**Joke Premise Paper Prototype 1**

**Goal**: Read news headlines and come up with *premises* for humorous responses to them.

**What is a joke premise?**

It’s the mechanism behind the joke, without the exact wording. Usually it isn’t funny. Making it funny is future work.

For example

**Headline**:

Americans Expected To Spend $703 Million On Pets For Valentine’s Day

**Humorous response 1**:

“The problem is that every year my tropical fish and I say we’re not doing the whole gift-giving thing.”

**Premise 1**:

In the headline, there is the assumption that for somebody with a pet, Valentine’s Day would be a good thing.

However, in the response, there is the assumption that rather than being a good thing for her and her fish, Valentine’s Day is bad. It has a problem. A problem people in real relationships have of mutually deciding whether or not to celebrate Valentine’s Day.

* It takes the point-of-view of someone with a pet.
* It sees the human/pet relationship through the lens of a human/human relationship.
* It finds a negative thing to talk about.
* This creates a violation of your expectations. From the point-of-view of a pet owner, Valentines day is assumed to be a good thing, but they find a problem (a bad thing) about some aspect of it.
* It uses an observation about human/human relationships as its vehicle:
  + *the uncomfortable decision couples make about whether to celebrate it.*

**Humorous response 2**:

“I’ll probably put it off until the 14th and just grab flowers and a smoked pig ear on my way home from work.”

**Premise 2:**

Different wording, but very similar premise:

* It takes the point-of-view of someone with a pet.
* It sees the human/pet relationship through the lens of a human/human relationship.
* It finds a negative thing to talk about.
* This creates a violation of your expectations. From the point-of-view of a pet owner, Valentines day is assumed to be a good thing, but they find a problem (a bad thing) about some aspect of it.
* It uses an observation about human/human relationships as its vehicle:
  + *the fact that some people put off buying gifts, and it becomes a thoughless chore for them.*

These jokes have similar premises. They take something assumed to be good, and find an aspect of it that is bad, and talk about that.

Not all jokes have this transformation of something that is assumed to be good being turned into something bad, but a lot do. We are going to practice that joke premise.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Headline | Joke | Joke Premise | Joke Mechanism |
| MTV Airing in Black and White On MLK Jr. Day To Spark Conversations On Race | Hopefully, once MTV finishes addressing racism, it can get back to showing the sexism. | Good -> Bad  Addressing racism is **good**.  MTV’s usual programming is sexist and **bad**. | **Insult**  MTV is hypocritical  Cynical lens, looking for the bad |
| Disney introduces first Hispanic princess | I’m sure Princess Elena will still have a sanitized backstory and Anglicized features where it counts. | Good -> Bad  Disney supporting diversity is **good**.  Disney’s history of whitewashing other ethnicities is **bad** | **Insulting** Disney for being hypocritical.  **Cynical** lens, looking for the bad |
| Study: Sitting Too Much May Be Deadlier Than Obesity | Yeah, but what a way to go. | Bad -> Good  Dying is **bad**.  But a good way to die is **good**. | **Sarcastic** (says the opposite of the truth).  Assumes that sitting is a good way to die, which is the **opposite** of the truth. |
| Publisher Pulls Book after boy admits he didn’t go to heaven | Either way, it’s good he’s safe back here on earth. | Bad - > Good  Lying is **bad**.  Back home safe is **good**. | **Ignoring** the major bad thing, to conclude a good thing. |

Prototype

**Step 1 (1 min)**

Read a headline and list all the characters, entities and closely associated entities.

Valentines Day Example:

* Americans
* Pets
* Pet owners
* Non-pet owners
* Stores selling pet treats
* Valentine’s Day
* National Retail Federation

**Step 2 (4 minutes)**

List aspects of the headline, whether they strike you as good or bad and drill into why.

* Valentine’s Day
  + GOOD (if you have a date)
    - Why? Get presents, go to a restaurant, tell each other I love you, have your life reaffirmed, know society thinks you’re on the right track
* $703 Million
  + GOOD for stores
    - They need people to compulsively buy things they don’t need
    - They need holidays and obligations to force them into buying more stuff

**Step 3 (4 min)**

Pick a reason why an aspect of this headline is good or bad and find a way to reverse it by:

* Valentine’s Day
  + GOOD Reversals:
    - BAD: if you don’t have a date
    - BAD: if you forget it accidentally your spouse will be angry
    - BAD: if you don’t know what to get them.
      * You could get mad at your for not getting anything. Or not like what you get them. If you procrastinate too long, there won’t be anything good left

# Jewish Orthodox Newspaper Edits Women Out Of Unity March

The ultra-Orthodox Jewish newspaper *HaMevaser* has sparked backlash for running a photo of Sunday’s anti-terrorism march in Paris that Photoshopped out all women, including German chancellor Angela Merkel, to follow an extreme interpretation of Jewish laws regarding female modesty. What do *you* think?

Step 1:

Read a headline and list all the characters, entities and closely associated entities.

Step 2 (4 minutes)

List aspects of the headline, whether they strike you as good or bad and drill into why.

Step 3 (4 min)

Pick a reason why an aspect of this headline is good or bad and find a way to reverse it:

Facebook To Post Amber Alerts In Users’ News Feeds

Facebook has announced that it will begin posting Amber Alerts in news feeds with a photo of the missing child and details about the case to encourage users to be on the lookout. What do*you* think?

Step 1:

Read a headline and list all the characters, entities and closely associated entities.

Step 2 (4 minutes)

List aspects of the headline, whether they strike you as good or bad and drill into why.

Step 3 (4 min)

Pick a reason why an aspect of this headline is good or bad and find a way to reverse it: