



23. Initiate a riddle guessing challenge. First, make a large tagboard cutout of a funny looking character (a clown, jester, or goofy guy) and mount it on the bulletin board. Draw a speech bubble from the figure's mouth and, every morning, write a different riddle inside. Have students guess the answer to the riddle.

24. Cherish every chuckle. By making students aware of the value of laughter they begin a lifelong habit of humor appreciation. Have them keep a running list of all the humorous happenings in school and at home throughout the year. Have students work in groups to illustrate incidents and compile drawings for a class project.

25. On April 30, or the last class day of the month, produce an Awards Ceremony Event. Select students to serve as Masters of Ceremonies. Give some 'serious' awards (Best Essay, Best Poster, Best costume, and Give some 'goofy' awards, too (longest left thumb, best socks, most contagious smile, most infectious laugh).

26. HAVE FUN!

Some of these ideas were adapted from material by Larry Wilde, who founded National Humor Month in 1976.



48 Classroom Action Projects PLUS Teacher's Guide to National Humor Month



Compliments of Steve Wilson
Founder of World Laughter Tour &
Director of National Humor Month



1. Read aloud something humorous each day - Shel Silverstein, Jack Prelutsky, and William Coles have delightful poetry books. Robert Newton Peck's Soup books are great read-alouds for intermediate students. Nothing can beat Beverly Cleary for grades 2 to 4.
2. Start a humorous quotations collection to which students can add. They could be on a bulletin board or in a file box. Bartlett's Quotations and other collections can be found in most libraries; many are organized by subject areas.
3. Organize a joke festival or marathon as a culmination of a language arts unit. Build up to it with a joke-of-the-week on the board or have a joke drop-box that students can read from when other work is complete.
4. Hold a best-joke contest. Have students rate submitted jokes or read them aloud to determine funniness rating.
5. Collect spoonerisms (for example, It's kisstumary to cuss the bride) and other humorous language forms: puns, pleonasm, conundrums, mixed idioms, palindromes, epitaphs, tall tales, tangletalk, chants, limericks, riddles, etc.
6. Do an art project with pictures of animal or body parts combined to create incongruous images. Have students name their creations.
7. Collect and then alphabetize into a class book all the words students can think of that describe ways to laugh and smile.
8. Do group creative writing using the word "laugh" as many times as possible. Student teams can compete, but their stories must make sense.
9. Share personal humorous anecdotes and allow students to do the same.
10. Compile a school "humor directory" that includes people's names and something humorous they can do or tell about to a class.

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11. Analyze humorous literature for types of humor (for example, Amelia Bedelia taking things too literally).

12. For vocabulary development, ask half the class to pantomime different smiles, while the other half guesses (for example, polite smile, grimace, grin, beam).

13. Put different laughs on cards, distribute them, and have students demonstrate (for example, guffaw, snicker, giggle, chortle, snort, cackle, chuckle).

14. Draw or pantomime nonliteral expressions (for example, shoplifting, cooking up a storm).

15. Parody television program titles or product names (for example, Crappy Days, Crust Toothpaste, Axwell House Coffee).

16. Make a chart of what makes people laugh: words, people, objects, events.

17. Create a funny "word wall" where students can tape up words such as zoot suit, bubble, burp.

18. Build a humorous learning center. See "Joke Center" in *Teacher* (March 1979) and "Limerick Center" in *Language Arts* (September 1976).

19. Have students keep a log of when and why they laugh.

20. Play tickle tag. Elementary students will enjoy tickling instead of tagging.

21. Do humor collages, for example, words, smiles, faces.

22. Collect humorous songs or songs that have something to do with humor and sing one a day, for example, "I Love to Laugh," "The Shadow of Your Smile," "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling," Include camp songs like "The Ole Gray Mare," "On Top of Old Smokey," and "Mares Eat Oats."

23. Give each student a humor-related word to look up in a large dictionary to determine its etymology (for example, laugh, chortle, giggle, smirk).

16. Assign students to write and/or tell about one of the funniest things that ever happened to them. Reinforces pleasant memories, speaking & writing skills; gets them thinking in terms of what's funny.

17. Have students look for and create a display of things that can add humor to your life. Have students collect various funny bumper stickers, buttons, T-shirts, cartoons, etc.

18. Get students to remember some of the cute, clever, funny things they or their brothers or their sisters might have said when they were little kids. Have them interview the parents, grandparents, neighbors, teachers, etc.

19. Hold a "Limerick Laugh-In." Begin by reading from *A Rocket in My Pocket: The Rhymes and Chants of Young Americans*, compiled by Carl Withers (Henry Holt 1988). Then invite students to put their own feelings/observations in rhyme and share with the class.

