



**TEXAS PERFORMANCE STANDARDS PROJECT**  
High School English Language Arts/Social Studies Unit  
*The Comedic Lens: Analyzing a Society through Its Use of Comedy*

This guide links *The Comedic Lens: Analyzing a Society through Its Use of Comedy* unit to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for ninth and tenth graders, though the unit can also be used for juniors and seniors. *The Comedic Lens* is an English language arts and social studies unit that allows students to use the genre of comedy to explore a society's history and/or literature. *The Comedic Lens* also has interdisciplinary connections to the fine arts disciplines. For example, students will understand traditional historical points of reference in U.S. history, which the Social Studies TEKS cover; they will also develop concepts about self, human relationships, and the environment, which the Theatre TEKS cover. The following document includes the applicable TEKS and the details of *The Comedic Lens* unit. The asterisks indicate the TEKS that are testable on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). The final section of this document presents the applicable Texas College Readiness Standards adopted by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) on January 24, 2008.

**Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills**

The unit may address the following TEKS:

English Language Arts:

***English I***

- I.1 Understands new vocabulary and uses it when reading and writing
- I.2 Analyzes, makes inferences, and draws conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provides evidence from the text to support their understanding
- I.8 Analyzes, makes inferences, and draws conclusions about the author's purpose in cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provides evidence from the text to support their understanding
- I.11 Understands how to glean and uses information in procedural texts and documents
- I.13 Uses elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text
- I.14 Writes literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas.
- I.16 Writes persuasive texts to influence the attitudes or actions of a specific audience on specific issues
- I.17 Understands the function of and uses the conventions of academic language when speaking and writing
- I.18 Writes legibly and uses appropriate capitalization and punctuation conventions in their compositions
- I.20 Asks open-ended research questions and develops a plan for answering them

- I.21 Determines, locates, and explores the full range of relevant sources addressing a research question and systematically records the information they gather
- I.23 Organizes and presents their ideas and information according to the purpose of the research and their audience
- I.24 Uses comprehension skills to listen attentively to others in formal and informal settings
- I.25 Speaks clearly and to the point, using the conventions of language

### ***English II***

- II.1 Understands new vocabulary and uses it when reading and writing
- II.2 Analyzes, makes inferences, and draws conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provides evidence from the text to support their understanding
- II.6 Understands, makes inferences, and draws conclusions about the varied structural patterns and features of literary nonfiction and provides evidence from text to support their understanding
- II.8 Analyzes, makes inferences, and draws conclusions about the author's purpose in cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provides evidence from the text to support their understanding
- II.9 Analyzes, makes inferences, and draws conclusions about expository text and provides evidence from text to support their understanding
- II.12 Uses comprehension skills to analyze how words, images, graphics, and sounds work together in various forms to impact meaning
- II.13 Uses elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text
- II.14 Writes literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas
- II.16 Writes persuasive texts to influence the attitudes or actions of a specific audience on specific issues
- II.18 Writes legibly and use appropriate capitalization and punctuation conventions in their compositions
- II.20 Asks open-ended research questions and develops a plan for answering them
- II.21 Determines, locates, and explores the full range of relevant sources addressing a research question and systematically record the information they gather
- II.24 Uses comprehension skills to listen attentively to others in formal and informal settings
- II.25 Speaks clearly and to the point, using the conventions of language

### **Social Studies:**

#### ***United States History***

- US.1 Understands traditional historical points of reference in U.S. history from 1877 to the present
- US.2 Understands the political, economic, and social changes in the United States from 1877 to 1898
- US.5 Understands significant individuals, events, and issues of the 1920s
- US.9 Understands the impact of geographic factors on major events\* (Testable on the Grades 10 and 11 Social Studies TAKS, Objective 2)
- US.20 Understands the relationship between the arts and the times during which they were created
- US.21 Understands how people from various groups, including racial, ethnic, and religious groups, adapt to life in the United States and how they contribute to our national identity
- US.24 Applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources, including electronic technology\* (Testable on the Grades 10 and 11 Social Studies TAKS, Objective 5)
- US.25 Communicates in written, oral, and visual forms\* (Testable on the Grades 10 and 11 Social Studies TAKS, Objective 5, and Exit Level Social Studies TAKS, Objective 5)

US.26 Uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings

### ***World History***

WH.1 Understands traditional historical points of reference in world history

WH.2 Understands how the present relates to the past

WH.20 Understands the relationship between the arts and the times during which they were created

WH.21 Understands the roles of women, children, and families in different historical cultures

WH.22 Understands how the development of ideas has influenced institutions and societies

WH.25 Applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources, including electronic technology\* (Testable on the Grades 10 and 11 Social Studies TAKS, Objective 5)

WH.26 Communicates in written, oral, and visual forms\* (Testable on the Grades 10 and 11 Social Studies TAKS, Objective 5, and Exit Level Social Studies TAKS, Objective 5)

WH.27 Uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings

### ***World Geography Studies***

WG.2 Understands how people, places, and environments have changed over time and the effects of these changes on history

WG.5 Understands how political, economic, and social processes shape cultural patterns and characteristics in various places and regions\* (Testable on the Grades 10 and 11 Social Studies TAKS, Objective 3, and Exit Level Social Studies TAKS, Objective 3)

WG.8 Understands how people, places, and environments are connected and interdependent\* (Testable on the Grades 10 and 11 Social Studies TAKS, Objective 5, and Exit Level Social Studies TAKS, Objective 5)

WG.16 Understands how the components of culture affect the way people live and shape the characteristics of regions

WG.17 Understands the distribution, patterns, and characteristics of different cultures

WG.18 Understands the ways in which cultures change and maintain continuity

WG.21 Applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology\* (Testable on the Grades 10 and 11 Social Studies TAKS, Objective 5)

WG.22 Communicates in written, oral, and visual forms\* (Testable on the Grades 10 and 11 Social Studies TAKS, Objective 5, and Exit Level Social Studies TAKS, Objective 5)

WG.23 Uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings

Depending on the subject of study, this task will cover additional Social Studies TEKS.

### **Theatre:**

#### ***Theatre I***

I.1 Develops concepts about self, human relationships, and the environment, using elements of drama and conventions of theatre

I.2 Interprets characters, using the voice and body expressively, and creates dramatizations

I.3 Applies design, directing, and theatre production concepts and skills

I.4 Relates theatre to history, society, and culture

I.5 Responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances

## ***Theatre II***

- II.1 Develops concepts about self, human relationships, and the environment, using elements of drama and conventions of theatre
- II.2 Interprets characters, using the voice and body expressively, and creates dramatizations
- II.3 Applies design, directing, and theatre production concepts and skills
- II.4 Relates theatre to history, society, and culture
- II.5 Responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances

### **Description of Unit**

Students will explore the use of comedy as a means of social commentary throughout history. Students will learn about different types of comedy and its role and impact in other cultures and eras. They will choose an historic event/era and look at the ways comedy was used in society at that time and how comedy affected popular opinions and attitudes. The final product will be a comedic interpretation of an historic or current event.

### **Goals**

Students will meet these goals in their explorations:

- Understand the relationship between comedies and the times in which they were created
- Become familiar with varying types of comedy from different time periods
- Learn about the functions of comedy in a society
- Develop the essential skills of logical thinking, creative problem solving, intellectual risk taking, and communicating
- Ask questions and explore theories
- Have opportunities to generate new ideas

### **Phase I. Learning Experiences**

1. Introduce the concept of comedy and explain the many kinds of comedy to the students. Examine different forms and definitions of comedy and provide an historical context. You may wish to look at different comedic genres, such as satire, irony, physical, or classic Greek, including reading or viewing samples. Helpful websites include:  
<http://www.theatrehistory.com/ancient/comedy001.html>  
<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/collections/capsule/langarts.html>  
[http://www.k-state.edu/english/baker/english320/cc-verbal\\_irony.htm](http://www.k-state.edu/english/baker/english320/cc-verbal_irony.htm)
2. Have a class discussion about comedy. You may use these questions to guide the discussion:
  - What makes something funny?
  - What makes a play, movie, or television show a comedy?
  - What are the characteristics of comedy that transcend time?
  - Why are some things that were funny in the past not funny today?
  - When does comedy have a serious purpose?
  - What role do ethics play in comedic performances?
3. Explore the use of comedy in different cultures and different eras. Emphasize connections among cultures and eras. If in a social studies class, you may wish to focus on a culture or era that you have studied/will study extensively. If in an English class, you may wish to focus on a literary genre or movement that is relevant to your curriculum.
4. Select a current comedy, such as a play, sitcom, or comic strip, and examine the social impact on contemporary culture, and also society's impact on the comedy. You may wish to use this as a class discussion, small group work, or an individual assignment.

## Phase II. Independent Research

### A. Research process

1. Selecting a topic. Divide students into small groups based on their interest. As a group, the students should choose an important historical era or event to study.
2. Asking guiding questions. Once students have selected their historical era or event, each student should think of three to five guiding questions, such as:
  - How was comedy used during this era?
  - Who used comedy?
  - What purposes did comedy serve?
  - How effective was comedy in achieving the goal(s) of the comedian(s)?
  - How did other groups receive the comedy?
  - Why do you think this example of comedy still exists today?

While these examples are general, the student's questions about the historical era or event should be specific to the chosen topic. The questions should lead him/her to form individual research-based opinions. The student should also develop a hypothesis or some possible answers to the questions.

3. Creating a research proposal. The student should include numerous components in the research proposal:
  - The historical era or event
  - Examples of significant comedies from that time period
  - The guiding questions he/she will investigate, as well as hypothetical answers to those questions
  - Resources he/she will need to find answers to questions, such as primary and secondary sources, correspondence with experts on the subject, etc.
  - Any initial thoughts on the social implications of comedy
4. Conducting the research. After the teacher has approved student proposals, each student begins using the resources he/she has identified and others he/she may encounter. During this stage, the student will need to keep a log, note cards, and/or resource process sheets for all the sources he/she uses and what he/she learns from each one. The students should focus on the social impacts of comedy, as related to the historical era or event.

### B. The product

The student groups will collaborate to complete **one** of the following product options:

1. A comedy about the historical era or event. Each student should write independently a short analysis of their research findings about comedy and its role in the historical era or event. This analysis might be a good way to assess the individual work of students.
2. A satire about a contemporary issue. The student chooses the format (e.g., comic strip, play, sitcom, standup routine, op-ed piece) and applies learning from the research process about comedy and its social implications. Again, each student could include a short individual writing assignment to reflect his/her findings.
3. An updated comedy piece from the historical era or event. Students should take a comedy from the time period studied and update it to make it modern and relevant today. Individual students may write a short explanation of the updated edition and artistic decisions made in order to explain their learning.

### **C. Communication**

Students perform or present the satire or comedic piece. One student in the group should be the director, while the other students act in the performance. If the piece is long, ask students to choose the most representative 5-10 minutes of it to perform. The piece should be followed by an unscripted Q&A session with audience members.

### **D. A completed project consists of:**

1. The research proposal
2. A log, note cards, or resource process sheets
3. The product—comedy about an historical era or event, contemporary satire, or updated comedy
4. Individual writing assessment that accompanies the product
5. A Works Cited Page
6. An audiotape or videotape of the presentation, including an unscripted Q&A session

### **THECB College Readiness Standards**

This unit may address the following THECB College Readiness Standards:

#### English Language Arts:

- I.A.1 Determines effective approaches, forms, and rhetorical techniques that demonstrate understanding of the writer’s purpose and audience
- I.A.2 Generates ideas and gathers information relevant to the topic and purpose, keeping careful records of outside sources
- I.A.3 Evaluates relevance, quality, sufficiency, and depth of preliminary ideas and information, organize material generated, and formulate thesis
- I.A.4 Recognizes the importance of revision as the key to effective writing
- I.A.5 Edits writing for proper voice, tense, and syntax, assuring that it conforms to standard English, when appropriate
- II.A.1 Uses effective reading strategies to determine a written work’s purpose and intended audience
- II.A.2 Uses text features and graphics to form an overview of informational texts and to determine where to locate information
- II.A.3 Identifies explicit and implicit textual information, including main ideas and author’s purpose
- II.A.4 Draws and supports complex inferences from text to summarize, draw conclusions, and distinguish facts from simple assertions and opinions
- II.A.5 Analyzes the presentation of information and the strength and quality of evidence used by the author and judge the coherence and logic of the presentation and the credibility of an argument
- II.A.6 Analyzes imagery in literary texts
- II.A.7 Evaluates the use of both literal and figurative language to inform and shape the percepts of readers
- II.A.8 Compares and analyzes how generic features are used across texts
- II.A.9 Identifies and analyzes the audience, purpose, and message of an informational or persuasive text
- II.A.10 Identifies and analyzes how an author’s use of language appeals to the senses, creates imagery, and suggests mood
- II.A.11 Identifies, analyzes, and evaluates similarities and differences in how multiple texts present information, argue a position, or relate a theme
- II.B.1 Identifies new words and concepts acquired through study of their relationships to other words and concepts

- II.B.2 Applies knowledge of roots and affixes to infer the meanings of new words
- II.B.3 Uses reference guides to confirm the meanings of new words or concepts
- II.C.1 Reads a wide variety of texts from American, European, and world literatures
- II.C.2 Analyzes themes, structures, and elements of myths, traditional narratives, and classical and contemporary literature
- II.C.3 Analyzes works of literature for what they suggest about the historical period and cultural contexts in which they were written
- II.C.4 Analyzes and compares the use of language in literary works from a variety of world cultures
- II.D.1 Describes insights gained about oneself, others, or the world from reading specific texts
- II.D.2 Analyzes the influence of myths, folktales, fables, and classical literature from a variety of world cultures on later literature and film
- III.A.1 Understands how style and content of spoken language varies in different contexts and influences the listener's understanding
- III.A.2 Adjusts presentation (delivery, vocabulary, length) to particular audiences and purposes
- III.B.1 Participates actively and effectively in one-on-one oral communication situations
- III.B.2 Participates actively and effectively in group discussions
- III.B.3 Plans and delivers focused and coherent presentations that convey clear and distinct perspectives and demonstrate solid reasoning
- IV.A.1 Analyzes and evaluate the effectiveness of a public presentation
- IV.A.2 Interprets a speaker's message; identifies the position taken and the evidence in support of that position
- IV.A.3 Uses a variety of strategies to enhance listening comprehension
- IV.B.1 Listens critically and responds appropriately to presentations
- IV.B.2 Listens actively and effectively in one-on-one communication situations
- IV.B.3 Listens actively and effectively in group discussions
- V.A.1 Formulates research questions
- V.A.2 Explores a research topic
- V.A.3 Refines research topic and devise a timeline for completing work
- V.B.1 Gathers relevant sources
- V.B.2 Evaluates the validity and reliability of sources
- V.B.3 Synthesizes and organizes information effectively
- V.B.4 Uses source material ethically
- V.C.1 Designs and presents an effective product

Social Studies:

- I.A.2 Analyzes the interaction between human communities and the environment
- I.A.3 Analyzes how physical and cultural processes have shaped human communities over time
- I.A.5 Analyzes how various cultural regions have changed over time
- I.B.2 Identifies and evaluates sources and patterns of change and continuity across time and place
- I.B.3 Analyzes causes and effects of major political, economic, and social changes in U.S. and world history
- I.E.1 Identifies different social groups and examines how they form and how and why they sustain themselves
- I.E.2 Defines the concept of socialization and analyzes the role socialization plays in human development and behavior
- I.E.3 Analyzes how social institutions function and meet the needs of society
- I.F.1 Uses a variety of research and analytical tools to explore questions or issues thoroughly and fairly
- I.F.2 Analyzes ethical issues in historical, cultural, and social contexts
- II.B.1 Explains and evaluates the concepts of race, ethnicity, and nationalism

- II.B.2 Explains and evaluates the concept of gender
- II.B.3 Analyzes diverse religious concepts, structures, and institutions around the world
- II.B.4 Evaluates how major philosophical and intellectual concepts influence human behavior or identity
- II.B.6 Analyzes how individual and group identities are established and change over time
- IV.A.1 Identifies and analyzes the main idea(s) and point(s) of view in sources
- IV.A.2 Situates an informational source in its appropriate context
- IV.A.3 Evaluates sources from multiple perspectives
- IV.A.4 Understands the differences between a primary and secondary source and use each appropriately to conduct research and construct arguments
- IV.A.5 Reads narrative texts critically
- IV.A.6 Reads research data critically
- IV.B.1 Uses established research methodologies
- IV.B.3 Gathers, organizes and displays the results of data and research
- IV.B.4 Identifies and collects sources
- IV.C.1 Understands/interprets presentations critically
- IV.D.1 Constructs a thesis that is supported by evidence
- IV.D.2 Recognizes and evaluates counter-arguments
- V.A.1 Uses appropriate oral communication techniques depending on the context or nature of the interaction
- V.A.2 Uses conventions of standard written English
- V.B.1 Attributes ideas and information to source materials and authors

Cross-Disciplinary Standards:

- I.A.1 Engages in scholarly inquiry and dialogue
- I.A.2 Accepts constructive criticism and revise personal views when valid evidence warrants
- I.B.1 Considers arguments and conclusions of self and others
- I.B.2 Constructs well-reasoned arguments to explain phenomena, validate conjectures, or support positions
- I.B.3 Gathers evidence to support arguments, findings, or lines of reasoning
- I.B.4 Supports or modifies claims based on the results of an inquiry
- I.D.1 Self-monitors learning needs and seeks assistance when needed
- I.D.2 Uses study habits necessary to manage academic pursuits and requirements
- I.D.3 Strives for accuracy and precision
- I.D.4 Perseveres to complete and master tasks
- I.E.1 Works independently
- I.E.2 Works collaboratively
- I.F.1 Attributes ideas and information to source materials and people
- I.F.2 Evaluates sources for quality of content, validity, credibility, and relevance
- I.F.3 Includes the ideas of others and the complexities of the debate, issue, or problem
- I.F.4 Understands and adheres to ethical codes of conduct
- II.A.1 Uses effective prereading strategies
- II.A.2 Uses a variety of strategies to understand the meanings of new words
- II.A.3 Identifies the intended purpose and audience of the text
- II.A.4 Identifies the key information and supporting detail
- II.A.5 Analyzes textual information critically
- II.A.6 Annotates, summarizes, paraphrases, and outlines texts when appropriate
- II.A.7 Adapts reading strategies according to structure of texts
- II.A.8 Connects reading to historical and current events and personal interest
- II.B.1 Writes clearly and coherently, using standard writing conventions
- II.B.2 Writes in a variety of forms for various audiences and purposes

- II.B.3 Composes and revises drafts
- II.C.1 Understands which topics or questions are to be investigated
- II.C.2 Explores a research topic
- II.C.3 Refines research topic based on preliminary research and devise a timeline for completing work
- II.C.4 Evaluates the validity and reliability of sources
- II.C.5 Synthesizes and organizes information effectively
- II.C.6 Designs and presents an effective product
- II.C.7 Integrates source material
- II.C.8 Presents final product
- II.D.3 Presents analyzed data and communicate findings in a variety of formats
- II.E.1 Uses technology to gather information
- II.E.2 Uses technology to organize, manage, and analyze information
- II.E.3 Uses technology to communicate and display findings in a clear and coherent manner
- II.E.4 Uses technology appropriately