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Comedy: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)

Matthew Bevis

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To consider comedy in its many incarnations is to raise diverse but related questions: what, for instance, is humour, and how may it be used (or abused)? When do we laugh, and why? What is it that writers and speakers enjoy - and risk - when they tell a joke, indulge in bathos, talk nonsense, or encourage irony?

This Very Short Introduction explores comedy both as a literary genre, and as a range of non-literary phenomena, experiences and events. Matthew Bevis studies the classics of comic drama, prose fiction and poetry, alongside forms of pantomime, comic opera, silent cinema, popular music, Broadway shows, music-hall, stand-up and circus acts, rom-coms, sketch shows, sit-coms, caricatures, and cartoons.

Taking in scenes from Aristophanes to The Office, from the Roman Saturnalia to Groundhog Day, Bevis also considers comic theory from Aristotle to Freud and beyond, tracing how comic achievements have resisted as well as confirmed theory across the ages.

This book takes comedy seriously without taking it solemnly, and offers an engaging study of the comic spirit which lies at the heart of our shared social and cultural life.

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