

"*Humor, laughter and absurdity* in the
contemporary Greek school textbooks of
children's literature: Travelling in time and space
through the creative writing of *humorous* texts"

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Introduction

This article seeks to assess to what extent *humor* and *laughter* are "allowed" to be chosen and exercised creatively in the greek contemporary teaching process as well as the involvement of the *absurdity* as a means of *humor* and *laughter* in the greek textbooks of children's literature.

Firstly, we are to define the key words *Humor*, *Laughter* and *Absurd* and the psychological theories concerning these terms. There are some *humorous* forms we have to refer to, as well as to the factors which affect our sense of *humor*, the functions of *humor* and *laughter* and last but not least, its beneficial effect.

Secondly, we will attempt to underline the seriousness with which *humor* is faced in modern "school" literary reality by investigating if the Greek Frameworks of children's literature in the Preschool and Elementary Greek Educational System aim at indicating *humor* and *laughter* as an educative tool. In addition to this, we examine the role of *humor* and *absurd* in the greek textbooks of children's literature.

It is essential that we inquire into these terms through the spectrum of *creative writing*, according to which each student is treated as a young artist, released from the fetters of a pretentious interpretative approach of literary works. Moreover, acting in the best interest of the student, the guidelines of the *creative writing* impose the child's involvement in a creative language laboratory and his collaboration with his classmates and the teacher, so we consider it as a way to ameliorate the due teaching process in our educational system. On the grounds of *creative writing*, we have conducted a workshop based on teaching the *absurd*,

nonsensical forms of poetry while practising one of them, the form of *Limericks* and we are to comment on it.

Last but not least, we ponder over *humor*, *laughter* and *nonsense*, wondering if they are really part of the *Absurd Literature* and the *Light Verse* or if they should be conceived as truly "weighty" terms.

A. Defining the terms *humor* and *laughter*.

A.1. Definition of the term *humor*. *Humorous* forms and the main Theories of *humor* and *laughter*

A.1.a. Definition of *Humor*

The tendency of particular cognitive experiences to provoke *laughter* and provide amusement is what we call *humor* (or *humor*).¹ According to the ancient Greeks, this term derives from the medical science by Hippocrates and the greek word /hi'mos/, combining the Greek root *hum-* and the Latin suffix *-or*.

¹ M. Buijzen and P. M. Valkenburg, "Developing a Typology of *Humor* in Audiovisual Media", *Media Psychology* 6 (2004): 147–167.

His theory taught that the balance of fluids in the human body, (the bile, the phlegm, the blood and the black bile—translated as the greek term of *melan+ choly*—), control human's health and emotion. Thus, every person who has a balanced proportion of the human fluids, i.e. of his /hi'mous/, is a "humorous" healthy and happy personality, or at least not sufferinfg from "melancholy" or the "black bile".¹

A.1.b. Forms of *Humor*²

There are a lot of *humorous* forms and patterns that we could refer to but we have to keep within the bounds of a general segregation. Of course, *humor* can be verbal, visual, or physical. Non-verbal forms of communication for example, music or visual art—can also be *humorous* but below, we are going to stick to the literary forms of *humor*.

The first kind of humor that we can discern is *parody* which is an imitation of the original "object" aiming at mocking someone or something by exaggerating over it. Secondly, *satire* is a sort of art which is meant to ridicule the "victims", to awaken the audience morally, politically and

² Stathis Valoukos, The comedy and the mechanisemes of laughter: The history of humor: The structure of the comic project: Comedian types and characters: The theme of comedy: The types of jokes: The Family Tree of Greek farce. (Athens: Capricorn, 2001).

emotionally. Thirdly, *black humor* deals with making jokes with macabre themes. Fourthly, *farce comedy* results from the disclosure of a fraud. Fifthly, *caricature* is a funny representation of someone by exaggerating on some of his personality traits, either spiritually or physically.

Sixthly, *the absurd/ the paradox or the surreal* is the combination of words, and meanings without sense. Finally, *comedy* is a concept that encompasses all of the terms above.

A.1.c. Theories of *Humor*³

There are a lot one could say about the theories of *humor*, trying to explain what it is, the social functions it serves and what would or could be considered as *humorous* but we are going to refer to the prevailing psychological theories, focusing later on one of them that best serves and supports our thesis.

