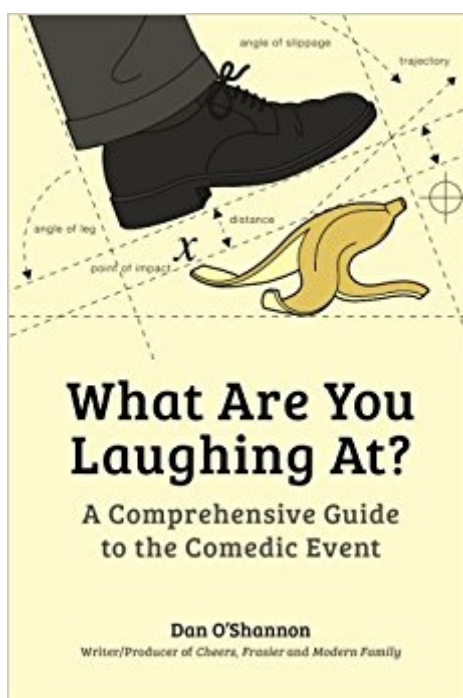


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# What Are You Laughing At?: A Comprehensive Guide To The Comedic Event



## Synopsis

If you're looking for a book that will teach you how to write comedy, we suggest you keep moving. You still have time to pick up a copy of *Writing Big Yucks for Big Bucks* before the store closes. However, if you want to understand the bigger picture -- what is comedy, why do we respond to it the way we do -- then you've come to the right place. *What Are You Laughing At?* presents an entirely new approach to comedy theory. It challenges long-held beliefs and shows how the three main theories of comedy (incongruity, superiority, and relief) are not in conflict; but rather, work as parts of a larger model. There are many examples pulled from the author's own experiences, writing for shows such as *Cheers*, *Frasier*, and *Modern Family*. By the end, you'll have an understanding of just what happens when man meets comedy. It will change the way you hear laughter.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Dan O'Shannon is currently co-executive producer for the ABC show *Modern Family*, previously working on other Emmy nominated shows such as *Frasier* and *Cheers*. O'Shannon has also lectured in classes at UCLA, USC, and taught a course on writing at Cleveland State University, where he holds an honorary doctorate.

This book provides a pretty decent model in how humor works. It goes without saying but if you're serious about understanding how humor works don't rely on this book alone. Still this is an excellent start. I'm particularly a fan of his graphing types of humor on a Cartesian coordinate plane. It may sound a touch silly, but makes for a useful map of getting at how a joke is poking fun at its

target. The portion on vehicles I felt could have been better elaborated for some things, and the chart in the little categorical boxes he moves through in the beginning and then shows in full at the end, I felt, were very useful if not a little cumbersome. I also wish it would have incorporated the Hurley model as I feel it implicitly leans in that direction. I really like this book however, it is one of the clearest I have read on the subject matter, most importantly provides useful, and relative easy to use tools for understanding and developing humor.

When I was in professional sports I took a lesson from a current world leader and the best thing I got out of it besides some important fundamentals was the fact that he explained the sport to me and what I had been doing all along which made me conscious of it so I could then do it on purpose, this book did that for me with comedy as well as teaching me new ways to look at laughter types and the why and how that they are achieved. I try to be a student of comedy, if you are a student as well then you are going to enjoy this book. If you are looking for a book on how to write jokes then go somewhere else, this explains laughter in great detail but is not an instructional book on how to be a comedian or writer. The book is almost 300 pages but reads fast and the author puts his own humor and even some call backs in it which makes it interesting as well.

sensible writing about a topic that frequently is the subject of conjecture, bias, or both. Dan has the experience, and he's added to the body of research.

Wow. What's the last comedy writing book written by an Emmy winner? A treatise on jokes written by someone pitching jokes in a writers room on the most critically acclaimed comedy on TV? What a great book. O'Shannon strips away the "theories" of comedy and instead develops a practical "law" which readers can use almost immediately. Dense, intelligent and - yes - very funny, this is a graduate course in humor. Maybe not the first comedy writing book you should read, but definitely the best.

As I started reading "What Are You Laughing At?", I began to worry. If humour was explained to me, if somebody successfully pulled back the curtain on what makes us laugh, would things stop being funny? And if I ever tried to write anything funny, would it interfere with my natural instincts? Luckily, as I pushed on, I realised that Dan O'Shannon's book isn't about to ruin anyone's appreciation of comedy, instead it explains the variables that come into play when something makes us laugh. You may have wondered, for example, Why is something funny to you, but not to me? Why does the

same person give a hearty applause to a joke in a stage play, but roll their eyes at the same joke in a TV sitcom? Why did Bob, who's a real hoot in work, bomb when he went to an open-mic night? All these questions, and many more, are clearly and thoroughly answered in this book. Additionally, through explaining the above, O'Shannon creates a sort of "Grand Unified Theory of Comedy". Rather than just focus on what makes a joke funny (the most obvious go-to place for someone to begin) the author presents what he calls the "comedic event", something which takes into account your state of mind, your prejudices, your preferences, etc. After all, we find humour everywhere in life, not just when we turn on the TV or when someone tells us a joke, plus everyone has a different sense of humour. All of these things need to be accounted for if one is to truly present an explanation of what causes us to laugh. O'Shannon's holistic view of things allows him to present insights that are completely self-evident once they've been explained. So solid is the author's appreciation, and so analytical is his approach, that you'll wonder how anyone has ever thought differently about the subject. I felt like I was back in University experiencing a great lecture. And yet, as I understand it, O'Shannon is the first person to present an explanation of comedy which actually takes into account all of these variables. If learning more about a fundamental aspect of the human experience is something that sounds interesting, I highly recommend this book. It won't necessarily improve your writing (if that's your bag), but it won't ruin comedy for you either. O'Shannon spent eight years writing this book, a lifetime researching it, and I think it's safe to say that his work has taken us one step closer to fully understanding what we're laughing at.

The book "What Are You Laughing At" by Dan O'Shannon, who, I now consider one of the leading "pathologists of comedy, dissects the structure of comedy to its very core. It's presented in an understandable format, reviewing all the collaborative aspects that can influence the receiver's perception and ultimate response. This book is not just about the nuts and bolts, it's about the nitty-gritty. A must read for those serious about comedy.

Good

Brilliant! I'm talkin' secret government think-tank BRILLIANT! Brain surgery made easy, brilliant. Dan O'Shannon's, WHAT ARE YOU LAUGHING AT?, is an accessible, entertaining, mind-blowing analysis of the Comedic Moment. Dan reveals variables & patterns which every comedy writer can use to engineer & analyze BIG LAUGHS.

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