Think you're funny? Ever gone for the punch line only to find your joke was taken the wrong way? Laughter is often noted as the best medicine, and yet seems to be taboo in traditional academic pursuits. Come see the world from the vantage point of the outsider, the jester, the comedian and see how they have levied social change through laughter. Discover the nuances of audience, the role of perspective, and the illusive nature of truth while discussing what is and what is not funny.

Reading List
(Choose Two):
First French kiss and Other Traumas - Adam Bagdasarian
Choose two.
Fly By Night - Frances Hardinge
Millions - Frank Cottrell Boyce
These are the Rules - Paul Many

Targeted Learning Goals (College of Invention)

Behavior: #20 This student assumed responsibility for his/her personal creative process.

Reading: #15 Rather than assuming that meaning is fixed and located within the text, this student successfully navigated the text “reading between the lines” and using that knowledge to generate new ideas.

Writing: #24 This student clearly articulated his/her innovative vision.

Big Picture Thinking: #19 This student challenged personal and cultural assumptions.

Application (Show What You Know): #26 This student demonstrated wit and humor.

Project Description: The class will center on the Laugh Lounge, our online comedy club. In the lounge we will have several collections of humorous content (a photo gallery, a database of jokes, and a humorous video channel). This will also be where students post their work and where other students respond to their work by giving them applause points. These points will not impact a student’s grade, but will give the student feedback on whether or not others think the joke is funny. Students will be able to post their weekly joke in a variety of forms and will also present their jokes in the Laugh Lounge.

The three sub projects of the class will be:

(Weeks 1-3) The Caricature: Create a caricature of yourself (image) or slapstick routine (video) and a support it with a set of anecdotes, a catch tale, a set of exaggerations/hyperboles, an example of situational humor, or a set of puns.

(Weeks 4-6) The Societal Critique: Create an Article for The Onion; A parody; a Political Cartoon; Improv Everywhere; a collection of political blunders with commentary that uses asides and understatements; several epigrams with visuals and use comedic tricks like reverses that trick the audience by a switch in point-of-view; Incongruity that pairs two logical but unconventional ideas; Stupidity that encourages the audience to feel superior to silly thoughts or actions.

(Weeks 7-9) The Performance: Using GoAnimate or a video recorder, create a 2 minute standup routine that uses your favorite material developed throughout the class and focuses on presentation and timing.
**Instructor Bio:** Anna Olson is a former teacher of gifted and talented secondary students. Her 20 years of classroom teaching span pre-school through grade 8 and college students. She reads constantly and believes that good literature should stir things up, causing students to think deeply and question their own assumptions. She prefers being a facilitator rather than a lecturer, and her favorite classes are those where students become excited enough to lead discussions and debate each other.

**Online Philosophy**

To be successful, an online class must have a foundation of respect and trust among the students and instructor. With this foundation, students can put forth ideas and opinions without fear of ridicule, engage in meaningful discussion, and confront viewpoints that differ from their own. They can respectfully disagree with each others’ ideas. They can collaborate to create products and develop new understandings. Respect and trust create openness, and an open classroom encourages students to grow, to challenge themselves and to realize their potential.

**Target Audience**

This course is targeted towards gifted and talented 7th and 8th grade students. These students have the passion and drive to want to gain deeper understanding in their reading and explore creativity in writing.

**Course Guidelines and Evaluation Plan**

To avoid confusion, *I thought that we should set some expectations in the beginning.*

- Communication: You may ask me questions through the Messaging Block (look in the left column). Simply search for Anna Olson and type in your message. There is also a [Course Help Forum](#) (just below) where you can post course questions that other students can see.

- If you have any technical questions, there is a [Tech Help Forum](#) (just below) where you may post those questions. This will allow us to all learn from any roadblocks our team hits.

- Deadlines and Assignments: All work will be posted by Monday morning of each week and you will have until the end of school the next Monday to get it all in-- unless otherwise posted.

- If the assignment is listed as a an extension activity, it is "extra credit."

- Materials: Make sure you have the books you will need. All other materials will be provided.

- Evaluation: All of your assignments will be assessed so that I can determine how to evaluate your growth on your learning goals. We focus on higher level thinking skills.

- Remember, if you want to see if you are missing work or what comments have been made simply check out your activity reports found under the link on your profile page.
First Face-to-Face Meeting

Second Face-to-Face Meeting

Third Face-to-Face Meeting
Weeks 1-3       What is a Joke

W.1 GQ (1): What is humor? What do you find funny?
GQ (2): Why isn’t humor typically taught in schools? What are our rules of comedy?

W.2 GQ: Are there rules for good joke telling? Are there structures or patterns to good joke telling? Are there different categories of jokes? What is the history of joke telling?

W.3 GQ: Who tends to be humorous? Can computers be funny? What is the psychology of humor?

Project Goals: (Weeks 1-3) The Caricature: Create a caricature of yourself (image) or slapstick routine (video) and a support it with a set of anecdotes, a catch tale, a set of exaggerations/hyperboles, an example of situational humor, or a set of puns.

Growth Checkpoint: EV: portfolio checks, PM conferences, learning coach alerts? How will your course adapt to the feedback?

Weeks 4-6       The Role of Humor in Society

W.4 GQ: Does humor change due to culture? Is humor timeless?

W.5 GQ (1): Is there anything that should not be made fun of?
GQ (2) Does comedy have to be funny?

W.6 GQ: Is imitation the purest form of flattery? Why do some mega-stars seem to seek out negative attention like being the center of people’s jokes?

Project Goals: (Weeks 4-6) The Societal Critique: Create an Article for the Onion; A parody; a Political Cartoon; Improv Everywhere; a collection of political blunders with commentary that uses asides and understatements; several epigrams with visuals and use comedic tricks like reverses that trick the audience by a switch in point-of-view; Incongruity that pairs two logical but unconventional ideas; Stupidity that encourages the audience to feel superior to silly thoughts or actions.

Growth Checkpoint: EV: portfolio checks, PM conferences, learning coach alerts? How will your course adapt to the feedback?

Weeks 7-9       More than a One-liner, a Performance

W.7 GQ: From where do comics get their material? Is reading a joke the same as telling one?

W.8 GQ: Have you ever had bad timing? Why does timing matter so much?

W.3. GQ: How do we know something is funny? Is it possible to develop a rubric for humor? If so, what should be on it?

Project Goals: (Weeks 7-9) Using GoAnimate or a video recorder, create a 2 minute standup routine that uses your favorite material developed throughout the class and focuses on presentation and timing.

Growth Checkpoint: EV: portfolio checks, PM conferences, learning coach alerts? How will your course adapt to the feedback?
Week One: What is humor?

Guiding Question (forum #19): Defining the Realm: What is humor? What do you find funny? What is the funniest thing about you? GQ #2: Why isn’t humor typically taught in schools? What are our rules of comedy?

Concept Development (Defining What’s Funny #26) Chose One:

Activity One (Investigation/forum): Look through the Joke Factory (our online database of jokes), Exposure (our collection of funny images), or The Laugh Channel (our collection of funny videos). As you are looking group at least thirty entries (just provide their links) in the categories that they seem to fit in. Then explain why you chose those categories in a short paragraph.

Activity Two (Systems/forum): Gather 10 different definitions of comedy, from friends, online dictionaries - any source you can find. From these definitions develop a rule set (3-5 rules) that define what is and is not comedy.

Activity Three (Identity/assignment): Write a short creative piece about the funniest thing that ever happened to you.

Show What You Know -Applied Learning:

Journaling (Each Week, Assignment, #24): Begin your online journal. Collect 5 examples every week of events in your life, images you see, things that you read that you find funny. Then write about why you think they are funny. You should try to update the journal several times throughout your week, so that all of the events don’t come from one day. Then pick your funniest experience and create a joke about it. Post this joke in the Laugh Lounge (please remember to follow the rules defined by the class).

Project One (Due at the End of Week Three, Laugh Lounge, #26): Create a caricature of yourself (image) or slapstick routine (video) and support it with a set of anecdotes, a catch tale, a set of exaggerations/hyperboles, an example of situational humor, or a set of puns. Post in the Laugh Lounge when you are done.
Week Two: The Structure of a Joke

Guiding Question (forum, #19): Are there rules for good joke telling? Are there structures or patterns to good joke telling? What kinds of jokes are there? What is the history of joke telling?

Reading and Research (forum, #15): Begin your first book (read at least a third of it) and respond to this question in your reading group. Describe 3 of your characters. Which is the funniest and why? Give cited examples from the book.

Concept Development (History of Comedy #19) Chose One: – maybe silent films here; Something here about word play – puns and Double Entendres, the plays on words that include reformations and takeoffs

Activity One (Invention): Read through these jokes about historical figures. How do they make sure that you don’t guess the end? How do they use misdirection? The create 3 of your own that surprise your reader.

Activity Two (Human Experience): Create a timeline of famous comedic events. Add in at least 5 important historical events that probably influenced the comedy of the time.

Activity Three (Investigation): Review the material analyzing the structure of a joke. Then go to the Joke factory and dissect four jokes using the terms given. How are misdirection and surprise incorporated into the poems.

Show What You Know - Applied Learning

Journaling (Each Week, assignment, #24): Continue your online journal. Collect 5 examples of surprise and/or misdirection you have seen in your everyday life, images you see, things that you read that you find funny. Then write about why you think they are funny. You should try to update the journal several times throughout your week, so that all of the events don’t come from one day. Then pick your funniest experience and create a joke about it. Post this joke in the Laugh Lounge (please remember to follow the rules defined by the class).

Project One (Due at the End of Week Three, Laugh Lounge, #26): Create a caricature of yourself (image) or slapstick routine (video) and support it with a set of anecdotes, a catch tale, a set of exaggerations/hyperboles, an example of situational humor, or a set of puns. Post in the Laugh Lounge when you are done.
Week Three: Profiling the Humorous

Guiding Question (forum, #19): Who tends to be humorous? Can computers be funny? What is the psychology of humor? How is humor used as stress release? Is it used as a defensive mechanism? The role of play.

Reading and Research (forum, #15): Continue to read your first choice book until you are about 2/3 of the way through. Then respond to this forum question. Character development is often achieved by explaining how a character feels about or relates to another character. Pick 3 characters and explain how they feel about each other and how they use humor to relate to one another. Then write a general paragraph summarizing how humor is used to develop the social interactions in the book.

Concept Development (The Psychology of Play and Humor, #19) Chose One:

Activity One (Identity, forum): Do men and women find different things funny? Read this research and then compare it to your own experience in a 2 paragraph essay. The first paragraph should review the reading you have selected and the second paragraph should explain why you think it is correct or incorrect using real life experiences to support your critic.

Activity Two (Human Experience, assignment): When do we develop a sense of humor? Read the research provided and create a visual that incorporates quotes from the research and/or common examples of how humans tend to develop their sense of humor.

Activity Three (Invention, forum): Are humor and creativity linked? Is comedy a science or an art? Do you have to bomb (fail as a comedian) in order to be a success? Is funny something that can be taught? Take a position on one of these questions and create a short story or visual to explaining why your position.

Show What You Know -Applied Learning (tool and Benchmark):

(Each Week, assignment, #24): Continue your online journal. This time write about at least 3 funny situations, taking the perspective of at least two other people who witness the event. Then pick your funniest experience and create a joke about it. Post this joke in the Laugh Lounge (please remember to follow the rules defined by the class).

Project One (Due This Week, Laugh Lounge, #26): Create a caricature of yourself (image) or slapstick routine (video) and support it with a set of anecdotes, a catch tale, a set of exaggerations/hyperboles, an example of situational humor, or a set of puns. Post in the Laugh Lounge when you are done.
Overview of Weeks Four through Six

Guiding Theme: The Role of Humor in Society

Week Four: Cultural Inspirations

Guiding Question (forum, #19): Does humor change depending on culture? Is humor timeless?

Reading and Research (forum, #15): Finish your first book. Take a scene in your book where several characters are interacting and rewrite it switching two of the characters. It doesn’t need to be a long section, 2 -3 paragraphs at the most. Then explain why you thought it would be funny to have those two characters swap places. What is it about their personalities that make it humorous for them to take each other’s role?

