

## Linguistics 103

### Language Structure and Verbal Art

#### Short Written Assignment #4: Jokes

Below you will find 40 jokes made by famous comedians. Choose any *eight* of the forty and discuss briefly their properties in terms of concepts introduced in class.

Some jokes involve *simple lexical puns*, others involve *ambiguities of sentence structure*, while still others make use of *violations of Gricean Maxims* based on the Principle of Cooperation for conversation, or hinge on infelicitous *speech acts*. Many of the jokes involve some combination of these devices, and also introduce conventional *scripts*.

In most cases the listener is led to make certain false inferences about the situation being described, only to be 'corrected' somehow by the punch line. Discuss *why* the false inference or inferences are made in each case.

Do not choose jokes which are all of the same type (e.g. all simple puns), but you should draw attention to any structural similarities that any of your chosen jokes share.

1. Peter Marshall: If the right part comes along, will George C. Scott do a nude scene?  
Paul Lynde: You mean he doesn't have the right part?
2. Peter Marshall: In *Alice in Wonderland*, who kept crying 'I'm late, I'm late?'  
Paul Lynde: Alice, and her mother is sick about it.
3. Peter Marshall: Billy Graham recently called it 'our great hope in a confusing and ever-changing world.' What is it?  
Paul Lynde: Pampers.
4. Peter Marshall: Who are more likely to be romantically responsive ... women under thirty or women over thirty?  
Paul Lynde: I don't have a third choice?
5. Peter Marshall: In Greek mythology, what would the god Morpheus do to you while you were asleep?  
Paul Lynde: I don't know, but I got an enchanted hickie!
6. Peter Marshall: Can you get 12 pounds of feathers out of a goose?  
Paul Lynde: I got them in there, didn't I?
7. Peter Marshall: In what state was Abraham Lincoln born?  
Paul Lynde: In what state? Well, like all of us, naked and screaming!

8. Peter Marshall: From what animal do you get silk blouses?  
Paul Lynde: An animal to *you*, Peter, but kind and generous to me.
9. Peter Marshall: You're marrying a man who's been married before. According to the book *Everyday Ettiquette*, is it all right to wear a veil?  
Paul Lynde: No, I'm just gonna wear a baseball cap.
10. The last guy I went out with, he was just so – I don't know – hopeless. He said if I broke up with him that he would kill himself. And I broke up with him, but he's not dead yet. I want to call him up and be like, 'You know, what's the deal? I thought we had an agreement.' —Margaret Cho
11. One time me and three friends dropped acid and drove around in my dad's car. He has one of those talking cars, we're tripping, and the car goes, 'The door is ajar.' We pulled over and thought about that for 12 hours. 'How can a door be a jar?' ... 'Why would they put a jar on a car?' ... 'Oh man, the freeway's melting' ... 'Put it in the jar.' —Bill Hicks.
12. Not all drugs are good, all right? Some of them ... are great. —Bill Hicks.
13. I was walking through Central Park, and I saw an old man smoking. Nothing makes a smoker happier than to see an old person smoking. This guy was ancient, bent over a walker, puffing away. I'm like, 'Duuude, you're my hero! Guy your age smoking, man, it's great.' He goes, 'What? I'm 28.' —Bill Hicks.
14. I'm a heavy smoker. I go through two lighters a day. —Bill Hicks.
15. A girl phoned me the other day and said ... Come on over, there's nobody home. I went over. Nobody was home. —Rodney Dangerfield.
16. I told my psychiatrist that everyone hates me. He said I was being ridiculous, everyone hasn't met me yet. —Rodney Dangerfield.
17. My psychiatrist told me I was crazy and I said I want a second opinion. He said okay, you're ugly too. —Rodney Dangerfield.
18. When I was a kid my parents moved a lot, but I always found them. —Rodney Dangerfield.
19. With me, nothing goes right. My psychiatrist said my wife and I should have sex every night. Now, we'll never see each other! —Rodney Dangerfield.
20. I always wanted to be somebody, but now I realize I should have been more specific.

—Lily Tomlin.

21. You can leave in a taxi. If you can't get a taxi, you can leave in a huff. If that's too soon, you can leave in a minute and a huff. —Groucho Marx.
22. Time flies like an arrow; fruit flies like a banana. —Groucho Marx.
23. A black cat crossing your path signifies that the animal is going somewhere.  
—Groucho Marx.
24. I have had a perfectly wonderful evening, but this wasn't it. —Groucho Marx.
25. One morning I shot an elephant in my pajamas. How he got into my pajamas I'll never know. —Groucho Marx.
26. Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend. Inside of a dog it's too dark to read.  
—Groucho Marx.
27. Ah, the patter of little feet around the house. There's nothing like having a midget for a butler. —WC Fields.
28. Every vacation movie didn't just make the studio money. They each made the studio a lot of money. —Chevy Chase.
29. Don't bother me while I'm eating, or when I'm coming out of the crackhouse or something. Just let me get going. —Wanda Sykes.
30. I'm no good in the morning unless I've had that first, hot piping pot of coffee ... Oh, I've tried other enemas. —Emo Phillips.
31. One guy I was in bed with him and he kept saying to me, 'Tell me what you want? Tell me what you want? Tell me what you want?' I want a milkshake, what do you think I want? —Susie Essman.
32. When they turn 26, women start asking really weird questions like, 'Where are we? Where are we?' Bitch, we at Red Lobster. Why you tripping? —Bill Bellamy.
33. You have to stay in shape. My grandmother, she started walking five miles a day when she was 60. She's 97 today and we don't know where the hell she is. —Ellen DeGeneres.
34. I don't feel old. I don't feel anything till noon. That's when it's time for my nap.  
—Bob Hope.

35. More than any other time in history, mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other, to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly. —Woody Allen.
36. Most of the time I don't have much fun. The rest of the time I don't have any fun at all. —Woody Allen.
37. Last night I went to a 24-hour grocery. When I got there, the guy was locking the front door. I said, 'Hey, the sign says you're open 24 hours.' He goes: 'Not in a row!' —Stephen Wright.
38. It is truly an honor and a privilege for me to be here at Pinehurst School, or whatever your school is called today. I say it's a privilege, because it's a violation of my parole to be around children. But enough about that! Hello little boys and little girls! Mmmm mmmm mmmm! —David Chappelle.
39. I can't understand why a person will take a year to write a novel when he can easily buy one for a few dollars. —Fred Allen.
40. What's on your mind, if you will allow the overstatement? —Fred Allen.