In the contemporary academic literature, three theories of *humor* seem to appear repeatedly, the *Relief theory*, the *Superiority theory* and the *Incongruity theory*.

³ M.P. Mulder and A. Nijholt, "Humor Research: State of the Art", University of Twente, Center of Telematics and Information Technology, Technical Report CTIT-02-34. (2002): 1–24. D. H. Monro, "Theories of Humor," Laurence Behrens and Leonard J. Rosen, eds. *Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum* 3rd ed. (1988): 349–55. Thomas C. Veatch, "A theory of humor," *Humor* 112 (1998): 161–215.

The first one features *laughter* as a mechanism of homeostasis—which includes the regulation of temperature and the balance between acidity and alkalinity (pH)—by which psychological tension is reduced, relieving the pressure caused by one's fears. The general idea of the second one is that a person laughs about the discrepancies of others, because these misfortunes make him feel superior to the "unlucky" ones.

As for the third theory, we perceive *humor* as a term of "incompatibility" between the reality and a concept involved in a certain situation. In the *Incongruity theory*, which includes theories characterized as *cognitive-perceptual*, *incompatibility-solving situations*, *surprise* and *theories of play (play theories)*, *humor* is perceived as an act of playfulness, focusing on the contrast between expectations and reality.

A.1.d. Factors affecting our sense of *humor*⁴

According to the experts, many external, individual and social characteristics can influence our perception about whether something is *humorous* or not. They support that *age*,

⁴ Jean Piaget, *Sociological Studies*. (London: Routledge, 1995). Jean Piaget, "Commentary on Vygotsky", *New Ideas in Psychology* 18 (2000): 241–59.

gender, mental capacity and emotional situation, culture and community can affect our sense of *humor*.

Firstly, scientists have been increasingly paying attention to the role of *age*. It is the most significant factor that "illustrates" if something is *humorous* or not. It is an issue which researchers very early focused on, associating it with the *cognitive studies*, mostly with the *four developmental stages* described in Piaget's theory—*Sensori-motor period* (from birth until the age of 2), *Pre-operational stage* (from 2 to 6), *Concrete operational stage* (6–12), *Formal operational stage* (12 and up).

Secondly, some scientists take into account the *gender* factor so as to approach the concept of *humor*. However, it should be noted here that strongly related views are contradictory.

Furthermore, they see the *mental capacity* of the individual as a very important criterion, since *humor* is a cognitive process, as mentioned before, that requires specific brain, neurological and emotional functions.

An equally important factor affecting the openness of a person to *humorous* messages is the *mood* of the recipient. In a survey of Wicker et al., (1981)⁵ it was found that when

⁵ Frank W. Wicker, Irene M. Thorelli, William L. Barron, III, and Marguerite R. Ponder, "Relationship among Affective and Cognitive

individuals were in a playful and happy mood, they were more receptive to *humor* and would appreciate it more.⁶

Finally, the *culture* and the *community* a person grows in is a significant factor that differentiates our sense of *humor*. What is regarded as *humorous* and funny in a country may not be well-received in another one.

A.1.e. Functions of *humor*⁷

Apart, of course, from considering *humor* as a quintessential social phenomenon, since jokes and other *humorous* utterances are a form of communication that is usually shared in social interaction, enabling us to have fun and cause pleasant feelings, there are also some functions that humor and *laughter* carry along.

These can be grouped into three broad categories. Firstly, the *cognitive* function refers to the advantages gained by a positive state of mind and mood of a person. Secondly, there is the *social* function approaching *humor* in terms of the

Factors in Humor", *Journal of Research in Personality* 15 (1981): 359–370.

⁶ Cho Hyongoh, "Humor Mechanisms, Perceived Humor and Their Relationships to Various Executional Types in Advertising", *Advances in Consumer Research* Volume 22 (1995): 191–197. Accessed November 14, 2012. <http://www.acrwebsite.org>.

