



# Story Prompts: Humour

## Introduction

The following story prompts are designed as entry points to new stories. Some of them will spark an idea. Some of them won't. With the ones that do spark an idea, can you keep pushing that idea into something completely unique? Perhaps the story you come up with in the end only references the prompt in a very oblique fashion. Perhaps it sticks to it more closely.

### April Fool's day prank

Write a story set on April Fool's Day. Have a character play a prank as your inciting incident. Where might this lead?

### Award speech

*"Wow, I really wasn't expecting this. A Nobel Prize? My great-aunt Evelyn would be so proud right now if she hadn't been killed by a wig-munching horse. It was her who inspired me. So, I'd like to dedicate this award (for best star jump by a thirty-seven-year-old in response to clearing their inbox) to her memory. I like to think she's looking down with a smile. Although, if I'm honest, she's probably looking up rather than looking down..."*

What's the weirdest thing a character might win a prize for? Can you write their acceptance speech?

### Dog ate my homework

What if the dog really did eat your homework? What if you'd used the excuse before and now it'd happened for real? What if it wasn't a dog but a dinosaur? Or a dodo? Or a duck-billed platypus?

### Drunken grandma

Characters that run against the grain of expectation can often be funny. We tend to think of grandmas as lovely ladies who knit or bake cakes, but what if grandma were a drunk? How might that lead to a humorous story?

### The egg-holding competition

What is the silliest competition you can come up with? Something so easy that it becomes ludicrous? Or something so ludicrous that it couldn't possibly become a thing? Or could it? When you start looking into it, there are plenty of ludicrous-sounding contests going on in different parts of the world. Think about how you might use this as the setting or scenario for a humorous story.

**Impolite animal**

Bring an animal to life and make them an “asshole” like in this humorous piece by Jeremy Glazer:

<https://oxfordflashfictionprize.com/2022/03/09/third-place-asshole-dolphin-by-jeremy-glazer/>

**Laughing gas argument**

Imagine a planet where the atmosphere contained traces of laughing gas so that you never quite know when you might start laughing. What if you were trying to have an argument at the time? Or what if you were trying to do something serious like a job interview or reading the eulogy at a funeral?

**Life drawing giggles**

Nakedness feels like another scenario / setting that might lead towards humour. How about setting a story at a life drawing class? Or at a nudist beach? Or at a sauna?

**Movie spoof**

You’ll need to be careful about copyright rules with this one, but how about creating a humorous fan-fiction of a favourite movie. Maybe you have Dodo Haggins and Blandalf the wizard going for a picnic in Whore-door? Or The Germinator going about his business fighting disease?

**Neighbour’s rude parcel delivered to you by mistake**

A parcel is delivered. You open it up. It’s something rude and it isn’t for you. Looking back on the packaging, you realise it was meant for your neighbour. What do you do?

**Prince frog**

Fairytales often include transformations and un-transformations. The prince becomes a frog but (wahoo!) is turned back into a prince. Sleeping Beauty falls asleep but (wahoo!) is woken by a handsome stranger. But what if the story isn’t quite so happily-ever-after after all? What if the prince preferred it as a frog? What if Sleeping Beauty wants to go back to sleep?

**Review of...**

Write a humorous review of something like a night at the pub with friends, a first date, a doctor’s appointment, a lecture, a bus ride, a tooth extraction, a car accident etc. How many stars would you give it? How might you build your review towards a punchline? Perhaps lean into the absurd.

For inspiration, read: <https://www.mattkendrick.co.uk/welkin-stories/abstract-exploration>

**Serious moment redefined**

Take a moment from history and make it silly. How might the coronation of a King become silly? How might the discovery of gravity become silly? How might the invention of dynamite become silly? How might the moon landings become silly? It feels like there are so many possibilities in writing the historical-humorous.

For inspiration, read: <https://flashbackfiction.com/index.php/2018/06/18/wheel-of-fortune-by-nick-black/>

**Silly superhero**

*“Mashed potato man to the rescue!!!!”*

Imagine a superhero who isn’t super in any real way, someone with the power to turn objects into mashed potato, someone with the power to make their left eyebrow (but nothing else) invisible, someone with the power to wind time backwards by half a millisecond. Come up with something absurd and write a story about them.

### **Underly qualified**

What happens when someone who doesn't speak any languages gets a job as an interpreter? How about when someone who doesn't know any computer coding being entrusted with writing a new app? Or how about when someone who doesn't even know how to change a lightbulb blagging a job as an electrician? What mayhem might result?



# ENDNOTE

## Bio:

This resource has been created by Matt Kendrick. Matt is a writer, editor and teacher based in the East Midlands, UK. His short fiction has been widely published both online and in print. His work has been included on the Biffy 50 list for 2019-20, in Best Microfiction 2021, Best Small Fictions 2022 and the Wigleaf Top 50 list for 2022. He has also been nominated for Best of the Net and the Pushcart Prize.

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