

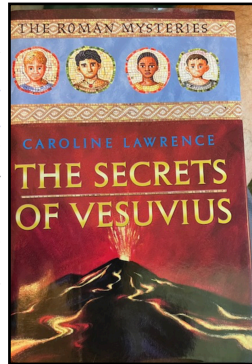
Inquiring Minds: Humor through the Ages...and More

“The secret to humor is surprise.” –Aristotle (Search for a 5 minute video on Aristotle and humor on YouTube)

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If you like short Mysteries about Famous People or Events like Dan Brown's DaVinci's Code...

My latest find in one of our neighborhood's curbside libraries once again opened up a world of [mystery, history, and adventure aimed at young readers](#). Patterned after Dan Brown's *The DaVinci Code*, this is a page turner which delves into historical events, famous people, and their cultures. *The Secrets of Vesuvius* does the same, and this is the first of 8 Roman mysteries presented by this award-winning author, [Caroline Lawrence](#).



Immediately I thought our 13-year-old granddaughter Lois would be interested in this book. She loves mysteries and has been studying mythology at her [Waldorf School](#). So I read the book in 4-5 days just in time to give it to her on our visit with the family in the Sierra Foothills.



I started writing this newsletter when Lois was born. Here she tweaked my nose at a family gathering in Twain-Harte. She has grown up so much, as have all around her.

This book might serve as extra-curricular reading for students who are studying Roman and Greek history and culture, or to be read aloud to a group since the language and plot are fairly sophisticated and would need explanation. As a starred [Booklist Editor's Choice](#) winner for young readers (teens and above) this book and series should be available in your local or county library system.

The 4 Styles of Humor that are appealing, and "Humor's Bad Reputation" for 2000 Years

What do you find funny, and what sort of humor appeals to you? Research has focused on different humor styles, and distinguishes four types. I liked this easy 5-minute read this short article in *Psychology Today* on [The 4 Styles of Humor](#)

However, verbal humor as we now know it, was discouraged if not banned for nearly 2 millennia by most major social and spiritual leaders. Confucius, Plato, and other leaders had an idealistic view of what they

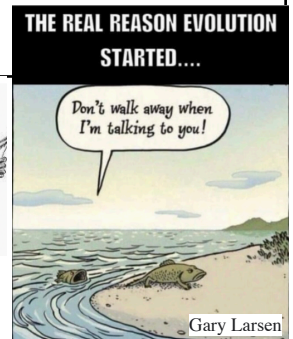
“When people are asked what's important in their lives, they often mention humor. Couples listing the traits they prize in their spouses usually put “sense of humor” at or near the top. Philosophers are concerned with what is important in life, so two things are surprising about what they have said about humor...” [cited on right]

thought leaders and society should be: serious and respectful, for the well-being of society. They held that laughter at the expense of another was disrespectful and would ultimately lead to violence and the dissolution of society. Plato says as much in [The Republic](#), as does [Confucius](#) in many places. Aristotle considered wit a valuable part of conversation, but agreed with Plato that laughter expresses scorn. [Stoics](#) said it diminished self control. This carried over to European thought and influenced Christianity, where laughter itself was frowned upon in church and Christian communities all the way up until the [Renaissance](#) (around 1500-1700). Below are on various theories of humor, developed by Aristotle and others.

[The superiority Theory](#)—where a class or group of people are the butt of a joke, was a way keep them in their place, class, or caste. [The Relief Theory](#) releases pressure from a tense situation, but if dismissive, can backfire. [The Incongruity Theory](#) is when something is out of the norm and is exaggerated, Aristotle's surprise, from above. [Humor as Play, Laughter, and a Plan \[for play\]](#) is a control mechanism when any speaker wants to relax people, show his/her humanity, establish rapport, etc. Teachers use humor judiciously. [Comedy](#), originally a play or story, has a happy ending, and is not just a bunch of jokes which end in a [tragedy](#), i.e., a sad ending. [Francis Hutcheson](#) (1750) first said, “Feelings of superiority are neither necessary nor sufficient for laughter.” Frivolity was tolerated in plays where the jester (a fool) could tell the truth; and “lower-cultures and un-educated classes” had joy, laughter, and humor in their culture. — brief notes from the [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy on humor](#), Wikipedia, and other sources.

Are the jokes or comics below humorous to you? Do you feel surprised for laughing a some brutal joke like the first below? Which of the above theories or combos do they fit? Do they they change your perspective in a positive way, or do they have a hidden agenda to push? Is some analysis helpful or just a buzz-kill?

My wife yelled from the bedroom asking, "Do you ever get a shooting pain across your body like someone's got a voodoo doll of you and they're stabbing it?"
I replied, "No."
She yelled back, "How about now?"



I hope you found something of interest in this very brief IM issue so far. May add more of your send-ins. Single frame. No videos.. [Joe B.](#)

Much more on [Black humor](#), dark humor, etc. PBS [Judy O'Bannon Comedy Special](#), 57 min. Only half done viewing. Much info but is slow at times.