⁷ John Morreall, *Taking Laughter Seriously*. (New York: SUNY Press, 1983). John Morreall, *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor*. (New York: SUNY Press, 1987).

functions it fulfills for a society or a social group. Some older interpretations of it tended to stress how *humor* (and other social phenomena) maintain and support the social structure, referring to some of its functions, such as communication, interpersonal relationships and social status. Thirdly, the *biological* function according to which—as mentioned in the definition of *humor*—, it releases tension and creates positive emotions so there is a happier and healthier person mentally and emotionally due to this function of *humor*.

A.1.f. The beneficial effect of *laughter*

We tend to identify *laughter* as *humor* but on the one hand, there is no necessary one-on-one relationship between these two terms and on the other hand, there might be other possible responses to successful attempts at *humor* (for example, we might only smile, tell another joke, a verbal acknowledgment or only a groan in response to a lame pun). Thus, *laughter* can be related to several other emotions, ranging from friendly to nervous or even ridiculous.⁸

In any case, *laughter* is often suggested as a therapeutic means of many problematic psychological cases, outweighing

⁸ Robert Provine, *Laughter: A Scientific Investigation*. (New York: Viking, 2000). Willibard Ruch, *The Sense of Humor. Explorations of a Personality Characteristic*. (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1998).

even more grandiose psychiatric practices. When laughing at a contemptuous joke to the limits of reason and rationality, we manage to blow up the images of the world and make it the agent of a change. This might explain why those suffering from a kind of emotional shock manage to exceed it when they laugh at their sufferings.

According to a recent study by Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, *laughter* is considered to be a powerful antidote to stress and pain and it is a quick and reliable method of renewing the balance of mind and body. It keeps us optimistic and helps us to tackle the most difficult situations and disappointments, or even loss in certain cases. Surveys have shown that the human body has its own euphoric substances, the so called "endorphins", which can bring our positive emotions to the surface, such as hope and joy while promoting our relaxation and soothing our pain.

Moreover, according to this study, the introduction of *humor* in the process of teaching resulted in an increased score in the tests. *Laughter* is conceived as the enemy of fear, while encouraging teamwork and sociability. At the same

time, it enhances the long-term and short-term memory as well as the learning process.⁹

B. The creative writing of humorous texts.
The Literature of the Absurd and forms of
Light Verse as part of absurdity.¹⁰

B.1. Definition of *creative writing*

Creative writing is currently a modern teaching method which approximates *language* in an experiential manner: therefore it combines teaching with "learning by doing" and acting. The use of such learning methods is essential to get the required abilities and skills, needed to be developed in the 21st century, so as to build up students' creativity, enhance their reading and writing skills through interactive activities, in the field of literature, and finally obtain the active involvement of a student while studying literature.

Creative writing is an established and widespread practice mostly abroad. Many countries that have fully integrated this

⁹ Angeliki Statharou, Chrysodimitra Galatou and Evangelia Kotrotsiou, "Using *humor* to take care of mentally ailing people". Accessed November 14, 2012. <http://www.vima-asklipiou.gr>.

¹⁰ Jerry Palmer, *Taking Humor Seriously*. (London: Routledge, 1994).

subject into their curricula, recognize its unique value as a pedagogical tool. It helps students to raise awareness in a direct way in the process of exercising their literary style of writing, describing and recreating their environment while evolving their artistic flair.¹¹

B.2. Literature of *absurd*. Forms of *Light Verse* and the "*absurd*" or "nonsensical" example of Limerick.

B.2.a. Definition of *Absurd*¹²

The term *absurd* is defined as something "utterly or obviously senseless, illogical, or untrue; contrary to all reason or common sense; laughably foolish or false: *an absurd explanation*. It is the irrational, silly, ludicrous, nonsensical,

¹¹ Curriculum of Cyprus. "Literature". p. 75. Accessed November 14, 2012. <http://dide-anatol.att.sch.gr>.

¹² Dimitriou Dimitrakou, Revised spelling dictionary and interpretation of all Greek language, epitome of the great dictionary of all 9—volume series of the Greek Language. (Athens: Giovanni, 1970). Webster's Dictionary. "absurd". Accessed November 14, 2012. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/absurd>. Wordreference.com. "absurd". Accessed November 14, 2012. <http://www.wordreference.com/engr/absurd>.

ridiculous, preposterous and inconsistent with reason or common sense: *an absurd claim*."

