
What's So Funny? Review by Debbie Li

WHAT'S SO FUNNY? Elizabeth Claire. Rochelle Park, New Jersey: Eardley Publications, 1984. pp. 151, \$7.95.

Humor is usually one of the last aspects of a language and culture that a non-native speaker is able to understand and master. *What's So Funny?* by Elizabeth Claire seeks to clarify some of the difficulties and nuances associated with American humor. It is geared towards intermediate and advanced ESL students in the United States, high school age and older. Basically, the book is designed for use in conversation classes or classes on American culture.

The volume is divided into a total of sixteen chapters, the first four of which serve as a basic introduction, giving information on what we learn about American humor, what makes a joke funny to Americans, the structure of a joke, children's humor, and stereotyping, etc. Chapters five through fifteen center around various types of American jokes, touching such areas as men and women, parents and children, college life, doctors, lawyers, and stupidity, just to name a few. Finally, the volume concludes with a chapter on how to tell a joke, which gives helpful hints to the non-native speaker concerning the appropriate place, timing, and manner for telling a joke.

This book can be used either as a supplemental text or self-study reference

guide. Each of the first fifteen chapters is followed by discussion questions and vocabulary exercises, with self-checking answers at the back of the book. Potentially difficult words are marked with asterisks and can be looked up in the glossary in the back of the book.

The "Suggestions for Instruction" section at the beginning of the book may also be a helpful guide for the teacher who uses this book in an ESL class.

With a useful body of information on American jokes, this book can be an effective supplement for ESL students who have overcome a large part of the linguistic barrier but who yet need to overcome the cultural barrier. However, due to the number of difficult words, its use should be limited to higher-intermediate and advanced students.

Volume one of the book costs \$7.95. Three additional volumes are planned for this series, each covering a different aspect and expression of humor. Information about the additional volumes should appear in the *TESOL Newsletter* upon publication, according to the publisher.

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