

Learning Targets

- Identify the elements of satire by marking a text.
- Analyze how a satirist uses humor to develop a position.

Before Reading

1. Satire is a specific form of literature in which an author often adopts a **persona** to convey a perspective different from her or his own in order to make a point. Try to identify the characteristics of the persona of the essay you are about to read.

During Reading

2. As you read, mark the text for any areas you find humorous. For example, look for **parody**, **caricature**, and other forms of humor. Caricature is more often applied to graphic representations, but it can be applied to literary works.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Bouchier is a British writer who has lived in the United States since 1986. He has written fiction, nonfiction, commentaries, and humor columns for newspapers, literary journals, and magazines. He is also an award-winning essayist for National Public Radio.

Satire

Let's Hear It for the Cheerleaders

by David Bouchier

1 Strange things happen on college campuses in summer. I was nearly trampled to death the other day by a horde of very young women wearing very short red skirts and chanting something that sounded like “A fence! A fence!”

2 A fence might be a very good idea, perhaps with some razor wire and a warning sign saying “Danger: Cheerleaders Ahead.” Long Island is host to more than a dozen cheerleader camps. For the educationally gifted, Hofstra and Adelphi Universities even offer cheerleading scholarships (“Give me an A! Give me an A!”).

3 But I think there is some intellectual work to be done here. Cheerleading needs a history, a philosophy and, above all, a more sophisticated theory of communications.

4 The cheerleading phenomenon is almost unknown in the rest of the world. British soccer fans do their own cheerleading, with a medley of traditional songs, bricks and bottles. In less civilized parts of the world, fans express their enthusiasm by running onto the field and beating up the opposing team. Only in America do we have professional partisans to do the jumping and yelling for us.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:
Marking the Text, Graphic Organizer

Literary Terms

A **persona** is a voice or mask that an author, speaker, or performer assumes for a particular purpose.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

Parody is an imitation of another’s work with the idea of ridiculing the author, his or her ideas, or the work itself.

Caricature is an exaggeration or other distortion of characteristics to the point of making a person or group appear ridiculous.

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Dramatic irony refers to situations—usually in plays, short stories, novels, etc.—in which the audience/reader understands or grasps information that the characters in the story do not. What information do you “get” that the narrator seems not to understand?

Why don't you fellows
Pick up that ball
And move it carefully
To the other end of the field?

12 If we really want to teach good social values, let's chant this famous verse from Grantland Rice:

For when the one great Scorer comes
To write against your name
He writes not that you won or lost
But how you played the game.

13 Now there's a catchy message for the millennium!

14 And why not bring that youthful spirit and those brilliant visuals out of the stadium and into the workplace? Cheerleaders should be in every office, with a chant for every corporate game. In a lawyer's office, for example, a spirited cry of "Rule of Law! Rule of Law! Sue! Sue! Sue!" accompanied by some eyepopping dance steps, would give courage and purpose to desk-bound drones. On Wall Street, a simple chant of "Go Greenspan! Low Interest! Never mind the Asians!" would create a positive environment for investment. And cheerleaders would share their boundless enthusiasm with the rest of us who, in the game of life, so often find ourselves on the losing team.

GRAMMAR & USAGE
Diction

Satire gets much of its humor from the diction a writer chooses. Bouchier takes the lighthearted topic of cheerleaders and uses overly formal and inflated diction. The mismatch between the topic and the diction contributes to the overall humor. For example, ancient cheerleaders used "frenzied rites" and "extravagant gestures." Injuries happen because of "excessive acrobatics" and the squads have "brilliant visuals."

After Reading

3. Create a graphic organizer like the chart below, and quote passages you found funny. Explain why you thought each was funny and identify the satirical techniques being used. Interpret what each had to say about the subject referenced in the quote. An example has been provided to get you started.

Humorous Passage	Identify humorous techniques and humor of quote	What is the implied message?
<p>"...perhaps with some razor wire and a warning sign saying 'Danger: Cheerleaders Ahead.'"</p>	<p>The writer uses hyperbole, irony, and vivid imagery to create a ridiculous picture of cheerleaders as a threat that needs to be contained.</p>	<p>The image seems to suggest that cheerleaders are dangerous.</p>

Check Your Understanding

Writing Prompt: Now apply the techniques you learned from the "Introduction to Satire." Using details from the text, explain how Dave Bouchier's article fits the definition of satire. Be sure to:

- Reference the definition of satire as discussed in class.
- Support your answer with specific examples from the text.
- Provide commentary that explains the effect of the technique you have identified.

Identifying the Elements of Satire

My Notes

Language and Writer's Craft: Definitions and Word Patterns

When you are reading a text and find a word you do not know, there are several ways to determine the word's meaning.

First of all, look for **context clues** and use the reading strategy of diffusing.

What meanings and connotations do surrounding words and sentences provide?

Example: What does the word *ardent* mean in the text below?

The cheerleading industry has many **ardent** supporters. It is said to build self-confidence, positive attitudes, and a mysterious quality called spirit, which seems to involve smiling a lot.

Here, *ardent* is clearly modifying *supporters*. The second sentence tells you that people believe many good things about cheerleading, so you can probably tell that *ardent* means "enthusiastic" or "passionate."

Also, you can use **patterns of word changes** that indicate different meanings or parts of speech. If you know that *ardor* means "passion; enthusiasm" and you recognize *-ent* as a suffix that transforms a noun to an adjective, you can figure out the meaning of *ardent* without looking it up.

Sometimes, however, you need to consult a dictionary to be sure you understand a word's **denotation**, or definition, and its **connotations**, or associations. You can also look up a word's **etymology**, or history, to learn more about it. For instance, if you look up the etymology of *ardent*, you will learn that it literally means "burning."

Check Your Understanding

Read the text below. Use context clues to determine the meaning of *decimated*.

The opposing squad, the Furies, were merciless goddesses of vengeance who would swing into violent action if their team was losing. . . . So many teams were **decimated** by the Furies or led astray by the Maenads that cheerleading fell into disrepute for 2,000 years.

First, jot notes based on context clues and your knowledge of word parts and changes. Then look up the word in a good dictionary or dictionary of usage. What was the word's original, literal meaning? Is it still used that way?