Lesson 2
Comic Premise
Grades: Advanced (11-12)

Educational Objective: The student will demonstrate the ability to find the comic premise in established humor and make up their own comic premise.

Materials Needed: Video clip (Back to the Future where Marty finds himself in downtown Hill Valley in the 1950's. Any other video with a strong comic premise will work.)

Hook: Show a comic video clip.

Step 1: Discuss Comic premise. The comic premise is the gap between comic reality and real reality. The comic premise in "Back to the Future" is the gap between the comic reality of that movie (1950s world) and the real reality of Marty McFly. To him, Ronald Reagan is president of the US; to the people in the fifties he's just a hack actor.

Step 2: Analyze this joke:
>   A: I haven't been kissed in over a year.
>   B: Did you swear off women?
>   A: No, I'm Married.

The gap here is the difference between a real world reason, to swear off women, and a comic reason, marriage. Analyze other jokes or movies.

Step 3: Have everyone write five real realities. Examples: Going to the store. Cop stops a truck. Going to church. High school drama class. Listening to a symphony. Listen to some of the ones the class comes up with. Now have them write five comic realities next to them. Examples: Shopping for an uzi. Car full of space aliens. Taught by Albert Einstein. Dancing to a symphony. Again Listen.

Step 4: Put them in groups of 4 and have them pick one of their 20 ideas and create a comic sketch. Give them 7-8 minutes. Have each group perform for the class. Discuss their realities.

Step 5: Discuss the three main types of conflict. Global (man vs environment), Local (man vs man) and inner (man vs self).

Step 6: Have the groups come up with five comic characters and write them on a paper. For example, a bungling scientist. Then have them write five real global conflicts (man vs environment). Give them 3-4 minutes. For example:
>   A bumbling scientist is at odds with a chemical firm
>   A school falls prey to a quirky new principal
>   Aliens takes on city hall

Now have them choose the best one and prepare a comic sketch. Have each group perform for the class.

Step 7: Have each group make up five real local conflicts (man vs. man) for the characters

they've made up. For example:

> Normal guy deals with a crazy neighbor
> Soldier and a pacifist go to war
> A prude and a pimp join forces
> Astronomer marries an astrologer

Have them choose the best one and prepare a comic sketch. Have each group perform for the class.

Step 8: Have each group write five real inner conflicts (man vs self) for the characters they've already made up. For example:

> A kid becomes the president
> A Prince turns into a frog
> Football player becomes a ballet star

Have them choose the best one and prepare a comic sketch. Have each group perform for the class.

Step 9: Discuss. What does conflict do to the comic premise? How do we find the comic premise and how do we create it?

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