Concept Development (The Impact of Culture, #19) Chose One:

Activity One (Human Experience, forum): Read the world’s funniest joke
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World%27s_funniest_joke. Do you think it is funny? Write a 3 paragraph essay explaining why you think it won the title the world’s funniest joke.

Activity Two (Invention, forum): Take two different cultures and create a supposition of one trait that the two cultures do not have in common. Describe this common trait and the two views on it in a way that uses humor to point out the silliness in both perspectives.

Activity Three (Identity, forum): Take a famous character and put him/her in a setting that would not normally be part of the character’s storyline. When a character is “out of context” how do we learn more about them? Describe a time you were out of context and what it caused you to learn about yourself. Why are situations like this often funny?

Show What You Know -Applied Learning: (Each Week, assignment, #24): Continue your online journal. Collect 5 examples of juxtaposition, characteristic swap, out of context and/or stereotypes from every day events in your life, images you see, things that you read that you find funny. Then write about why you think they are funny. You should try to update the journal several times throughout your week, so that all of the events don’t come from one day. Then pick your funniest experience and create a joke about it. Post this joke in the Laugh Lounge (please remember to follow the rules defined by the class).

Project Two (Laugh Lounge, #26): The Societal Critique: Create an Article for the Onion; A parody; a Political Cartoon; Improv Everywhere; a collection of political blunders with commentary that uses asides and understatements; several epigrams with visuals and use comedic tricks like reverses that trick the audience by a switch in point-of-view; Incongruity that pairs two logical but unconventional ideas; Stupidity that encourages the audience to feel superior to silly thoughts or actions.
Week Five: *The Role of Satire*

**Guiding Question Choose One (forum, #19):** Is there anything that should not be made fun of? Does comedy have to be funny?

**Reading and Research (assignment, #15):** Read two of the stories provide. Summarize what each story is about and how satire is being used. Then compare and contrast what you like and don’t like about the two stories. What is funny about each? What isn’t?

- *Mark Twain* [http://www.kobobooks.com/content/Cannibalism-In-The-Cars-Written/sc-7fMySkQOREy8e-MTik_v2g/page1.html#1](http://www.kobobooks.com/content/Cannibalism-In-The-Cars-Written/sc-7fMySkQOREy8e-MTik_v2g/page1.html#1)

**Concept Development (Understanding Satire, #26) Chose One:**

- **Activity One (Human Experience, assignment):** Watch Charlie Chaplin’s Hitler skit. Analyze the performance by picking out at least 3 references to real historical events. Then explain how Chaplin puts his own twist on those real events through his delivery, timing, and/or writing.

- **Activity Two (Identity, assignment):** Watch “Two Cars in Every Garage and Three Eyes on Every Fish” from *The Simpsons* and follow the directions here [http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/exploring-satire-with-simpsons-811.html](http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/exploring-satire-with-simpsons-811.html)

- **Activity Three (Investigation, assignment):** Analyze 3 articles from *The Onion*. Summarize their content and explain what event the article is satirizing. Finally explain what different techniques the articles use to point out the humor in the situation. [http://www.esl-lesson-plan.com/archives/2007/01/lesson_plans_teaching_parody_through_newspapers_advanced.php](http://www.esl-lesson-plan.com/archives/2007/01/lesson_plans_teaching_parody_through_newspapers_advanced.php)

- **Activity Four (Investigation, forum):** What are the two different kinds of satire? What makes them similar? What makes them different? Give 5 examples of each kind of satire. Which do you prefer?

**Show What You Know -Applied Learning**

- **Journaling (Each Week, assignment, #24):** Continue your online journal. Collect 5 examples satire from every day events in your life, images you see, things that you read that you find funny. Then write about why you think they are funny. You should try to update the journal several times throughout your week, so that all of the events don’t come from one day. Then pick your funniest experience and create a joke about it. Post this joke in the Laugh Lounge (please remember to follow the rules defined by the class).

