring out their [highlighted and annotated](#) reading from last night. Spend five minutes on this analysis. (They should have already considered these questions during their reading last night, and may use their notes to fill out the sheet.)
7. Present – Call on presenters to share the information from their sheets. What did they notice about Twain's use of satire? What was his direct message and what was his indirect message? (Point out that Twain is “code-switching” again, using a different speech style and strategy to make a point.) Why did Twain choose to use satire to talk about lynch mobs? (Students may think back to the original discussion of the purpose of satire. Is humor used to understand a difficult and painful issue? How? You may note that, by using a callous and trivializing tone, Twain is demonstrating how cruel and callous the actions of the lynch mob are. He appears to take the side of those involved in the lynch mob, praising their chivalry. In fact, he is exposing the hypocrisy behind their actions, since an act of wrongful murder clearly outweighs any aspirations toward chivalry.) Is his essay funny? Why or why not?
8. Process Observers – Have process observers report on how the group worked to find connections between the political cartoon and last night's reading. Spend five minutes, total, on the presentations of the presenters and the process observers. Ask process observers what the strengths and weaknesses of the group process were.
9. Wrap Up: Is the essay effective? – Ask for volunteers to explain whether or not the group found the material disturbing and the use of satire appropriate. What was Twain's purpose in the essay? Who was his audience and what were their biases? Remind them of the definition of satire. Who was the target? Was Twain's purpose accomplished? Was satire a useful tool for achieving this purpose? What are the other possible tools that might achieve the purpose? (He might have written a persuasive piece that brings in evidence against the use of lynch mobs. Would that have been more or less effective?) Think back to the political cartoon and the difference between what was said and what was meant. With both the political cartoon and this essay, what did the use of satire accomplish that a direct statement of the message does not accomplish? Tell the students that satire is one

of the chief tools Twain uses in *Huckleberry Finn*, so it is important that they think about the reasons he might want to use it.

10. **Peer Revision** – Ask students to take out the first drafts of their essays, as well as their **Evaluation Essay 1 Instructions**. Pair up the students and have them trade essays. Remind them that the instructions for peer revision are in their handout. Have them place the handout on the desk to look at it. They have been through the revision process before, so they should be familiar with it. They must complete Step 3 today, and have their partners sign their essays. They must complete Step 4 tonight for homework. Spend the rest of the period on revision.
 11. **Review Homework** – Remind students to write the second drafts of their Evaluation Essays, prepare their Book Talks, and continue to study vocabulary.
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HOMEWORK

- 1) Rewrite Evaluation Essay 1 (Step 4 of Essay Instructions).
 - 2) Prepare Book Talks.
 - 3) Study Vocabulary.
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GROUP ROLES

Facilitator – Your job is to keep the group focused on the task at hand and to help them generate as many ideas as possible for the **Political Cartoon Content Analysis** sheet. You must also help them generate ideas about the answer to the questions. It is not your job to come up with the ideas. It is your job to encourage/help other group members to come up with the ideas.

Notetaker – Your job is to write out the words the group is giving you for the **Political Cartoon Content Analysis** sheet. You must also write down the group's answers to the questions. It is not your job to generate all of the ideas. It is your job to help others to give you as many ideas as possible to write.

Presenter – Your job will be to help your group members to present the information from the **Political Cartoon Content Analysis** sheet. You must also present the group's answers to the questions. It is not your job to conduct the entire presentation. It is your job to make sure that everyone in your group has a role in the presentation, that they can effectively convey their ideas, and that the presentation runs smoothly.

Process Observer – Your job is to observe how other members of your group work together. You must write down your thoughts about how your group members work together to generate ideas and make decisions about the content of the cartoon. Also make note of any connections the group makes between the cartoon and last night's reading assignment. It is not your job to say anything to them about what you are writing during the exercise, but you will report back to them after the exercise is complete

DOCUMENTATION FOR PORTFOLIO

Unit 1

Project 1 – A True Story