

Humour in "Fawlty Towers"

"Fawlty Towers" by John Cleese and Connie Booth

1. What comedy genres do you like?

- black comedy (death, violence, discrimination or disease), e.g. "M*A*S*H" (on Korean War)
- blue comedy, (nudity, sex), e.g. ???
- character comedy, e.g. "Mr Bean"
- mockumentary (parody using documentary style), such as "Borat", "Brüno")
- surreal comedy (absurd situations, nonsense logic), e.g. "Monty Python's Flying Circus"
- sitcom, e.g. "Fawlty Towers", "Friends"
- wit/word play (clever, subtle manipulation of language), e.g. Woody Allen's movies
- other

2. What do you think are the most important ingredients of a situation comedy:

- a) characters (the way they behave and interact with other characters and their surroundings
- b) themes (what the series is generally about)
- c) witty dialogue lines
- d) title
- e) situations, problems to solve
- f) locations
- g) other?

Series 2, Episode no. 1 "Communication Problems"

- 1) What sort of characters do we have in the episode? Who is the best character for you?
- 2) What are the central characters' speech styles and mannerism?
- 3) What are the communication problems that the main characters have in this episode? Try to enumerate as many scenes as you can.
- 4) What does the hotel guest, Mrs Richards, complain about?
- 5) What are the relationships between Basil Fawlty and other characters?
- 6) How does Basil Fawlty deal with stressful situations?

7) What does the title of the series "Fawlty Towers" convey?

2. In what context do the characters say these words?

"Communication Problems" Quotes:

"I'm gonna sell you to a vivisectionist!"

"A satisfied customer. We should have him stuffed."

"Well, may I ask what you were expecting to see out of a Torquay hotel bedroom window? Sydney Opera House, perhaps? The Hanging Gardens of Babylon? Herds of wildebeasts swinging majestically...?"

"And if you give us any more trouble, I shall visit you in the small hours and put a bat up your nightdress."

[with feigned reminiscence] "Oh, happy. Yes, I remember that. No, not that I noticed, dear. Well, I'll report it if it happens, though. "

Basil Fawlty: Shhh-shh-shh-shh-shh. You know nothing... about... the horse.

Manuel: [parroting] I know "nothing... about... the horse."

Basil Fawlty: Yes.

Manuel: Ah. Which horse?

Basil Fawlty: What?

Manuel: Which horse I know nothing?

Basil Fawlty: My horse, nitwit!

Manuel: Your horse - Nitwit.

Basil Fawlty: No-no-no. Dragonfly.

Polly: I'll get you some. Do you want plain ones or ones with our address on it? Mrs Richards: Address on it?

Polly: How many sheets? Well, how many are you going to use?

Mrs Richards: Manager!

Mrs Richards: [to Manuel] Now, I reserved a very quiet room with a bath and a sea view. I specifically asked for a sea view in my written confirmation, so please make sure I have it.

Manuel: Que?

Mrs Richards: What?

Manuel: Que?

Mrs Richards: Kay?

Manuel: Si.

Mrs Richards: Sea?