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Juvenile Nonfiction

Funny Bones: Comedy Games and Activities for Kids
Lisa Bany-Winters
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Everyone loves a good laugh, and kids are no exception. This is the perfect book for the child who loves to tell jokes, put on performances for family and friends, and play the class clown. The author, who directs a children's theater program, has created games and activities that center around the elements of comedy and theater.

For the reader who really wants to learn about comedy, this book is full of opportunities. Famous comedians and their routines, including the Marx Brothers, Abbott and Costello, Charlie Chaplin, and Lily Tomlin, are introduced. Suggestions for adapting similar routines are supplied for budding comics.

Instructions are provided for short skits and routines that kids can perform using props made from common household items like toilet paper, puppets, scarves, hairspray, shoes, and toothbrushes. Some of the games, such as "Rock Star Names," "Take it Back," and "Candy Shop," help kids develop a unique style and characterizations. All the games describe the reasons for playing them, and include directions, the number of players needed to play, and suggestions for expanding them. Techniques like improvisation and physical comedy are discussed, as is the use of music, silly songs, and circle games (such as "Thumb Catch," an activity intended to improve focus). Finally, "Comic Scenes for Young Actors" offers short scripts to use in practicing the techniques, including scenes from Alice in Wonderland, a tall tale, and Twelfth Night.

Kids who want to improve their comedy stylings will definitely want to read this book, and adults who work with kids will benefit, too. Drama teachers, camp counselors, and youth leaders will find it a useful resource. Shy children will discover opportunities to gain confidence in social settings by participating in these games and activities. As Victor Borge said, "Laughter is the shortest distance between two people." (August)

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