

# Teacher's Guide for Ask

April 2015

## What's So Funny?

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### Objectives:

To supplement the reading and study of this magazine, students will

1. discuss the causes of laughter,
2. explore the physiological and social benefits of laughter,
3. discover the role of the clown in different cultures, and
4. share personal experiences of humor and laughter.

### Getting Ready:

Display the magazine and ask students to describe the cover. What emotions do the children express? What might cause them to look that way? What subjects might this issue explore?

### What Are You Laughing At?

Vocabulary: crinkle, nostril, guffaw, distinctive, hard-wired, high-pitched, complex

### Discussion:

1. Does the description of physical reactions when a funny joke is heard apply to you? Do you react in some different ways?
2. How do you think people distinguish a fake laugh from a real one?
3. What animals react with laughter or other ways when they are tickled? What message are they sending to their fellow animals?
4. Why does laughter feel good to people? What two emotions trigger a laugh?
5. What prevents you from tickling yourself?
6. How do jokes make you feel mentally?
7. Why are practical jokes tricky?
8. Where and why did a laughing epidemic take place?
9. What is laughing yoga?
10. When do most laughs happen and why?
11. In what ways does laughing matter to individuals and to groups?

### Activities:

- Look up the vocabulary words above in a dictionary and then use one in a funny joke. Write and illustrate your joke; then share it with the class.
- Practice making these different kinds of laughs: giggle, chuckle, belly laugh, guffaw, nervous laugh, unkind laugh. Write and perform a skit with a friend or two that demonstrates one or more of these laughs.
- Begin your own joke collection by writing down the good jokes you hear or see in a notebook or computer file.

Homework: Explain laughing yoga to your family and ask them to practice it with you for three to five minutes. Then poll them on their reactions: did they feel more relaxed before or after laughing yoga? Would they try it again?

## How to Tell a Joke; How Not to Tell a Joke

Vocabulary: punchline, pace (v.)

Discussion:

1. What are the six tips for telling a joke well?
2. What are some of the ways a person can spoil the telling of a joke?

Activities:

- Choose your best joke and practice telling it to a friend. Have your friend peer review your joke-telling skills.

Homework: Review the six joke-telling tips with your family. Ask each person in your family to practice a joke to tell the family before bedtime. Enjoy each other's jokes!

## World's Greatest Practical Jokes Art Pranks

Discussion:

1. Which of these practical jokes do you find funniest? Which do you find most amazing and why? Has anyone ever played a practical joke on you? What was it? How did you react?
2. Which of these works of art on pages 20 and 21 is the funniest to you? What makes it funny? How are the art pranks like practical jokes, and how are they different?

Activity:

- Create a work of art that is based on a prank.

Homework: Share the story of one practical joke at home. Then ask your family what practical jokes they know about from their own lives or the lives of their friends. Write up the best one to share with your class.

## Clowning Around the World The World's Oldest Jokes

Vocabulary: jester, fool (n.)

Discussion:

1. Have you ever seen a clown perform? What did he or she do? How did it make you feel?
2. How have jesters and other clowns worked with rulers and royalty?
3. How did the *heyoka* or sacred clowns of the Sioux Indians use funny actions to help their people?
4. What are *koshari* and what do they do?
5. How do the Chinese chase away evil spirits?
6. Who was the first "Joey the Clown"?
7. Which of the oldest jokes are still funny to you?

Activities:

- Take any two types of clowns, such as a jester and a chou, and write a paragraph about their similarities and their differences.
- Draw and illustrate a comic strip that shows several different types of clowns meeting.
- Following the description in the article, make and decorate a jester's bauble.
- Math Connection: Share the "oldest jokes" with ten people and ask them which three they find funniest. Graph your results.

**Wrap Up:**

- Ask students how humor, laughter, and jokes play a role in their lives.
- What new things did they learn about humor and laughter in their study?
- If students have made joke collections, give them time to share their best jokes with each other.