



Teacher, Parent and Adult Reader Guide

Overview:

When we first wrote this “joke” book (referred to here as the “book”), we thought the jokes would be self-evident to young readers (ages 5 – 11). Indeed, some even seemed too simplistic. But, after reading the book in manuscript form and in different ways to many students, including those who are low-income and first generation, we realized mighty fast that jokes are actually complex. They need to be “deconstructed” for and explained to some students to understand them fully.

Jokes require a facility with language, word plan, context, common phrases and imagination. So, here, we share some strategies to enable children first to understand the jokes in *Lady Lucy’s Laugh Giraffe Journey* but also to pave the pathway for their writing their own jokes about other animals. Joke telling and joke writing are remarkably good “thought” and “language” learning devices. Enjoy the jokes and enjoy the power of learning with a smile — even when getting that smile takes some effort initially. **Laugh to learn is the motto!**

Ten Steps for Learning and Laughing:

1. **Giraffes** are inherently funny creatures. Just look at them. Put images up from online (or show them on a computer at home), especially ones where **giraffes** are smiling or with children. It is hard **not** to smile when looking at a **giraffe**. So, when reflecting on **giraffe** jokes, it is always good to keep an image or two up on a screen — whether that screen is big or small.
2. Many of the **giraffe** jokes in this book play off information about **giraffes**: where they live, their overall size, their coloration, their eating habits, their long necks and thin legs, their horns (tufted) on the top of their head. Children can research **giraffe** facts; some are provided in the back of the joke book (with links). **The Giraffe Conservation Foundation** (which co-branded this book and shares in the proceeds) has an excellent website worth perusing — <https://giraffeconservation.org>. So, a session or conversation on **giraffe** information might be a good place to start before the reading of the jokes begins. Or, one can do the “research” as one is reading the jokes.
3. It might be good to have children share non-**giraffe** jokes they already know with you — knock knock jokes among others. That can serve as a warm-up exercise to the joke book. Obviously, we are seeking “clean” jokes!
4. The jokes in the book are subject focused — jokes related to school, to sports, to the **giraffes’** bodies, to **giraffe** romance. This seemed like a way to play effectively off a theme. It is also an excellent strategy when working with children to write jokes — pick categories so the jokes bear certain similarities. Jokes can also be pieced



together using the “who, what, where, why, when and how” lead-ins. One can develop jokes playing off each of these words.

5. It's worth noting that the **giraffe** jokes actually do not appear in the story until page 11. This is important because it provides “table setting.” Dillon the Dragon and Tapestry the Unicorn (look at their hand-drawn images too) were in search of an animal that resembled themselves (with the help of Lady Lucy) since they felt so alone. There's a worthwhile conversation to be had on that topic and on the idea that jokes do not have to be mean or nasty or humiliating or racist or sexist. Depending on the age of the children reading the book, this can lead to a longer discussion of when and how they have heard jokes. *Ask:* what makes a joke funny instead of mean? This can lead to a discussion of why Dillon and Tapestry feel so alone; it can lead to a conversation about discrimination and difference.
6. One of the first jokes in the book is one that is easily deconstructed and explained in a way that helps children “get” jokes. *Joke:* What happens when you cross a pig and a **giraffe**? *Answer:* You get bacon and legs. Try explaining the root phrase that is in play: Bacon and eggs. *Ask* if kids know where bacon comes from — a pig. Now talk about rhyming words: eggs, legs. Then *ask:* why would one mention legs in the context of the **giraffe**: because they are so so long. So, piece it all together, the joke's answer rests on a common phrase (which you need to know for the joke to work), you need to know where bacon comes from, you need to know **giraffes** have long legs, and you need to know legs rhymes with eggs. Jokes take hard work to construct and deconstruct!!! And, not all students know the answers to the various information that makes a joke work. And the expectation that all these steps happen really fast in one's brain.
7. Here's another deconstruction example. Consider this joke in the “sports” section: *Joke:* What kind of shoes do **giraffes** wear to play sports? *Answer:* High tops. Now, start with understanding what “high tops” are. And, why would **giraffes** wear them? Because they are so tall — and it's a way of recognizing the **giraffe's** height and shoes that match that. Now the joke is also that, of course, **giraffes** don't wear shoes but picturing these creatures in shoes should elicit at least a smile.
8. For teachers, a class can be divided into joke tellers and joke responders. Two teachers or two students can read them back and forth. Roles can be reversed. The jokes can also be ranked — pick five and ask which are the funniest and why? And, for parents, a parent can ask the jokes and their children can answer and then the roles can be reversed. Parents and adult readers might be able to guess answers — so this will be fun. See how many answers the adult responder can come up with and even “wrong” answers might become the basis for a new joke.
9. Suggest added **giraffe** jokes that can be sent to the authors via the website: www.ladyLucysquest.com. There is a contact form there. The authors will post the best jokes on the book's website and list the names of the students who created them.
10. Ask the students to write their own jokes — with respect to another animal. Pick an animal that is quite familiar so one can learn facts. Pick one that is local too. Tell students to share their jokes with their families and see who laughs. One could even do them at an assembly if this is done at a school.



Conclusion:

Laugh to learn. For many students, books are intimidating. Jokes involve reading and so non-readers can be reading, almost without knowing it. Learning can be fun and this book is intended to help make learning happen on many levels.

Enjoy! Laugh! Learn!

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