Ridiculous, here, implies that something is regarded as something to laugh at, perhaps contemptuously, e.g. *a ridiculous suggestion*. Preposterous implies the extreme of foolishness: e.g. *a preposterous proposal*.

It derives from the Latin *absurdum* meaning "out of tune", hence *irrational* (out of *ratio*). The Latin *-surdus* means "deaf", implying stupidity. In general usage, *absurdity* is contrasted with seriousness in reasoning. The English synonyms we might find to the word *absurd* are "senseless, nonsensical, incoherent, delirious, farfetched, inconsequential, disconnected, illogical, exorbitant, extravagant".

The *Literature of the absurd* depicts a grotesque caricature of our world. It shows the world as an incomprehensible distorted place with twisted images occurring both in time and place, resulting in perplexing us.

E.g. "*I see*" said the blind man to his deaf and dumb daughter As he picked up his hammer and saw.¹³

¹³ Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Catch Phrases*. (London: Routledge, 1986). "*I see*" [either as "look" or "understand"] by a blind man expressed and said to his *daughter* who is *deaf and dumb* as this blind man *picked his hammer and saw* ("*saw*" either as another tool like hammer or as the Past Simple form of "see").

B.2.b. Light Verse¹⁴

Light Verse, viz *Nonsense Verse*, is a form of the *absurd literature* that attempts to be *humorous* so as to entertain, please or amuse. Poems considered "light" are usually brief and can be commenting on a frivolous or serious subject often featuring word play, including puns, "adventurous" rhyme and heavy alliteration. Some of the most commonly practised forms of *light verse* are the *nursery rhymes*, the *clerihews*, the *cleriviews*, the *thoroughews*, the *limerick* and the *anti-limericks*.

Here are some examples of each of the forms mentioned above:

Nursery rhyme¹⁵

Hey diddle, diddle,

The cat and the fiddle.

The cow jumped over the moon.

The little dog laughed to see such fun,

And the dish run away with the spoon.

¹⁴ Russel Baker, *The Norton Book of Light Verse*. USA: Norton and Comp., 1986). Accessed November 14, 2012.

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/glossary> and http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/m_r/parker/lightverse.htm

¹⁵ The term *nursery rhyme* is used for traditional poems and songs for young children in Britain and many other countries.

Clerihew¹⁶

Father Brown

Gained wide renown.

Not for prayer books or hyminals,

But for collaring criminals.

Cleriview¹⁷

"L is for Lawless"—Sue Grafton

Sue Grafton

Knows her craft, and

She gets better

With each letter.

Thoroughew¹⁸

George W. Bush

Would do well not to push

His luck with his old amigo

That brew gush ego.

¹⁶ The first line is the name of the poem's subject, usually a famous person. The rhyme scheme is AABB.

¹⁷ *Cleriview* is a *clerihew* concerning a book review.

¹⁸ *Thoroughew* is a variation of *clerihew* but with the anagram—ie changing the letters—of the person mentioned in the first line of the poem.

Limerick¹⁹

*There was an Old Man with a nose,
 Who said, 'If you choose to suppose,
 That my nose is too long,
 You are certainly wrong!'
 That remarkable Man with a nose.*

Anti-limerick²⁰

*There once was a man from the sticks
 Who liked to compose limericks.
 But he failed at the sport,
 For he wrote 'em too short.*

B.3. The example of *Limerick* through time and space in the Children's Greek Literature²¹

A *limerick* is a brief *humorous* poem with a strict rhyme scheme AABBA. The form of *limericks* got popularised by Edward Lear in his *Book of Nonsense*. The *limericks* of

¹⁹ The form of *Limerick* got well-known thanks to Edward Lear in his *Book of Nonsense*. A *limerick* is a brief *humorous* poem with a strict rhyme scheme AABBA.

²⁰ An *anti-limerick* reverses the structure of a real *limerick*, changing the number of syllables in lines.

²¹ Carolyn Wells, *A Nonsense Anthology*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903).

Edward Lear accompany an *absurd* illustration of the same subject. As for its form, the final line of the *limerick* is a kind of conclusion, usually a variant of the first line, ending in the same word.