- **Project Two (Laugh Lounge, #26):** The Societal Critique: Create an Article for the Onion; A parody; a Political Cartoon; Improv Everywhere; a collection of political blunders with commentary that uses asides and understatements; several epigrams with visuals and use comedic tricks like reverses that trick the audience by a switch in point-of-view; Incongruity that pairs two logical but unconventional ideas; Stupidity that encourages the audience to feel superior to silly thoughts or actions.
Week Six: The Role of Parody and Absurdity

Guiding Question (forum, #19): Is imitation the purest form of flattery? Where is the line between imitating and stealing? Why do some mega-stars seem to seek out negative attention like being the center of people’s jokes?

Reading and Research (#15): Begin your second book. By next week you should be half way through.

Concept Development (What is Parody, #26) Choose One:

Activity One (Invention, forum): Write a tall tale (2-3 paragraphs) which uses exaggerations or hyperbole. (Example: Big Fish)

Activity Two (Human Experience, assignment): Why did many authors like Lewis Carroll and Eugene Ionesco use fantasy and absurdity? What was the Theatre of the Absurd? What was tragicomedy? What was Vaudeville? How did surrealism and Dadaism impact comedy? Find two examples of absurd comedy. Do you like the style? Why or why not?

Activity Three (Investigation, assignment): The Office is an example of a parody of a common real life situation. Looking through the categories of the kinds of comics, label the kind of comic approaches of 5 different characters from The Office. Explain why you decided to give each character that classification.

Show What You Know -Applied Learning

Journaling (Each Week, assignment, #24): Continue your online journal. Choose one of the Dr. Seuss stories to parody. Write your parody. Then pick your funniest section and post it in the Comedy Club. (Parody poems http://www.ehow.com/how_2118173_write-parody-poem.html)

Project Two (Laugh Lounge, #26): The Societal Critique: Create an Article for the Onion; A parody; a Political Cartoon; Improv Everywhere; a collection of political blunders with commentary that uses asides and understatements; several epigrams with visuals and use comedic tricks like reverses that trick the audience by a switch in point-of-view; Incongruity that pairs two logical but unconventional ideas; Stupidity that encourages the audience to feel superior to silly thoughts or actions.
Overview of Weeks Seven Through Nine

**Guiding Question:** Becoming a Comedian

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Week Seven: Finding Material

**Guiding Question (forum, #19):** Where do comics get their material from? How personal should comic routines get? Should you mention your family in a routine? Why or why not?

**Reading and Research (forum, #15):** Continue to read your second choice book until you are 2/3 of the way through. Then respond to this forum question. Find three examples of times when characters in the novel are aware of their audience and change their behavior because of who they are taking to or because of who is listening. How does their awareness of audience influence them? Is it funny? Why?

**Show What You Know -Applied Learning (assignment, #26):**

- **Project Three: This Weeks Goal:** Create a set. Review the parts of a comedic routine. Look through the material you have already collected and play out your set. Post your progress in your journal.

- **End Goal: A standup routine (due in three weeks):** Using GoAnimate or a video recorder, create a 2 minute standup routine that uses your favorite material developed throughout the class and focusing on presentation and timing.
**Week Eight: Timing and Setup**

**Guiding Question (forum, #19):** Why is timing important? How is reading a joke different than hearing one?

**Reading and Research (forum, #15):** Finish reading your book. Then explain which book you liked better and why.

**Show What You Know -Applied Learning (assignment, #26):**

- **Project Three: This Weeks Goal (#26):** Practice your set and refine it. Video tape it or use Go animate to animate it. Post your progress in your journal.

- **End Goal: A standup routine (due in three weeks):** Using Go animate or a video recorder, create a 2 minute standup routine that uses your favorite material developed throughout the class and focusing on presentation and timing.

**Week Nine: How do to Review a Comedic Performance**

**Guiding Question 1 (forum, #19):** How does your age change what you think is funny? How does audience change your performance?

