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## ABSURD HUMOR

Absurdism, as a philosophical concept, revolves around the idea that human beings exist in a meaningless, irrational universe, and that any attempt to find inherent meaning will ultimately fail. This school of thought is most famously represented by the 20th-century philosopher and writer Albert Camus, particularly in his works *The Stranger* and *The Myth of Sisyphus*, both published in 1942. In these texts, Camus illustrates the conflict between the human desire for purpose and the indifferent universe that offers none. Camus suggests that, rather than despair, individuals should embrace this absurdity and create personal meaning through their experiences and relationships, independent of any external or divine design.

In everyday language, the term *absurd* typically means something that is wildly unreasonable, illogical, or nonsensical. For example, a story with talking vegetables or a situation where a dog becomes the CEO of a company would be considered absurd because they defy common sense and normal expectations. This casual understanding of absurdity is closely tied to randomness and chaos, often provoking surprise or laughter because it challenges what we consider “normal.” While absurdity in casual speech often refers to silly or bizarre situations, philosophical absurdism digs deeper into the existential conflict between human longing and the universe’s indifference.

Philosophically, absurdism emerges from existentialist thought but moves in its own direction. Camus’s form of absurdism argues that the absurd arises from the confrontation between our search for order and the universe’s silence. Unlike nihilism, which might conclude that nothing matters at all, absurdism invites people to live meaningfully in spite of this meaninglessness. Camus famously uses the myth of Sisyphus — a man doomed to roll a boulder up a hill for eternity — as a metaphor for human life: we persist in our efforts, not because they are meaningful in a cosmic sense, but because we can find value in the act of striving itself.



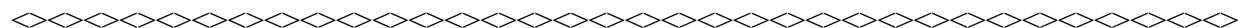
In the realm of humor, absurdism plays a vital role, particularly in forms that reject logic and conventional structure. Absurdist humor — often seen in the works of comedians like Monty Python and in meme culture popular with Generation Z — employs randomness, contradiction, and illogical juxtapositions to provoke laughter. According to Partlow & Talarczyk (2021), younger audiences often appreciate this style of humor precisely because it mirrors the chaotic, unpredictable world they perceive around them. For them, absurdity becomes a way to process existential concerns and find relief through laughter.<sup>1</sup>

Ultimately, absurdism invites a philosophical reckoning with life's lack of inherent purpose while also offering a creative outlet through humor. It allows people to face uncertainty without despair and encourages them to laugh at the strange, unpredictable, and often illogical nature of existence. Whether encountered in deep philosophical reflection or in the offbeat sketches of internet comedy, the absurd continues to resonate as a meaningful response to the mysteries of the human condition.

1 Just remember: although absurd humor often breaks logic, it still follows an internal consistency. In other words, it is still “nonsense with rules.”

## Reference

Partlow, C., & Talarczyk, P. (2021). Absurdism and Generation Z humor: The effects of absurdist content on perceived humor levels in Generation Z students. *Journal of Student Research*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.47611/jsrhs.v10i4.2011>



## *The Onion*

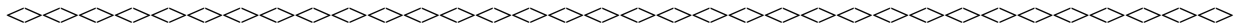
*The Onion* is a satirical news website that publishes fictional articles parodying traditional news media. Founded in 1988 as a print newspaper in Madison, Wisconsin, it transitioned to an online format in the late 1990s and became widely known for its clever, absurd, and often hilariously exaggerated takes on current events and social trends. The site mimics the tone and structure of real journalism, legitimate news outlets, which sometimes causes confusion for readers unfamiliar with its satirical nature.



The humor of *The Onion* lies in its ability to blend absurdity with a sharp critique of real-world issues. Articles often highlight the ridiculousness of political systems, cultural norms, media sensationalism, and human behavior by pushing scenarios to extreme or illogical conclusions. Some examples are:

1. **“World Death Rate Holding Steady at 100 Percent”**  
→ A perfect blend of grim truth and faux-news tone.
2. **“Archaeological Dig Uncovers Ancient Race of Skeleton People”**  
→ Pokes fun at science misinterpretation and the obviousness of skeletons in graves.
3. **“‘I’m Not Like Other Girls,’ Says Girl Identical to Every Other Girl Who Says That”**  
→ A deadpan take on self-proclaimed uniqueness.
4. **“Study: Dolphins Not So Intelligent on Land”**  
→ A satirical jab at both animal intelligence studies and obvious scientific conclusions.
5. **“CIA Realizes It’s Been Using Black Highlighters All These Years”**  
→ A bureaucratic mix-up with hilarious, absurd consequences.
6. **“Everyone in Middle East Given Own Country in 938,000-State Solution”**  
→ An extreme, absurdist satire of complex geopolitics and failed peace plans.
7. **“Man Pledges to Spend Rest of Life Looking at Phone”**  
→ A cutting commentary on digital addiction disguised as a life decision.

Through this mix of absurdity and realism, *The Onion* challenges readers to think critically about what they consume in the media while also delivering laughs through its deadpan style and unpredictable satire.



### Absurd Objects

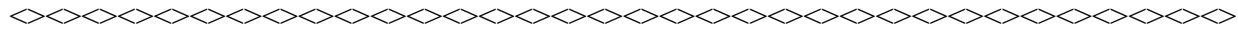
Absurd objects are inventions that defy common sense, practicality, or normal expectations. They often have bizarre purposes, such as slippers shaped like fish or alarm clocks that run away from you, and are usually based on exaggerated logic, novelty, or parody. While



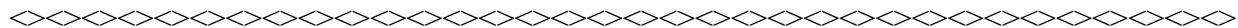
some absurd inventions are created as jokes or satire — like the famous Pet Rock or the Useless Machine that turns itself off once it is turned on<sup>1</sup> — others are real products born from over-engineering, failed creativity, or an attempt to stand out in a crowded market. These objects may not solve actual problems efficiently, but they grab attention, spark laughter, or challenge what we think is “normal” in product design.

People invent absurd objects for many reasons. Sometimes, it’s to entertain or make a social statement through humor or irony. Other times, it’s to experiment with creativity or push the boundaries of design thinking, even if the outcome is ridiculous. Some inventors genuinely believe they’ve found a niche need — no matter how obscure or strange it may seem. In today’s digital age, absurd products often go viral online, helping brands and individuals gain attention, clicks, or even sales. Whether for satire, curiosity, or accidental genius, absurd objects remind us that invention doesn’t always have to make sense — it just has to make people react. Of course, it’s great if people look at the invention and say, “Shut up and take my money!”

1 [http://youtube.com/watch?v=3KTilOsXBmU&ab\\_channel=OddityMall](http://youtube.com/watch?v=3KTilOsXBmU&ab_channel=OddityMall)



Let’s now look at a slideshow that shows some example absurd objects.



#### \* \* \* \* \* HOMEWORK TASKS \* \* \* \* \*

Choose **ONE** of the following tasks:

1. Make three of your own *The Onion* news headlines.
2. Invent an absurd object. In one-to-two paragraphs, write a description of what it is, what it does, what “problem” it is meant to solve (if any), and who the target buyers or consumers would be.

You may not copy from the internet, and you may not use GenAI like ChatGPT. The task should be printed out, ready for submission.