The *limericks* were introduced in the literary Greek reality during the second half of the 20th century by George Seferis. Though, his work was to be published only after his death, in 1975. He titled his book *Poems with drawings for young children*, naming them as /lirolo'gimata/ (a compound word, deriving either from the name of Edward Lear—the first practitioner of limericks—or the greek word /li'ros/—which indicates an insane person—and the word /'logima/—another term indicating the meaning of *word*).

In the contemporary literature, Thetis Chortiati has been acknowledged for her verbal ingenuity when creating *limericks*. The poet plays with the assonance and the synonymy of words and manages to give a harmonious and hilarious result. Alcestis Kontogianni, Fontas Ladis and Liana Aranitis are some of those poets who have also practised and published limericks.

C. The Greek Curriculum Framework for
Literature with regard to *Humor* and
Literature of Absurd. The Greek textbooks of
Children's Literature

C.1. The Supplement to the Greek Curriculum
Framework for Literature²²

C.1.a. Pre-school and kindergarten students.

According to the Greek Framework, kindergarten children are expected to demonstrate increasing awareness and competence so as to facilitate their understanding of the world of literature, of writers and illustrators, books and libraries. There should be a wide range of literature, provided by the teachers, from many periods and in many genres so as to build an understanding of the several dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience. The standards insist that instruction be a shared responsibility within the school.

²² "The Supplement to the Greek Curriculum Framework for Literature". Accessed November 14, 2012. <http://dschool.edu.gr/>.

C.1.b. Elementary students

The General Standards included in the Supplement to the Greek Curriculum Framework for Literature indicate that students of Primary Education are expected to identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the themes, structure, and elements of poetry (for example, rhythm, schemes of rhyme, repetition, sensory images) and characteristics of various genres, distinguish among forms of literature and finally, identify personality traits of characters and how the traits of the hero and the text reveal their personalities.

C.2. Significant delinquencies in the Greek Framework and in the textbooks of children's literature.

The principles in Frameworks are statements that underlie the standards of the Greek Curriculum Framework and they should guide the instruction of literature in schools. Students who advance through the grades are expected to meet each year's specific standards and develop their literary skills and understandings.

Though, we should also refer to what is Not covered by the Standards. Thus, they should be recognized for what they are Not as well as for what they are. For example, the standards

define what all students are expected to know and be able to do but not how teachers should teach. For instance, the use of play with young children is not specified by the standards. What is more, contemporary teaching methods, such as *creative writing*, are left out and there is a guidance to teach traditional issues. This is also illustrated by the choice of the literary texts in the Greek textbooks of literature.

In the 469 texts (poems and short stories) of the four Greek textbooks of Children's Literature in the Pre-school and Elementary education, there were only approximately 85 *humorous* texts and poems²³ (their classification as *humorous* texts took place according to the principles of the humoristic forms). More specifically, there were 33 items in the *absurd/paradox/surreal* category, 20 in the *satire* one, 19 in *comedy*, 11 in the category of *parody*, three in *farce comedy* and 2 appeared in *caricature*.

²³ The 80 humorous texts in question are in the following books and pages. Paraskevi Anastasiou et al., Pre-school Greek Literature Textbook. (Athens: OEDB, 2001): 20, 32, 38, 46, 53, 59–71, 75, 78, 83, 85, 137, 142, 155, 157, 168–171, 201, 208, 214, 219, 238, 246, 251, 266, 268, 271, 280, 283, 294–5. Tasoula Tsilimeni et al., A & B Elementary Class Greek Literature Textbook, (Athens: Patakis, 2008): 30, 42, 54, 57, 60, 63, 65, 69, 80, 105, 132, 149, 150, 152. Ada Givalou- Katsiki et al., C & D Elementary Class Greek Literature Textbook, (Athens: Ellinika Grammata, 2012): 23, 28, 39, 48, 57, 61, 122, 127, 130, 138, 143, 166, 169. Ada Givalou- Katsiki et al., E & F Elementary Class Greek Literature Textbook, (Athens: Patakis, 2008): 27, 30, 51, 57, 60, 85, 90, 95, 108, 120, 128, 133, 141, 147–151, 164, 231, 236, 250–5, 261–282.

