

Overall goal: to use creativity as a method of uncovering the writer's voice, as related to course material

Goals of Each Part:

Part I: to adopt novel linguistic approaches to writing; to acknowledge the reader's knowledge

Part II: to forge unexpected semantic connections, as they pertain to thinking about writing

----- ACTIVITY STARTS BELOW -----

PART I: Developing a parody with some linguistic constraints (15-20 minutes)

Between satire and parody, parody is generally "simpler" to do: you are, in many senses, *reinterpreting* and/or *reframing* some source material. However, that doesn't mean that parody is easy!

In this part, you will construct a parody of children's rhyming poems; specifically, we will attempt to parodize (parodify?) Dr. Seuss. A reasonable follow-up question after reading the previous sentence: what do children's rhyming poems have to do with anything we've done?

Well, dear reader, they have so much to do with what we've done! First, they have a *clearly-defined* audience. Second, they have a great deal to analyze linguistically. Third, they're humorous (at least for me).

Perhaps some examples would better serve my point. Consider the following two stanzas from *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*:

One fish, two fish
Red fish, blue fish.
Black fish, blue fish,
old fish, new fish.

This one has a little star.
This one has a little car.
Say! what a lot of fish there are!

Yes. Some are red. And some are blue.
Some are old. And some are new.
Some are sad. And some are glad.
And some are very, very bad.

Why are they sad and glad and bad?
I do not know. Go ask your dad.

Some questions to think about: what do you notice as a reader? What are the various linguistic details that Dr. Seuss uses to keep the reader reading? How do such details build an overall feeling to reach their target audience?

Now, consider the following stanza from *The Lorax*:

“I am the Lorax,” he coughed and he whiffed.
He sneezed and he snuffled. He snarggled. He sniffed.
“Once-ler!” he cried with a cruffulous croak.
“Once-ler! You’re making such smogulous smoke!
My poor Swomee-Swans... why they can’t sing a note!
No one can sing who has smog in this throat.”

“And so,” said the Lorax,
“—please pardon my cough –
they cannot live here.
So I’m sending them off.”

What’s going on with all those fake words? How & why do they work?

And, finally, consider the following stanzas from *The Cat in the Hat*:

The sun did not shine.
It was too wet to play.
So we sat in the house
All that cold, cold, wet day.

I sat there with Sally.
We sat there, we two.
And I said, “How I wish
We had something to do!”

Too wet to go out
And too cold to play ball.
So we sat in the house.
We did nothing at all.

So all we could do was to sit!
Sit! Sit! Sit!
And we did not like it.
Not one little bit.

What are some devices that you notice?

With all this in mind, construct a short parody (3-4 stanzas) of a Dr. Seuss poem that twists the topic material to anything of your choosing.¹ You may parody any of the poems² that I've presented here, or you can look up others online – nearly all of his works are available as free PDFs online (given a preliminary search of 5-6 books). That said, try to attend to metrical structure and rhyme. After you have completed your parody, write a brief rationale for your decisions: how did you get to the final product? What were some things you were thinking about? What did you try that succeeded? What did you try that failed?

REASONING:

¹ Some random sample topics, in case you can't find a topic: being a student at Cornell, the secret life of your pet(s), opening your fridge with the expectation that your favorite food X will still be there but your roommate ate it instead and didn't even let you know, an embarrassing first date, a penguin's greatest aspiration, something incredibly banal that is awesome and cool and should be valued more.

² And feel free to add your own tiny visuals!

PART II: Constructing satire (15-20 minutes)

Now, we will direct our attention to satire. Even more so than parody, satire allows you to *lean in* to a stronger writing voice – rarely are satires subtle. In particular, you will construct a satirical fable.

Fables are a well-defined genre that is well-suited to our purposes today: satire requires a strong familiarity with the structure and general aesthetic of a genre, and the genre must have features that are easily satirized. Fables satisfy both of these requirements. Two sample fables can be seen below³:

The Lion and the Mouse

A Lion lay asleep in the forest, his great head resting on his paws. A timid little Mouse came upon him unexpectedly, and in her fright and haste to get away, ran across the Lion's nose. Roused from his nap, the Lion laid his huge paw angrily on the tiny creature to kill her.

"Spare me!" begged the poor Mouse. "Please let me go and some day I will surely repay you." The Lion was much amused to think that a Mouse could ever help him. But he was generous and finally let the Mouse go.

Some days later, while stalking his prey in the forest, the Lion was caught in the toils of a hunter's net. Unable to free himself, he filled the forest with his angry roaring. The Mouse knew the voice and quickly found the Lion struggling in the net. Running to one of the great ropes that bound him, she gnawed it until it parted, and soon the Lion was free.

"You laughed when I said I would repay you," said the Mouse. "Now you see that even a Mouse can help a Lion."

A kindness is never wasted.

The Gnat and the Bull

A Gnat flew over the meadow with much buzzing for so small a creature. He settled on the tip of one of the horns of a Bull. After he had rested a short time, he made ready to fly away. But before he left, he begged the Bull's pardon for having used his horn for a resting place.

"You must be very glad to have me go now," he said.

"It's all the same to me," replied the Bull. "I did not even know you were there."

We are often of greater importance in our own eyes than in the eyes of our neighbor. The smaller the mind, the greater the conceit.

The general structure of fables: they're short stories about generic creatures (who are rarely named) that demonstrate an important life lesson for all.

³ Plenty more examples of fables can be found here: <https://www.shortkidstories.com/story/aesops-fables/>

In the space below, construct a short satirical fable (2-3 paragraphs worth of material). As in the previous exercise, you have free rein regarding your subject matter.⁴ Note that the story could be satirized, the lesson could be satirized, or *both* the story and the lesson could be satirized. Don't be afraid to be bold, weird, or bizarre. After, explain your decisions.

[illegible]

⁴ Some random sample topics, in case you can't find a topic: any of the ones mentioned in the footnote for parody, food content creators slapping meat before they cook it, a virtuoso pianist who plays with their toes, finding true love is worth the fight, missing your mouth when you try to take a drink at a fancy restaurant, finding family in unexpected places, forgetting a raincoat on a rainy day, being the CEO of a surfing company but not being able to swim,

REASONING: