

Assignment: Writing a Parody

Parody is always a form of imitation, and your first step is to study the original, break it down in terms of style and qualities, particularly those you might be able to exaggerate and mock. There are several different types of writing that fall into the genre of parody. All of them require a close and analytical reading and full understanding for the original piece; one is parodying.

Parody

A satiric imitation of a work or of an author with the idea of ridiculing the author his ideas, or his work. The writer exploits the peculiarities of an author's expression—his propensity to write long, effusive sentences or to repeat favorite words or expressions. The parody can also be focused upon an unlikely plot or dependence on a *deus ex machine* to resolve the conflicts. Henry Fielding wrote such a parody when he wrote *Shamela*, a parody of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*.

Travesty

A work that treats a serious subject frivolously—ridiculing the dignified. Often the tone is mock serious and heavy handed. The movie *Fahrenheit 9/11* is an example of travesty.

Mock Epic

Treating a frivolous matter in a serious way, so serious as to mock the very lack of seriousness of the matter under discussion. This is accomplished by using the literary devices common to epics (invocation of the muse, heroes with larger than life qualities and superhuman abilities, weapons with names and noble histories, descriptions of great battles, extended similes, epithets, and kennings). The most famous of these is "Rape of the Lock" by Alexander Pope, a poem in five cantos in which an actual event, a young man so smitten with a lovely girl that he sneaks up and snips off a lock of her hair as a keepsake, is transformed into an epic battle.

Pastiche

A respectful attempt at emulating a work of literature; an imitation that is done in tribute to the author of the original.

Parody Assignments

1. Write a mock epic using the literary conventions found in *Beowulf*. Describe the most ordinary event—cleaning out the garage, taking out the trash, bathing the family dog, etc.—in epic terms. Begin with an invocation of the muse; then present a situation so “grave” that it requires the attention of a hero. Give your hero super powers, equip him with legendary weapons of great lineage, and give a blow by blow description of his epic “battle.” If he were to receive generous gifts for his efforts, that would be a nice touch. Describe them in detail. Your epic must have at least two kennings and two epithets.
2. Poetry Parody. Beginning on page 569 in your DiYanni text book you will find four famous poems by such notable bards as William Carlos Williams, William Shakespeare, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and Robert Frost and some very clever parodies of their work. Choose any poem in your literature book or the DiYanni book and write a parody of the poem. Try to follow the poet’s meter and rhyme scheme while you give his sentiments a new twist.
3. Write a parody/pastiche of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Read the prologue to the tales carefully. Chaucer's poetic verse is written in what is called heroic couplets. Each line has ten syllables and each pair of lines ends with a rhyme. Using this style, create a new pilgrim to go on the journey. Pick someone from modern life, but describe him as Chaucer would. Notice the attention Chaucer gives to attire, facial features, profession, and personality. Your poem should consist of at least ten heroic couplets (twenty lines). An accompanying illustration in the form of a poster or drawing would be a delightful addition.

TEKS covered:

1 A, B, C, D, E

2 A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H

3 A, B, C, D, E

4 B, H

5 A

9 C

12 E, G