Thus, it is inferred that *humor* has not come into focus in the field of the Greek educational research and there is not that much interest in profiting from its positive qualities, so far at least. *Humor* could even highlight important issues such as political conflicts, racism and ethnicity, gender inequalities or even social resistance, though this is not the school case.

D. Our "nonsensical" example of *creative writing* with the aid of *limericks*. *Learning by doing*.

"A poem could be part of children's literature if its words are available to play on with"—Gianni Rodari

Our example of practising *limericks*, according to the principles of *creative writing*, ensues from a three-hour-seminar, teaching 35 students of the Department of Fine Arts at University of Western Macedonia.

Having presented where the limericks originated from, who the first practitioners were, what a limerick is and how we can construct it, we chose one of the drawings of Lear, at random, which was not accompanied by the correlated

limerick. We asked the students to construct one using the following image:



Having completed this task, we gave the students the following piece of paper, in order to sketch a drawing based on Lear's *limerick* below.

There was an Old Woman of Surrey,
Who was morn noon and night, in a hurry,
Call'd her husband a Fool,
Drove her children to school;
The worrying Old Woman of Surrey.

At the end of our three-hour workshop, we presented the authentic Lear's limericks, that is to say his poems with their accompanied sketches, and we had a brief discussion about the similarities and differences resulting from the comparison between the students' projects and those by Lear.



There liv'd an Old Woman at Lynn,
Whose Nose very near touch'd her chin,
You may easy suppose,
She had plenty of Beaux;
This charming Old Woman of Lynn.

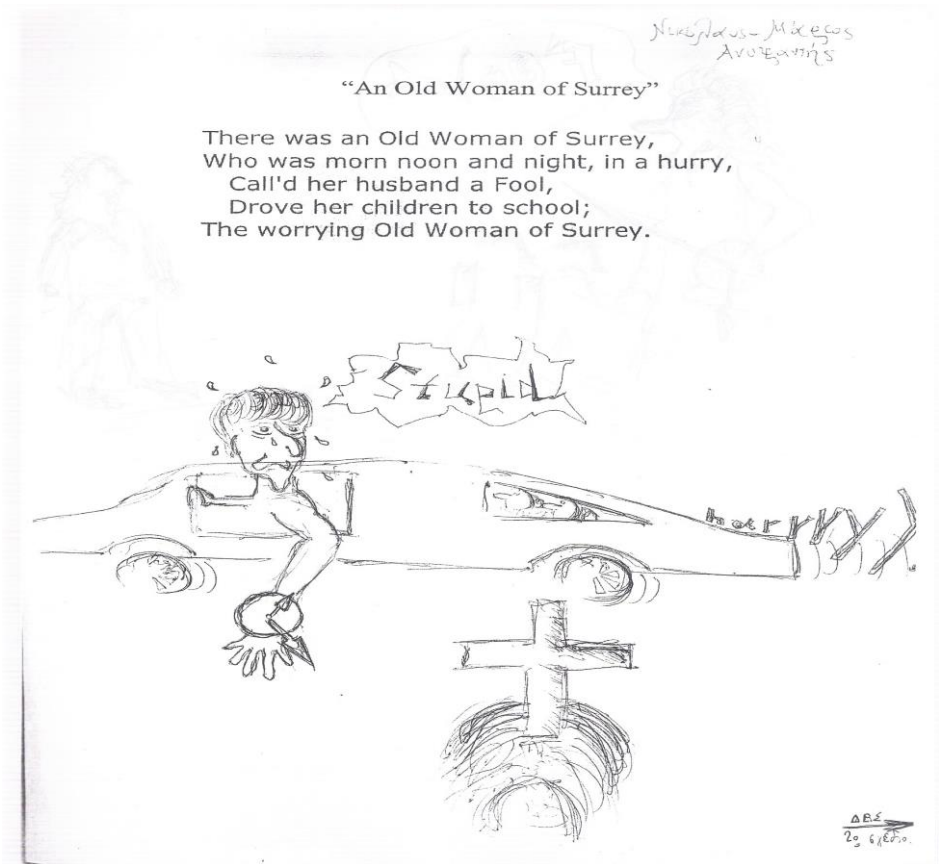


There was an Old Woman of Surrey,
Who was morn noon and night, in a hurry,
Call'd her husband a Fool,
Drove her children to school;
The worrying Old Woman of Surrey.

