

# Finding Truth in Comedy

SUGGESTED LEARNING STRATEGIES: Graphic Organizer, Metacognitive Markers

Quote by <b>Gerorge Bernard Shaw</b>	Interpretation	Personal Commentary
<p>“The power of comedy is to make people laugh, and when they have their mouths open and they least expect it — you slip in the truth.”</p>		

Why might authors use comedy to discuss serious or important topics?

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## Dave Barry’s “A Couple of Really Neat Guys”

Humorous Examples	Context	Element of Truth



# Finding Truth in Comedy

## My Notes

### GRAMMAR & USAGE

A **pronoun** usually refers to a noun or pronoun earlier in the text (its **antecedent**) and must agree in number (singular or plural) and gender (male or female) with the person or thing to which it refers. Example: “When a **person** litters, Captain Tidy comes swooping out of nowhere and explains to the litterer, in polite terms, that **he or she** is being a jerk.”

When you write, be sure you have made your antecedents clear to your reader and that any pronouns referring to the antecedent agree with it.

that “hmmmmm” noise that doctors are trained to make, when I happened to mention littering. Suddenly Jeffrey started stomping around the examination room, neck muscles bulging, denouncing the beer-can tossers of the world and waving his eyeball light around like the Hammer of Thor. Watching him, I realized that I had finally found the perfect sidekick for Captain Tidy.

Captain Tidy is a concept I have fantasized about for many years. He is a masked avenger for the forces of neatness. When a person litters, Captain Tidy comes swooping out of nowhere and explains to the litterer, in polite terms, that he or she is being a jerk. What kept me from acting out this fantasy was the fear of being embarrassed, by which I mean having my nose punched into my brain. But I knew that if Captain Tidy had a SIDEKICK, a LARGE sidekick, a large, TRAINED OPTOMETRIST sidekick, that would be a whole different story.

And thus Jeff and I became Captain Tidy and Neatness Man. We assembled costumes consisting of the aforementioned red tights (size triple-extra large), plus red Superman-style boots, plus blue shorts and shirts with our superhero names professionally lettered on them, plus white gloves, plus capes made from garbage bags, plus utility belts from which were suspended feather dusters, dustpans and rubber gloves.

Also, of course, we wore hoods and masks to preserve our Secret Identities. If you had seen us wearing our outfits and standing in our official superhero stance—hands on hips, chest thrust out, garbage bags blowing out dramatically behind—your only possible reaction would have been to say, with genuine emotion in your voice, “What a pair of dorks.”

But we didn’t care. We were on a mission. We rented a black Tidymobile with very dark windows, and we spent a day cruising the streets. When we saw people litter, we’d leap out, rush up to the perpetrators, pick up their litter, hand it back to them and say, with deep but polite superhero voices, “Sir, you don’t want to litter, DO YOU?” Inevitably, they’d look ashamed, take their litter back and dispose of it properly. One possible explanation for this, of course, is that they thought we were dangerous escaped perverted tights-wearing lunatics. But I like to think that they were genuinely

impressed with our message. At one point, a tough-looking street crowd actually APPLAUDED us for making a man pick up his cigarette butt. And remember, this was in MIAMI, a city where armed robbery is only a misdemeanor.

By the end of the day, thanks to our efforts, Miami had been transformed from a city with crud all over the streets into a city with crud all over the streets. But at least SOME litterers had been chastised, and Jeff and I felt a LOT better. I strongly recommend that you consider becoming a litter avenger in your particular city or town or random suburban area. What's the worst that could happen to you? OK, death. But probably you'd do fine. Just remember to be polite. "Speak softly and carry a large sidekick—that's Rule Two of the Captain Tidy Code. Rule One, of course, is: "Always visit the bathroom BEFORE you put on your tights."

**Writing Prompt:** What truths about life does Barry convey in this essay? Be sure to include a variety of sentence structures (e.g., adverbial phrases and clauses) in your response.



## GRAMMAR & USAGE

A phrase is a group of words that does not contain a subject and verb. A clause is a group of words that contains both a subject and a verb. Adverbial phrases and clauses modify the verb. Barry uses both in his essay.

**Adverbial phrase:** "By the end of the day, thanks to our efforts, Miami had been transformed..." (modifies *had been transformed*)

**Adverbial clause:** "And when it's time to leave, these people simply . . . leave." (modifies *leave*)

Notice that both the phrase and the clause are dependent and are thus followed by a comma.

## My Notes

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