**Guiding Question #2 (forum, #19):** What should be included in a rubric used to evaluate comedic routines?

**Show What You Know -Applied Learning (Laugh Lounge, #26):** Present your routine at the face-to-face and in the Laugh Lounge if possible.
Rubric for Behavior: #20 *This student assumed responsibility for his/her personal creative process.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element One: Risk Taking</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Score 1 Needs Improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being flexible in ideas and thoughts; Embracing risk without placing &quot;blame&quot; when failure occurred</td>
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<tr>
<th>Element Two: Motivation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Score 1 Needs Improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrating high intrinsic motivation, curiosity and a drive to generate a product; Displaying perseverance and competency when meeting challenge</td>
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<tr>
<th>Element Three: Incorporating Feedback/ Group Work</th>
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<tr>
<td>Score 1 Needs Improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enlisting feedback to enhance the final product; Showing a willingness to collaboratively construct knowledge</td>
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Total
Rubric for Reading: # 15 Rather than assuming that meaning is fixed and located within the text, this student successfully navigated the text “reading between the lines” and using that knowledge to generate new ideas

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<th>Score 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Needs Improvement</td>
<td>On the Right Path</td>
<td>Achieving Expectations</td>
<td>Beyond Expectations</td>
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**Element One: Summarizing Content**
Demonstrating knowledge of content, theme, plot structure, and character development which articulate the dynamic relationship s/he developed with the characters and text.

**Element Two: Inferring Meaning**
Reading between the lines and using that knowledge to generate new ideas; Forming unusual connections from the obvious; Using text as building blocks for alternative meanings.

**Element Three: Applying Concepts About Humor to Reading**
Searching and identifying attributes of creative personalities; Identifying the key concepts and/or principles of creative processes.

Total
### Rubric for Writing: #24 This student clearly articulated his/her innovative vision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element One: Content</th>
<th>Score 1 Needs Improvement</th>
<th>Score 2 On the Right Path</th>
<th>Score 3 Achieving Expectations</th>
<th>Score 4 Beyond Expectations</th>
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<td>Creating a complex storyline; Exploring philosophical/psychological principles; Producing an original creative writing piece that shows sophistication.</td>
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### Element Two: Movement
Enticing the audience to follow along; Eliminating the unnecessary and enhancing the key points with rich vivid details; Incorporating visual imagery, a sense of movement, and timing.

### Element Three: Technique
Employing the best formats, words, tools, and/or materials; Using humor and uncanny wisdom; Using paradox, parallel structure, unusual adjective and adverbs; Willingly playing with words and using sophisticated syntax.

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<th>Total</th>
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<td>Score 1 Needs Improvement</td>
<td>Score 2 On the Right Path</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Element One:</strong></td>
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<td>Challenging “What is”</td>
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<td>Asking “what if?”;</td>
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<td>Avoiding perceptual sets</td>
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<td>and entrenched ways of</td>
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<td>questions</td>
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<td><strong>Element Two:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Manipulating “What is”</td>
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<td>Breaking the existing</td>
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<td>assumptions; Broadening</td>
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<td>the scale of an idea;</td>
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<td>Reversing problems;</td>
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<td>Changing the Contexts</td>
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<td><strong>Element Three:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thinking about “What is”</td>
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<td>in a New Way</td>
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<td>Perspective taking;</td>
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<td>Communicating complex,</td>
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<td>asymmetrical, ambiguous</td>
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<td>ideas; Selecting more</td>
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<td>unusual solutions and</td>
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<td>seeking to think in an</td>
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<td>unconventional way</td>
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Rubric for Application (Show What You Know): # 26 This student demonstrated wit and humor.

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<th>Score 1 Needs Improvement</th>
<th>Score 2 On the Right Path</th>
<th>Score 3 Achieving Expectations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hyperbole</td>
<td>Able to hyperbolize or reframing an event or issue.</td>
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<td><strong>Element Two</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Juxtaposition</td>
<td>Able to juxtapose colliding perspectives to communicate an incongruence or paradox.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Element Three</strong></td>
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<td>Misdirection</td>
<td>Able to write surprising and misdirecting humorous pieces.</td>
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<td><strong>Element Four</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Word Play</td>
<td>Able to craft writings which play on double meanings, cultural contexts, or rhythmic meaning.</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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