20. Ask students WHO makes them laugh and WHY?

21. Find out WHAT tickles their funny bone. Have students keep a "Funny Bone Journal" through the month to record funny things that happened to them, or someone they know, this month. A joke they just heard. Something funny that got laughter going at home.

22. Take an object (piece of chalk, eraser, or a comb) and try to make up something funny about it. Example: Chalk=a white caterpillar; Eraser=a square squirrel; Comb=a baby rake.

23. Invite a local Certified Laughter Leader to come to class a teach laughter exercises and lead a laughter club. Find them at www.worldlaughtertour.com or call 1-800-NOW-LAFF.



8. Have students come to school in crazy costumes.
9. Get students to read aloud from a joke book to classmates. This induce students to read out loud and to have fun doing it.
10. Have students bring in comic strips they think are funny. Display them in anonymously in a "comic gallery". Have a contest to guess which student brought which comic strip or cartoon.
11. Invite a local cartoonist or caricaturist to talk about and demonstrate their work. Have students create their own cartoons.
12. Hold a riddle and joke-telling festival. Encourage participation & performance. Eliminate competition.
13. Get students to create posters that depict the sense/idea of National Humor Month. Post them around the school.
14. Establish an essay writing contest. Possible topics:
Why Laughter is the Best Medicine. They can point out all the healthful benefits derived from the physical act of laughing.

Why It Is Different Joke for Different Folks. They should explain that humor is personal, subjective, and a matter of taste; give examples; make a case for 'humor diversity'.

Laughing At vs. Laughing With Others. They can point out the harm that can be done by insults, zingers and put-downs; sensitize classmates to the importance of good humor,

15. Invite a guest speaker who is a member of the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor to teach a class about humor, laughter and mirth. (www.aath.org)



23. Give each student a humor-related word to look up in a large dictionary to determine its etymology (for example, laugh, chortle, giggle, smirk).
24. Study the history and science of humor. Every encyclopedia has a section on humor.
25. Investigate the possibility of having a physician speak on the physical changes laughter produces. (More and more doctors are becoming interested in humor's healing powers.)
26. Put a humorous item on each test.
27. Find humorous art (for example, Mona Lisa parodies). Explain/discuss parody.
28. Collect laughs on a tape recorder. Label and try to match to owners.
29. Collect humorous quotations and photos from newspapers.
30. Listen to humorous CDs or DVDs (for example, Bill Cosby).
31. Set up a tongue-twister station for students to use when work is complete. Have students practice and record times on a graph. See Alvin Schwartz in bibliography.
32. Start every Monday with something fun so students will look forward to coming to school, that is, BGIM (Be Glad It's Monday) instead of TGIF.
33. Use humorous sentences during spelling tests.
34. Practice punctuation by using unpunctuated jokes and limericks.
35. Have a backwards day. Run your schedule backwards, put some clothes on backwards, do last items on worksheets first, etc.
36. Have students research and then write biographies of comedian's and authors of humorous works.
37. Take candid school shots with a camera and let students caption them.
38. Re-write fairy tales, myths, etc., in updated form.

39. Find humorous (safe) stunts that students can learn to do (for example, push potato across room with nose, roll eyes, wiggle ears, hambone rhythms).

40. Do creative writing or original riddles, jokes, tall tales, etc. (See Journal of Reading, Reading Teacher, and search the Internet for bibliographies.)

41. Learn signing of humor words as used by deaf people (for example, smile, laugh, etc.).

42. Study humor of different cultures, and collect jokes and humorous stories from different countries.

43. Do a unit on humor using art, music, creative writing, speaking, listening, humorous literature.

44. Play a trick on the class each day by making something incongruous in the classroom that they must find.

45. Set up a display on humorous literature and authors in the library.

46. Have students collect and write "books" of Funny Family Folklore. Begin by having them ask parents, grandparents, and siblings to tell stories of funny things that happened to them.

47. Watch sit-coms and other television programs and list types and examples of humor used.

48. Invite a comedian to speak to the class about how he or she prepares material. Perhaps this could be coordinated with a career day.

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TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR CELEBRATING NATIONAL HUMOR MONTH - APRIL

Some of these can be done all year 'round.



1. Prepare a special April Activity Calendar. You can call it "HUMOR: 30 Ways In 30 Day" (or download one from www.humormonth.com)

2. Have students report on National Humor Month. How did it start? What are the goals?

3. Have students search the internet for lists of humorous books for children.

4. Get students to create a list of books they recommend as being funny or humorous, based on books they have read,

5. All through the month, generate a list of adjectives that describe senses of humor. See if they can find 100. Some examples are: droll, witty, punster, weird, nonsensical.

6. Have students report on the origins of April's Fool's Day. How many different theories can they find?

7. Ask students to create an April Fool's Day joke/prank for April 1. Discuss the difference between harmless pranks and harmful pranks. This stimulates creativity and starts them thinking funny as well as thinking about social values.