



# Jokes for the Million: Humor in Kids Books: Then and Now

*Lesson Plan for Grade 3 and up*

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## OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to:

- A primary source written by a child.
- Evaluating vintage and contemporary jokes for their humor and appropriateness.
- Creating their own “books.”
- Option: sharing their own work to bring joy to others.

## EDUCATION STANDARDS (This reflects WA standards but many state standards are similar.)

### Social Studies

- H4.3.2 Use evidence to develop a claim about our past community's history.

### English Language Arts

- Speaking and Listening Standards/Comprehension and Collaboration: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
  - Explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.
- With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

### Social-Emotional Learning

- Standard 6: Social Engagement—Individual can consider others and show a desire to contribute to the well-being of school and community.

- Benchmark 6C: Contributes productively to one's school, workplace, and community.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Students will explore humor from a joke book produced by a 12-year-old in 1867.
2. Students will evaluate vintage and contemporary jokes for their humor and appropriateness.
3. Students will be able to work in teams to create their own books to share with others.
4. Students will be able to share their work with others.
  - a. One option for this would be to share their book with other children in a hospital or with people in a nursing home.

## VOCABULARY

**Humor** - the ability to tell about the amusing or comic side of things

**Joke** - something said, done, or written to provoke laughter

## MATERIALS NEEDED

### Part 1 (~30 minutes):

1. Part 1 of the Slideshow: [Jokes For The Million lesson plan](#) - slides #1-9
2. Printouts of selected jokes from *Jokes for the Million*:
  - ▢ [Jokes for the Million printables](#)
    - a. Suggestion: give each table a set of the jokes or post them around the room so students can do a “gallery walk.”

### Part 2 (~30 minutes):

1. Slideshow: [Jokes For The Million lesson plan](#) - start on slide #10
2. A collection of joke books for students to review.
3. Exit Ticket: [AAS Exit Ticket - Three Jokes \(1\).pdf](#)
4. Pencil

### Part 3 (Depends on what kind of final project the teacher chooses):

1. Slideshow: [Jokes For The Million lesson plan](#) - start on slide #14
2. Jokes books for students to peruse.

3. Paper
4. Pencil
5. Art supplies (crayons, markers, scissors, etc.). Note: we set the final project as a paper minibook for this example lesson but do what is best for your context! Some suggestions will be found in the Part 3 activity.

## ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- During the lesson, observe students as they turn and talk.
- Part 2 Exit ticket: evaluate three student joke choices for appropriateness and completeness (they will need these jokes for their joke books!).
- Teacher walks around to monitor students engaging in accountable talk.
- Teacher engages students in whole group discussions to gauge student understanding.
- Teacher asks questions to assess students analytical skills, particularly in evaluating joke appropriateness.

## ACTIVITY

### Part 1:

Slide 1 Humor in Kids Books: Then and Now

**Hook:** Say: “Does anyone have a joke they would like to share?”  
After the kids have shared a few jokes, say: “Kids have been making jokes for longer than anyone can remember.”

Slide 2: Say: In fact, 150 years ago a twelve year old boy named Samuel Merrill wrote and published his own joke book.

Slide 3: Say: Samuel Merrill lived in St. Albans, Vermont.

Slide 4: Say: He lived in the United States 150 years ago.

Slide 5: Say: “Today we are going to read and discuss jokes from *Jokes for the Million* with a partner.” Read learning and target and success criteria on slide.

Slide 6: Share vocabulary.

Slide 7: Share the author’s work. Read some of Samuel’s jokes and see if the children think they are funny and why.

Slide 8: Your turn. Children will walk around the room and read Samuel’s jokes together and find one joke they find funny and explain why. With

partner's have them work together to select a joke that is funny.

Slide 9: Review what a joke is. Were any of Samuel's jokes funny? Why were they funny?

**Part 2:**

Slide 10: Humor in Kids Books: When Are Jokes Funny?

Slide 11: Have the group discuss what makes a joke funny and what makes a joke funny to you but not funny to others? What is a joke not funny?

Slide 12 Learning Target: I can determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text.

Success Criteria: I will be successful if I can write down three jokes that I find funny.

Slide 13: Working by yourself or with a partner, read through the books and write down three (3) jokes you find funny.

You will need: exit ticket (see link above), pencil, joke books.

**Students should turn in their exit ticket with three jokes at the end of the lesson. Before the next lesson, double check the exit tickets and make sure the jokes are complete and appropriate to share with others.**

**Part 3:**

Slide 14: Creating My Own Joke Book - say "Today we are going to take the books you collected on your exit tickets (and any others you would like to add) to make our own joke book, just like Samuel Merrill did 150 years ago."

Slide 15: Learning Target: I can organize a collection of jokes into a book.  
Success Criteria: I will be successful if I can create my very own joke book.

Slide 16: Working by yourself or with a partner, create a joke book with at least 3 jokes. Each student needs their exit ticket with the three jokes they collected last lesson. If you are creating minipaper joke books, students will also need paper, scissors, markers, crayons, or colored pencils. Optional: Joke books to find more jokes.

Slide 17 Option: Video on how to make a mini paper book?


The joke books could also be formatted in Canva, Book Creator, or whatever works best for your class!

## **COMMUNITY SERVICE OPPORTUNITY:**

Have your students donate copies of their finished joke books to a local children's hospital, nursing homes, etc.!

## **SOURCES**

[American Antiquarian Society](#)

 [How to Make a Quick and Easy 8 Page Mini-Book From One Piece of Paper](#)