



Eighth Grade

ELA

Learning Strategies

Think-Pair-Share
 Marking the Text
 Questioning the Text
 Discussion Groups
 Socratic Seminar



KNOWLEDGE QUEST

Knowledge Question:

Why is humor an effective way to communicate wisdom?

My Notes

Learning Targets

- Analyze a humorous essay by participating in a Socratic Seminar.
- Explain how an author conveys universal truths through humor.
- Integrate ideas from multiple texts to build knowledge and vocabulary about humor.

Preview

In this activity, you will read a humorous essay and explore how people use comedy to discuss serious topics.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

- As you read the essay, underline words and phrases that are intended to be humorous.
- Underscore the parts of the text that seem to reveal a truth about life.
- Circle unknown words and phrases. Try to determine the meaning of the words by using context clues, word parts, or a dictionary.

About the Author

Dave Barry (b. 1947) was a humor columnist for the *Miami Herald* from 1983 to 2005, during which time he won a Pulitzer Prize for Commentary. Barry has written over 30 books, including two that were turned into a sitcom, *Dave's World*. Much of Barry's work provides humorous commentary on current social issues.



Essay

I've Got a Few Pet Peeves about Sea Creatures

by Dave Barry

- 1 Pets are good, because they teach children important lessons about life, the main one being that, sooner or later, life kicks the bucket.
- 2 With me, it was sooner. When I was a boy, my dad, who worked in New York City, would periodically bring home a turtle in a little plastic tank

that an aquarium is a powder keg that can explode in deadly violence at any moment, just like the Middle East, or junior high school.

8 TRUE STORY: A friend of mine named David Shor told me that his kids had an aquarium containing a kind of fish called African cichlids, and one of them died. So David went to the aquarium store and picked out a replacement African cichlid, but the aquarium guy said he couldn't buy that one, and David asked why, and the guy said: "Because that one is from a different lake."



9 But getting back to my daughter's fish: After much thought, the aquarium guy was able to find me three totally **pacifist** fish—Barney Fife fish, fish so nonviolent that, in the wild, worms routinely beat them up and steal their lunch money. I brought these home, and so far they have not killed each other or died in any way. Plus, Sophie LOVES them. So everything is working out beautifully. I hope it stays that way, because I hate zucchini.

pacifist: opposed to violence

Knowledge Quest

- How and where did this essay make you laugh?
- Where did you find yourself agreeing with the author?

Returning to the Text

- Return to the text as you respond to the following questions. Use text evidence to support your responses.
- Write any additional questions you have about the essay in your Reader/Writer Notebook.

1. What is the effect of the repetition of "a little plastic" in paragraph 2?

2. What is the effect of the juxtaposed ideas "grown bigger" and "grown smaller" in paragraph 4?

3. How does the author use stories from his boyhood to support his feelings about pets?

4. **KQ** In paragraph 6, why is referring to a group of fish as being a “society” humorous? How does the author’s humorous use of the term *fish society* help you understand his position about pet fish?

5. What specific details does the author include in paragraph 7 in order to have a comic effect?

6. Read and respond to the following quote. Then find a quote from the essay that shows how Barry slipped in the truth after making you laugh.

Quote	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>		

7. How does the author use language (diction, syntax, imagery, and figurative language) to create a humorous tone?
8. How does the author appeal to the audience’s emotions, interests, values, and/or beliefs?
9. What is the universal truth (theme) of the text? How does the author develop the idea through humorous language?