

# Satire



“**Satire** is both a genre and a literary device that holds human nature up to criticism and scorn. It is often political in focus but does not have to be. In literature, writers use irony, humor, and exaggeration to create successful satire.”—MasterClass

# Essential Questions:

1. What is satire?
2. What is the purpose of satire?
3. What are the distinguishing characteristics of **Horatian**, **Juvenalian**, and **Menippean** satire?
4. What rhetorical and literary devices do authors use to communicate satire?

Watch the following videos.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XvhHsRAwDz4> (1:16)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9Aww6YAcqA>  
(7:41)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4njw3ZG27e0>  
(7:41)

Explain the satirical cartoon below.



# Examples of Satire in Literature

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) by Lewis Carroll is one of the best examples of Menippean satire in literature. The novel pokes fun at upper-class intellectualism but does it with a distinct sense of humor. The ridicule is there, but it is good-natured in spirit.

*American Psycho* (1991) by Brett Easton Ellis uses extreme exaggerations of consumption, concern with social status, and masculine anger and violence to skewer American capitalism.

*Animal Farm* (1945) by George Orwell is a good example of Juvenalian satire. The novel's intended target is communism and Stalin-era Soviet Union. *Animal Farm* is also an allegorical satire: it can be read as a simple tale of farm animals, but it has a deeper political meaning.

*Fight Club* (1996) by Chuck Palahniuk tackles the culture of consumerism, lifestyle branding, and constructions of masculinity in the text fit this definition of satire quite well. Of course, the fact that the Fight Club transforms into Project Mayhem also satirizes the extreme of resisting those same societal constructions.

*Gulliver's Travels* (1726) by Jonathan Swift is an example of Horatian satire. It is a spoof of the kind of travelogues that were common at that time. Through his invented narrator, Gulliver, Swift takes aim at travel writers, the English government, and human nature itself.

*Sellout* (2015) by Paul Beatty is a satire about racial identity in the United States and the pervasive historical effects of racism. It features a young black male protagonist in Southern California who ends up before the Supreme Court for trying to reinstate slavery.