We ended up laughing, wanting even more of this educational procedure. So, even if there were only 35 students, we got more than 100 drawings, all sketched with limericks by the students, since we all found it an overwhelming experience.

There are only two examples presented below of each of the projects by the students because of the lack of space.

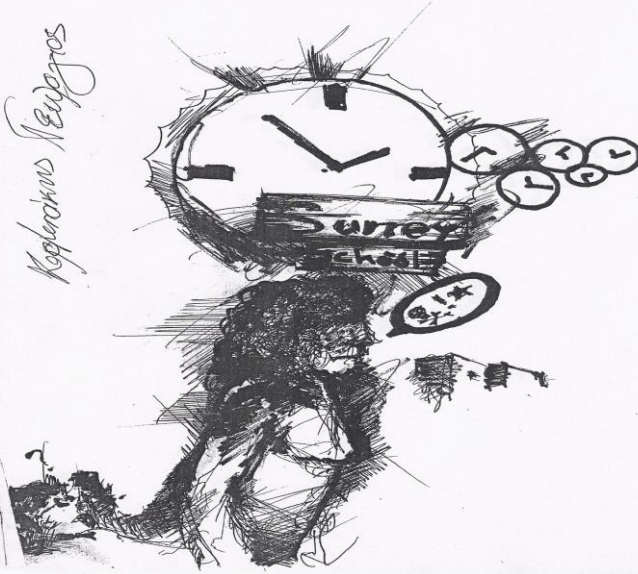
Sketches accompanying the limerick "An Old Woman of Surrey":



"An Old Woman of Surrey"

There was an Old Woman of Surrey,
Who was morn noon and night, in a hurry,
Call'd her husband a Fool,
Drove her children to school;
The worrying Old Woman of Surrey:

Katherine Redgrave



As for the following image by Lear, there are some limericks written mostly in Greek but also in English, as well.



Lear's picture.

Students' limericks:

"The lady with the ugly nose"

*There was a lady with an ugly big nose
wearing a big hat with a rose.*

*She was running around like a hen
around her million and million of men
the lady with the ugly big nose.*

"The two year old grandma"

Little ugly two year old grandma

went flying to Alabamma.

Spent all her money on the way

nothing left to make her stay.

What a pity, the two year old grandma.

E. So, are we really talking *nonsense*?

Conclusion

According to the *Incogruity theory* mentioned in the beginning of our article, in the *Theories of Humor*, the term of *humor* is perceived as an act of playfulness, focusing on the contrast between expectations and reality. This is clearly practised through the *creative writing* in the *literature of absurd* and *limericks* in particular.

Unfortunately, as indicated in Unit C of our article concerning the literary school reality, *humor* is not taken seriously, by being more attentive mostly to the intellectual poetry, the one practised by poets belonging to the elit class of literature. What is more, the educational importance of *humor*

holds almost a marginal position in terms of teaching Greek literature.

Our survey over *humor*, combined with the issues of *literature* and *creative writing*, is not applied yet to young students because of lack of time to get a permit for the conference. We could reckon it as a feasible method for young children according to well-known pedagogical theories.²⁴ Educational research could make profit from *humor* as an educational "tool" considering it as a teaching practice and as a teaching technique too, in every educational level. Furthermore, we could even profit from its use in learning environments of foreign languages, in the settings of special education so as to make interventions and improve academic achievements for many gifted students, or in working environments etc.

Taking into consideration all the issues above, we really ponder over the classification of *humor*, *laughter* and *absurd* as parts of the *Light Verse*. We firmly believe that we would rather conceive them as truly "weighty" terms. Of course, *humor* is definitely subjected to every person's sense of *humor* but we could all agree with Immanuel Kant when saying that

²⁴ Jean Piaget, *Sociological Studies*. (London: Routledge, 1995). Jean Piaget, "Commentary on Vygotsky", *New Ideas in Psychology* 18 (2000): 241–59.

"We face the difficulties of our life usually with three ways:
with dreams, with hope and with *humor*."

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