

## Student Handout: Humor

Humor is a quality caused by some sort of surprise that triggers responses of mind, emotion, and body. These reactions are wit (a thought), mirth (a feeling), and laughter (a physical reaction), notes Steven Sultanoff, Ph.D., of the Association of Applied and Therapeutic Humor.

- **humor**--a quality that notes what is surprisingly incongruous, comical, or absurd.

Humor strikes us in a variety of ways:

- **wit**--usually an quick, intellectual perception such as a clever play on words, surprising contrasts, or keen perception of similarities found in dissimilar objects.
- **irony**--an incongruity of what is expected or thought to be, and what it is.
- **paradox**--a seeming contradiction that is actually true.
- **farce**--a ludicrous, improbable situation, lacking seriousness or consequence.
- **satire**--a work of humor and wit that attacks faults and follies of humanity with irony, sarcasm, and wit, with the intention of improving society
- **sarcasm**--a cutting statement with the intention of ridicule or contempt.
- **parody**--a work that imitates characteristic elements of another work or creator's style with the intention of ridicule or comic effect.
- **whimsy**--a quality to describe that which is odd, fanciful, and fantastical.

Sometimes figures of speech in expression contribute to humor:

- **metaphor**--a figure of speech making a comparison.
- **hyperbole**--a figure of speech in which extreme exaggeration is used effectively.

- **understatement**—an expression that is retrained for effect.

## Getting the Joke

As you tour *Life on Mars*, look for what strikes you as funny and jot notes here. See if you can identify what kind of humor is at play, and make notes as to what effect the artist seems to be creating with humor. Why is it funny? What does it mean to you?

wit    irony    paradox    farce    satire    sarcasm    parody  
whimsy    metaphor    hyperbole    understatement

### Finding Humor in *Life on Mars*

Artist's name & title of artwork	Describe qualities of the work that make it humorous. What sort of humor is at play?	Why is it funny? What does it mean?