Lesson 3
Comic Characters
Grades: Advanced (11-12)

Educational Objective: The student will demonstrate the ability to create their own comic characters by performing the four elements of comic characters.

Materials Needed: Video clip examples of good comic characters (Lucy, Saturday Night Live, Monty Python, etc.)

Hook: Show a video example of good comic characters (Lucy, Saturday Night Live etc.)

Step 1: Ask students to list as many comic characters as they can. Now ask if there are so many of them already out there is there any hope for us to create our own? Have them pull out a paper and tell them that you have the formula for inventing a comic character. There are four elements that go into a comic character.

Step 2: Tell them that this is the first and most important element. STRONG COMIC PERSPECTIVE. This is the unique way the character sees the world. It is the characters personal comic premise. Discuss some of the comic perspectives from the list made in Step 1. Have them make a list of five Strong Comic Perspectives. Examples: Virginal schoolboy, newborn baby, hard luck loser, space alien, optimist, perfectly paranoid, know-it-some, testosterone poisoning. Put them in groups of four or five and have them choose one Strong Comic Perspective from their lists and create a skit to demonstrate it.

Step 3: The second element is EXAGGERATION. A priest's perspective is not inherently funny. Something must be done to it to push it toward the edge. That is Exaggeration. Be bold. Exaggerate Huge. If the Strong Comic Perspective is "a tightwad" then make him value his money over his own life. Have them exaggerate their five STRONG COMIC PERSPECTIVES on their paper. Then in their groups, have them choose one and create a skit and perform it.

Step 4: The third element is FLAWS. Give characters flaws so that they will be detached from us and then we can laugh at them. Examine flaws in Famous comic characters. Al Bundy - Sloppy, selfish, sexist. Have them write ten flaws. Examples, Greed, fearfulness, insecurity, dementia, envy, drug abuse, artificial leg, baldness. Now have them make two lists: One of Fantasy - How the character sees himself, And one of reality - who they really are. Now insert the flaws into a character using the Strong Comic Perspective and Exaggeration and create and perform a skit to demonstrate. Ask, what happens when the character sees himself as he really is? Not funny.

Step 5: The final Element is HUMANITY. (I like him. He's like me.) Discuss the Humanity traits. Loyalty, honesty, generosity, humility curiosity, etc. These are things that make use like the character. If we don't like him we don't care (this would go for non-comic characters as well, like Anakin in Star Wars episode II) Chris Farley's interview character has the flaw of insecurity, but the Humanity of humility. Have them make up a list of ten Humanity traits. Now have them put it all together in a performance. Each actor using the four traits to create a comic

character. And have them act it out in a sketch involving those characters. Remember make the flaws and Humanity equal. The worse the flaw the better the Humanity.

Step 6: Discuss. Have them create and write down three characters using this formula:
        Character Name:
        Comic perspective:
        Flaws:
        Humanity:
        Exaggeration: