

Naked Pictures of Famous People Study Guide

Naked Pictures of Famous People by Jon Stewart

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Contents

Naked Pictures of Famous People Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Breakfast at Kennedy's.....	4
A Very Hanson Christmas, 1996-1999.....	5
Lack of Power: the Ford Tapes.....	6
Martha Stewart's Vagina.....	7
The New Judaism.....	8
Pen Pals.....	10
Local News.....	11
The Last Supper, or the Dead Waiter.....	12
Da Vinci: the Lost Notebook.....	14
The Cult.....	15
Five Under Five.....	17
The Recipe.....	18
The Devil and William Gates.....	19
Vincent and Theo on AOL.....	20
Revenge is a Dish Best Served Cold.....	22
Adolf Hitler: the Larry King Interview.....	23
Lenny Bruce: the Making of a Sitcom.....	25
Microsoft Word '98 Suggested Spelling and Usage.....	27
Characters.....	28
Objects/Places.....	37
Themes.....	40
Style.....	44
Quotes.....	48



Topics for Discussion.....52



Breakfast at Kennedy's

Breakfast at Kennedy's Summary

Jack Kennedy is a "top dog" student at the elite Choate school, beloved for his wit and way with the girls, but he's sad being the only Catholic there. He bonds with the unnamed narrator, the school's only Jew, and invites him to drive himself and roommate Lemoyne (Lem) Billings to Hyannis, MA, for a romping weekend with the family. "Mr. K" is a charitable soul. "Mrs. K" gives birth to sufficient children to offset those lost in athletic competitions. The narrator misses the fun as he installs irrigation. He also stumbles upon Kennedy children who are less than perfect—some genetic monsters—locked inside a darkened bunker.

Breakfast at Kennedy's Analysis

The first story spoofs the rich, high-spirited, athletic, prolific Kennedy clan, claiming to look at the merry, pre-Camelot days. It is structured as a series of diary entries, from 9-12 and 18 Apr. 1935, recorded by the unnamed narrator, a Choate student two years Jack's junior. This device allows Stewart to write in a gushing, whirlwind style, slipping between past, present, and future tenses, jumping to asides, and ending many sentence fragments with multiple exclamation points calculated to annoy.

The narrator, a Jew, laughs along with JFK's wisecracks about Jews, insisting that they are lighthearted and not anti-Semitic (e.g., naming the wing of the Hyannis mansion in which he rooms alone "Dachau." In many of the stories in this anthology Stewart spoofs his Jewish heritage as acutely. He is clearly comfortable joking about the uncomfortable.

Accordingly, Stewart wildly exaggerates the Kennedy stereotypes. Mrs. K's fertility, Robert's moodiness, Teddy's large head and way with girls, and Rosemary's institutionalization. Teddy has a tricycle accident that prefigures Chappaquiddick and the mansion sports a vault full of genetic monsters, all claiming to be full-blooded Kennedys. One of these children is generously given to the narrator's father to replace the son who dies while the family car is in Hyannis, leaving walking the only way to the hospital. Various celebrities (e.g., Charles Lindberg and Dr. Jonas Salk) are seen in humorous cameo roles.



A Very Hanson Christmas, 1996-1999

A Very Hanson Christmas, 1996-1999 Summary

On behalf of Gary and the Hanson family, Eileen Hanson sends out a bubbling "Jesus loves you" Christmas card in 1996. It talks of family creativity on the theme "Genesis," in lieu of exchanging gifts; successes in home-schooling the children; and the boys' "little music project," in which a "crafty little Asian gentleman" cheats them. In a P.S., Eileen asks for donations to help a neighborhood child have his cleft lip repaired.

In 1997, she apologizes for sending the update on fan letterhead and invites recipients to visit the official website. She complains about bad contracts, thanks to husband Gary, and apologizes for missing the annual family picnic. Her handwriting is sloppy because she is writing in the new limousine. Jesus still loves them, Eileen insists.

In 1999, Eilene addresses a bitter note "to whom it may concern." Eleven-year-old Zach has herpes, she has been treated for addiction at Hazelden and is suicidal over being charged with embezzling family money. She has plenty of information that could put people in jail, however, and her "little bastards" keep on succeeding. She ends, "Merry Fucking Christmas, God is dead."

A Very Hanson Christmas, 1996-1999 Analysis

In the second story, Stewart again adopts a device that allows him to roam over considerable territory: the annual Christmas letter. He speaks through Eileen Hanson, mother of the 1990s band that quickly goes to the top of the charts, cheered by frenzied young girls. The letters to family and friends counterpose their rise to fame and fortune with the decline in the family's moral sense and Eileen's own loss of faith. The writing shifts from bubbly Evangelical "Jesus loves us" to "God is dead." In both cases, Eileen, as it were, puts on all the trimmings. All of the stereotypes of rise and fall are explored. Various notables of the day (e.g., Naomi Campbell and Kenny G) receive doubtless unwanted cameo roles.



Lack of Power: the Ford Tapes

Lack of Power: the Ford Tapes Summary

The voice-activated taping system that brings down Pres. Richard M. Nixon, continues to operate, unbeknownst to his successor, Gerald R. Ford. The tapes, preserved in his son's garage, show: Ford's steward, Javier Sanchez, trying to convince him that he is now president (10 Aug. 1974); Al Haig giving up his Cross pen to get Ford to sign Nixon's pardon (15 Sept. 1979); Ford struggling for some ten hours to open a Coke bottle while Cambodians hold the USS Mayagüez captive (12 May 1975); Ford hanging up on Soviet Premier Brezhnev because he discovers the tape recorder and is entranced (21 Jul. 1975); Ford choking on his hat during a strategy meeting for the 1976 election (1 Oct. 1976); and Sanchez discovering Ford watching television the day after Jimmy Carter is inaugurated as his successor.

Lack of Power: the Ford Tapes Analysis

The third story is also device-driven: the Nixon-era sound-activated taping system has captured moments documenting his bumbling successor's years. Gerald R. Ford is savagely caricatured as a disoriented, bumbling fool. His Presidential Library occupies a box in his son's garage.

The story is held together by White House Steward Javier Sanchez, who tries in the beginning to convince Ford that he is now in charge and in the end that he has been replaced. Ford is put in a wide array of situations. The most confusing occurs on 12 May 1975, as the USS Mayagüez is held by the Cambodian government, appears to capture the Commander-in-Chief determined, angry, and frustrated; in fact, he spends ten hours trying to open a Coke bottle. Wife Betty accomplishes it in a snap. The revelation to the reader is jarring, and re-reading the transcript brings all new understandings.

The incident with Brezhnev being mistaken for Kissinger because both have accidents could have been milked for comedy, but Steward instead has Ford discover the tape recorder and become mesmerized. The election strategy of 1 Oct. 1976 is trivialized by having Ford choke on the hat he has lost. The mild titillation which sees him the first day caught looking at Nixon's Playboy is completed with him lusting over Renee Richards playing tennis on television the day after he ceases to be president. Richards is a famous transsexual.



Martha Stewart's Vagina

Martha Stewart's Vagina Summary

Home decorating and entertainment diva Martha Stewart gives advice on preparing the most exciting and ignored party accessory: the vagina. She deals first with "Exteriors," advising hair removal, making the vagina look warm, inviting, and exclusive, and taking care that treatments neither distract nor frustrate.

Turning to "Interior," Stewart advocates making the vagina a "multifaceted everyspace," aside from sex and hygiene. She warns that "uninvited guests" can make an appearance for up to nine months. She suggests how to create a "Vaginal Office," enjoy "Private Moments," and to enjoy sex, again cautioning about accidents; installing "Vaginal Trundle Beds" are optimal. The vagina is the "centerpiece of your personal style" and must be used wisely. It is no place to scrimp.

Martha Stewart's Vagina Analysis

The fourth story is pure fantasy, first spoofing Stewart's self-promotional style, declaring that thanks to following directions in various Martha Stewart Living magazine articles, the reader's party has been a "smashing success," and then segueing into "the party you're about to throw in your vagina." A reader's P.S. letter to the editor confirms that help is needed in this area. The discussion is divided between "Exteriors" and "Interior." The first topic is handled better, allowing "Martha" to enthuse about the impression one must make on a prospective lover and the dangers of various "treatments." The "Interior" section twice reminds the reader that unplanned pregnancies are always a possibility, but rather stumbles in over-the-top suggestions of furnishings (e.g., office equipment, Parisian folding chairs, and a Murphy bed). The final paragraph ends strong, relieving the fear that guests know one has beneath glamorous, expensive jewelry and clothing "a vagina from Filene's Basement."



The New Judaism

The New Judaism Summary

Intermarriage threatens to devastate American Judaism by 2010, but Judaism has a "long and storied history of surviving threats of extinction." Spain in 1492 offers Jews conversion or expulsion; many who have put down time-shares in Majorca convert, but are later hunted down by sophisticated methods. Hitler's Final Solution kills six million Jews and leaves survivors concerned about the "health hazard" of their religion. Burger King's non-kosher offerings are too delicious to resist, suggesting that contemporary Judaism cannot compete in America's "free market religious environment."

The Orthodox accept the whole Torah as coming from God, separate the sexes during worship, and believe Jackie Mason is the funniest man alive. Conservatives take the Orthodox strictness "down a notch" and prefer Woody Allen. Reform Jews are "Christians with curlier hair" and favor Carrot Top. None of these forms can sustain Jews through the 21st century. The New Judaism requires simplifying the concept of God and adopting a positive outlook. The Law must be simplified and a mascot—Jewey, based on Joe Camel—must be adopted. People want religion, but it must be appealing.

The New Judaism Analysis

In the fifth story, Jon Stewart examines his faith, Judaism, in history and the present day, suggesting ways in which to make it survive into the next century. The style is straightforward exposition in which he fondly caricatures his people. He opens with dire predictions by the Rabbinical Congress: by 2010 there will be too few Jews to support a Seinfeld reunion. In an aside, two rabbis fight over how to clarify that 2010 is an approximate date (the suffix -ish vs. "... or so).

Stewart moves next to surveying how Jews survive the Spanish Inquisition and the Third Reich but have difficulty turning down sinfully-delicious Burger King croissan'wiches containing pork. He describes the three main categories of American Jews: Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform, and then offers a comparative chart on how they look at various cultural and religious topics. Note that they agree only on Guilt being Total. To keep "defection, apathy, and blondes" from wiping out Judaism, a new brand must be developed.

The solution derives from a mish-mashed fable involving wise King Solomon that leads nowhere, but suggests that Judaism must be simplified along the lines of the Christians: make him attractive and marketable. Stewart proposes to call God "Uncle Pete," a friendly gentleman, although still all-powerful. Jews must play down their history of always getting "the shit end of the stick." The Passover Seder has to become upbeat. The arbitrary laws of the Old Testament have to be simplified and expressed in relevant jargon: "Ass, gas or grass, nobody rides for free; and Be cool." Jews need a brandable



mascot, like Santa Claus. He suggests a retooled Joe Camel character to be called Jewey, who will enliven Bar Mitzvahs. People still need the opiate of religion to make them feel secure in an uncertain world. They also need a place to go on weekends. New Judaism can provide this.



Pen Pals

Pen Pals Summary

Claiming to be Mother Teresa of Calcutta, India's greatest fan, the young wife of Great Britain's Prince Charles, heir to the throne, writes a bubbly, disjointed letter to the aged Roman Catholic nun revered world-wide for her charity work among the poor and diseased.

When she receives no answer, Diana turns petulant, but is reconciled when form letters from Teresa's order, the Sisters of Charity, makes clear that Teresa is frightfully busy. Diana continues trying to establish a friendship. Diana's last letter rejoices in her divorce from boring Prince Charles, talks about enjoying her freedom, and suggests that the two women vacation together.

Diana dies in a tragic accident and Teresa dies soon after of old age. The Sisters of Charity write to console Diana's father, suggesting that he remember Teresa's close pen pal when making donations in Diana's memory.

Pen Pals Analysis

The sixth story is constructed as a series of letters between the young Princess Diana of Great Britain and the aged Mother Teresa of Calcutta, India, spanning the years 1994 and 1997. Diana sounds like a Valley Girl, gushing, asking naïve questions (is Teresa married?), and dropping names of celebrities (e.g. Cindy Crawford and Elton John) with whom she associates. She notes specifically in a P.S. that she is not crazy.

When no reply is forthcoming, Diana turns petulant, dropping more names (the surviving Beatles) and declaring that she hates Teresa for ignoring her. A form letter addressed to "Dear Supporter" comes from the Charities of Hope Foundation, explaining the "Living Saint's" busy schedule and asking for a donation. Diana is touched. She rambles on about her big-eared husband, "Charles the turd) and asks for a picture. A P.S. says that she sometimes wants to kill herself. Another form letter explains that pictures cannot be sent and pleads for donations.

A year passes before Diana writes her "Girlfriend" about her divorce, quoting Martin Luther King's "Free at last" phrase. She mentions unanswered letters and rejoices in being divorced. She hopes that Teresa can join her for drinks in Cabo. In 1997, Diana writes the "little scamp" who has not written to her and encloses a personalized get-well card. She ends by noting that she has found a new lover, who is sure to upset the Queen Mother.

The story ends cynically, with the Sisters of Charity sending a letter of condolences to Diana's father, Early Charles Spencer, claiming that Diana and Teresa had been "constant correspondents" and asking for tax-deductible donations.

Local News

Local News Summary

Señor Jangles, the talking Chihuahua who stars in Taco Bell commercials, is killed during a "physical altercation" in an Anaheim, CA, "adult entertainment establishment. Discovered on a Los Angeles street corner, Jangles performs minor roles before becoming the Taco Bell spokesman. Recently he has been moody about commercial roles and had been taking pain-killers for hip dysplasia. Jangles is killed by James MacPherson, who takes offense at some of his comments. Only one punch is thrown and Jangles dies saying "Ay caramba" (Oy vey). MacPherson awaits arraignment.

Local News Analysis

The seventh story is presented as a brief news item on the death of the Taco Bell talking Chihuahua, Señor Jangles. It reviews his discovery and early career, success as a commercial spokesman, disenchantment with the role—and widespread anti-Hispanic discrimination in the industry—and declining health, for which he is taking painkillers. Precisely how Jangles provokes an unemployed long-haul trucker in a bar is unclear, but one punch ends the confrontation. Jangles dies with his tag line on his lips. It is noted that Jangles had been excited about moving on to Broadway to play Rizzo in *Grease*. As in a standard obituary, his parentage is given and it is observed that "he had no children due to a childhood operation."

Stewart maintains a strict journalistic style throughout, citing facts from Jangle's biography and collecting eyewitness accounts of the fatal confrontation. Phrases like "inebriated Jangles ignored numerous pleas to sit and stay" are worked into the text without breaking the overall atmosphere.



The Last Supper, or the Dead Waiter

The Last Supper, or the Dead Waiter Summary

A manuscript discovered in the Sinai Peninsula tells about a dinner party the Jesus Christ host for twelve male friends at Jerry's, a popular Jerusalem restaurant. The narrator is Avram the Waiter. Jerry's is packed at Passover when Luke arrives, asking snottily for a table for thirteen under "Christ." Avram finds nothing and refuses to seat the party until all arrive. Avram matches Luke's attitude and is ready to throw them out when Jesus intervenes. When he speaks a meaningless parable the disciples become "all kittens and puppies."

The party is finally seated at 9 p.m. and set to arguing who sits where. Avram wants to give them the children's menu. They order water to wash Jesus' feet and share a single glass of the house red. Food is finally served. Despite rumors, Jesus seems normal, performing no miracles and offering no "pearls of wisdom." Mostly they talk about the impression made by haircuts and beards. When Avram learns that someone betrays Jesus, he is not surprised. Those men are obviously not his friends, but hangers-on wanting to be fed. All flee when the bill arrives. Avram has met other messiahs. He feels sorry for Jesus, who had been a good tipper.

An editor's note claims that after Avram's manuscript is published, it is learned that a "New Testament" exists. It has also been discovered that the manuscript is written in Magic Marker, a product of the 1950s. The editor offers apologies.

The Last Supper, or the Dead Waiter Analysis

The eighth story is set up as a recently-discovered manuscript giving an eyewitness account of Jesus' last supper with his disciples. The manuscript is found in the Sinai by a German tourist beneath sands and a Starbucks. It purports to support Franz Shecter's thesis that the crucifixion is a "bachelor party gone awry." Avram writes as a haughty New York maître d', about events in Jerusalem AD 33 (3706 in the Hebrew calendar that many then prefer). Jerry's restaurant is crowded with people gawking at Pontius Pilate and with drunken centurions. Luke asks for their reserved table and exchanges attitude with Avram, who is careful only because the "blue-collar Nazareth crowd" looks pretty tough. Avram is on the point of calling the Etruscan bouncer when Jesus offers some words that calm his followers. Apparently anything he says does that.

The disciples argue like children over who will sit where and over hors d'oeuvres. Avram would walk out if he did not need the money. The disciples are snobby misers, snapping their fingers for water (to wash Jesus' feet) and sharing a glass of wine. Avram observes that the disciples settle down when they realize that he will be handling their food—and he assures the reader that rumors of what disgruntled kitchen workers do are not fiction. Avram continues complaining about having to serve these people and observes that

Jesus does nothing extraordinary. He claims not to have been surprised when one of his companions betrays him. They are freeloaders, but he is a good tipper.

The story ends with a disclaimer from the editor of the publication that earlier publishes Avram's manuscript. A New Testament unknown to the house is sent to them and the manuscript suspiciously is printed in Magic Marker. Both render the story worthless and the editor apologizes.

Da Vinci: the Lost Notebook

Da Vinci: the Lost Notebook Summary

Interpol recovers Leonardo da Vinci's notebook from 1477-85, lost in 1485 perhaps with connivance of Mona Lisa. The entries date from before he is acclaimed as a genius. It includes sketches and drawings of a "Wine Hat," edible ladies underwear, Buffalo Chicken Wings, pine air fresheners packaged in four-seat compact automobiles, and an "Ass Comb."

Da Vinci: the Lost Notebook Analysis

The ninth story is short, consisting of an introduction to the rediscovered da Vinci notebook with suppositions about how it is lost in 1485. Mona Lisa, whose face suggests that "she knows something," is suspected in the disappearance, along with the Black Death and simple misplacement of the book in a cab. This is followed by five pages of drawings well-executed by Diane Dwyer in the da Vinci style. They show four items well-known in 20th century popular culture plus an "Ass Comb" to deal with hair that fails to vanish from a certain place as man evolves. It even allows for comb-overs.



The Cult

The Cult Summary

Jon Stewart imagines himself as a "persuasive leader of a messianic cult," operating out of his rent-controlled one-bedroom apartment. He has foretold that Captain Crunch will spring to life from his cereal box and take the members to eternal bliss. Four minutes before the miracle, he speaks with his enthusiastic lieutenants, Johnson and McShane. Stewart is distracted by such mundane matters as pollen count and them emptying the dishwasher. The Captain had been "an all-powerful, benevolent leader" until one day a leprechaun accuses him of stealing his Lucky Charms and puts a spell on him until his righteous followers can pull the sword from the rock. The lieutenants nitpick at details of the legend.

As the countdown begins, Stewart tries to slip out a window but is caught. At 4:02, he claims not to have factored in Daylight Saving Time, gaining 58 minutes. Followers complain of Stewart's having slept with their wives and daughters, and he begins clutching at every straw to save himself from their anger. Johnson proposes suicide as the only way out. Others agree. As they force Stewart to swallow pills, he says that he has done this to save them from their own anxieties. When the Captain does not come to Stewart's defense, the mob tears him to pieces.

The Cult Analysis

The tenth story is rather long, examining the psychological workings of cults. After paying tribute to the leadership of Churchill and Martin Luther King, Jr., Jon Stewart decides that the truly impressive leaders are those that head the suicidal cults at Jonestown and Heaven's Gate. He imagines himself in their shoes, even though he has never succeeded in selling Amway products. He imagines the scene at 3:56 PM, with Captain Crunch of sugared cereal fame, due to return to life and deliver the cult members. Stewart, worried what happens when this fails to happen, is preoccupied and has to gain control over his lieutenants, zealous true believers. He tells a tale about how the Captain's followers growing sinful, lazy, and argumentative had doomed the Captain to become a cereal box cover until a righteous follower pulls a sword from the rock—a snippet of the Arthurian legend. The Lucky Charms leprechaun casts the spell. The lieutenants nitpick at details of the familiar legend, particularly the sword, which has not been mentioned previously.

As Stewart shifts the conversation, it is suggested that the cult employs a good deal of intimacy. This in turn is interrupted by the beginning of the count-down to 4 p.m. As all gather in the front room, Stewart sneaks out a window but is caught and is by 4:02 grasping at straws over the Captain's failure to emerge from the box. Followers are angry at being lied to and of Stewart's sleeping with their wives and daughters. A male follower, Phil, claims that Stewart also sleeps with him; Stewart is amazed at Phil's soft

hands. This aside aside, Stewart tries to control the situation but McShane declares that mass suicide is the only out. Stewart stalls, claims to have helped save them from themselves, and loses out to mass hysteria.

Five Under Five

Five Under Five Summary

Magazines regularly identify lists of "30 people under 30" to imitate. As the population ages, the trendsetters of 2015-25 must be identified. A Condé Nast research team has identified a diverse "Fab Five" to watch. These include: 1) Chelsea Jameson, likely to lead in the field of communications; 2) Michael Green (originally Hyman Yid) whose adult-like anxieties suggest that he will be either a high-powered executive or a serial killer; 3) Maggie Lynn Pratt, an eight-year-old whose father, a powerful publicist, insists that she be on the list; and 4) Cary Streisand Rent, a genetic creation of Cryotech Institute, combining genes from an MIT physicist, a Broadway lyricist, and a Persian cat. No consensus is reached on the first member, but it is likely to be an Asian or black.

Five Under Five Analysis

The eleventh story spoofs the trend stories appearing in many magazines. It has the research team at Condé Nast, a publishing company specializing in fashion magazines such as Vogue, identify "five people to watch under the age of five" in the decade 2015-2025, when the Baby Boomers are dead, Generation X suffering prostate trouble, and Generation Y middle-aged. The results are a fairly normal-sounding Chelsea Jameson whose parents seem likely to push her into television or ballet, Michael Green a home-schooled Jew who has already developed the anxiety disorders of an old man, Maggie Lynn Pratt, too old for the survey but her publicist father insists on her inclusion, and Cary Streisand Rent, a cyborg clone. Condé Nast cannot decide on a fifth individual, but is sure s/he will be Asian or black. The next month's list is 50 beautiful people with whom the reader will never have sex.

The Recipe

The Recipe Summary

"The Recipe" provides an outline of how to conduct an awards ceremony, beginning with the introduction of the well-respected, acerbic host and his opening prattle, providing for responses to laughter or non-laughter from the audience. A humorous actor and beautiful actress come on stage for some sexual banter. They are presenters of the would-be honorees.

The lone honoree is announced and brought on stage. S/he makes self-effacing remarks, expresses gratitude, commiserates with those who do not win, and makes a political plea of some sort. S/he continues as the music swells to signal the end of this segment. The host makes a witty observation and introduces the next presenters: a corpulent woman and adolescent with a fatal illness. The process repeats as necessary.

The editor notes that this recipe is taken from a Mayan manuscript found in 1982 and translated in 1985. It is at least 4,000 years old, suggesting that Mayans must have been visited by an advanced civilization.

The Recipe Analysis

The twelfth story outlines how to produce an awards ceremony. It is narrated in a sort of robotic, generic style that captures the gist of the proceedings perfectly, complete with all of the stereotypes. The script is followed by a note that this contemporary-sounding document is, in fact, a Mayan relic over 3,000 years old. It comes from a time when the Mayans barely know about the sundial, so it suggests contact with an extraterrestrial civilization. Mentioned in passing, Erich Van Daniken is a proponent of such encounters influencing human civilization. The editor's note is written in Jon Stewart's usual glib style, much as in the contextualizing sections of "The Last Supper." The contrast is effective.



The Devil and William Gates

The Devil and William Gates Summary

William Gates III is dead. Some folks in the Pacific Northwest claim that he is buried, while others claim he is present in every keystroke on the World Wide Web. He controls all business. For a while, Bill controls all of life, although he had started out plain-looking and not much to listen to. In May 1975, Bill is so frustrated by an invention that another bests, that he swears his soul to the Devil. He is relieved when the Devil does not appear—until the next day, when he prints out a "contract of servitude" good for 25 years of fortune. The Devil admires Bill's industry in fulfilling his prophecy.

As the 25 years ends, Bill plans how to buy-out the Devil rather than surrender his soul. Unimpressed, the Devil gives Bill overnight to tie up loose ends. Instead, Bill uses it to change the Devil's hotel bill, cancel his credit card, change the registration on his Mercedes and report it stolen, and exchange his fingerprints for a "crack-addicted prostitute." Satan gives up and hands over all power to Bill, who becomes even more merciless, forcing Beelzebub to proctor an MTV chat room, a task that drives Beelzebub insane before killing him.

The Devil and William Gates Analysis

The thirteenth story is a take-off on the Faust legend, where success comes only at the price of selling one's soul to the Devil. The founder of Microsoft is pictures as a youth to whom nothing comes easily. Frustrated when someone invents a superior version of a product he invents, Bill offers his soul to the Devil. The Devil, a perfect stereotype, arrives and brandishes a laptop computer to print a contract. This scene is set in 1975, nearly a decade before the first crude laptop is introduced. Bill becomes rich and powerful over the next 25 years and plans on buying out the Devil, rather than giving up his soul according to the bargain. The Devil shows that he controls famous and important people including attorney Alan Dershowitz and entertainer Kaghie Lee Gifford, an odd pair to carry around in one's pocket.

Bill outsmarts the Devil, nearly getting him arrested as a San Diego crack whore, and so frustrates him that the Devil surrenders his power. Evil Chairman Bill forces the Devil to proctor an chatroom on MTV, driving him crazy and ending his life. At the end of the tale, told rather like Rod Serling narrates old Twilight Zone episodes, the reader can appreciate the story's wide-eyed opening: showing Bill dead but still all-powerful, all-controlling, thanks to the Internet.

Vincent and Theo on AOL

Vincent and Theo on AOL Summary

To test whether the Internet can once again sharpen people's ability to communicate beautifully and effectively, Jon Stewart adopts the persona of Vincent van Gogh to communicate with his beloved brother Theo. He enters various chat rooms on America Online (AOL) as VincentVG, writing rather long and mawkish missives about his life, in the style of the 19th century.

Much of what VincentVG discusses are his contemporary artist. Paul Gauguin, with whom he briefly and contentiously lives; Claude Monet, who betray the Impressionists; Edgar Degas, who becomes a Graphic Artist because "a guy's gotta eat"; and Thys Maris, who makes a mockery of art. VincentVG talks about the joys and treachery of portraying human beings and in the end decides to give up painting in favor of "honest work." He asks Theo for tuition money to DeVry.

VincentVG continually bemoans his "cursed finances," pleading with Theo to send him money. He describes some of the difficulties of using the Internet, particularly when he falls victim to online pornographers, and enters into a "budding romance" that turns out to be a sham. Having prided himself on learning the meaning of "LOL" (laughing out loud), VincentVG admits that he has become "the laughingstock of the entire electronic community."

As VincentVG pours out his heart to Theo, others in the chat rooms, almost exclusively young and looking to hook up, rate musicians, announce what they are currently doing, and ignore his contributions completely—until he asks if anyone likes singer Alanis Morissette.

Vincent and Theo on AOL Analysis

The fourteenth story has Jon Stewart pretending to be painter Vincent van Gogh joining chat rooms on America Online (AOL) to correspond with his beloved brother and financial supporter, Theo. The long missives, interspersed among brief, slangy, self-absorbed chat messages, paint word pictures of the real van Gogh's inner turmoils and his interrelations with contemporary painters, particularly Paul Gauguin. VincentVG claims to have cut off his ear—probably the best-known incident in his life—over an online lover (who turns out to be a man rather than a beautiful, intelligent woman), rather than after having a fight with Gauguin. VincentVG at any rate decides to give up painting and attend a trade school, which is a step up from the suicide that the real van Gogh commits.

Note that one participant in the MTV Chatroom asks people to press 11 if they hate Hanson, the musical group portrayed in the second story, "A Very Hanson Christmas, 1996-1999." S/he gets four immediate hate responses in a row before HAAAAAR22

declares: "HANSON IS A BUNCH OF HORNY BUTT LOVING BROTHERS!!!!!!!!!!!!!"
Such interconnections between stories is rare.



Revenge is a Dish Best Served Cold

Revenge is a Dish Best Served Cold Summary

Thirty years after graduating from Hasbrook High School in 1968, Sheldon Francis Stein is prepared to wreak vengeance on classmates who had never bother to befriend him long ago. Picturing himself as a character from J. D. Steinbeck's *Catcher in the Rye*, Sheldon has, over the last five years, constructed from animate and inanimate pieces a fearsome, living monster.

Reviewing his checklist, he discovers that he has neglected to learn to drive, so the monster must walk with him to the school. On the way, the monster utterly destroys a neighbor's Nativity and Santa display. Arriving in the gym, Sheldon is shocked to find that the majority of his classmates are already engaged in innovated and deadly acts of terrorism (including lasers and anthrax) against the small clique of long-ago popular kids. Sheldon and the monster go home to watch *Baywatch*.

Revenge is a Dish Best Served Cold Analysis

The fifteenth story portrays Sheldon Francis Stein as an angry middle-aged man. For thirty years he has resented his parents moving in the middle of his senior year, so he has no time to make friends. Classmates' using his name rather than a nickname is proof to him of their malice. Earlier in his life Sheldon's parents for years keep him in a bubble, having seen actor John Travolta portray *The Boy in the Plastic Bubble*. They release Sheldon only after seeing Travolta in *Grease* and reason that recovery is possible. Sheldon lives with his parents until their recent death and is now rebelling, drinking *Fresca* on the furniture and openly watching *Baywatch*.

Behind his parents' back, Sheldon constructs a Frankenstein monster out of spare parts and bits of animals. To keep them from guessing his intention, he pretends that he is masturbating and they do not dispute that ejaculation causes sparks and fires. Sheldon recalls some of his accidents and sufferings but is ready to triumph. As he goes over his checklist of things to do, he realizes that he has not learned to drive, but the school gym is close enough to walk.

Stewart does a masterful job of building up tension as the monster on the way viciously attacks people encountered on the road; only when he makes clear that a crèche and Santa display are the target of the monster's ire do the various body parts make sense. The reader is as surprised as Sheldon to find that most of the Class of 1968 are also angry at their popular classmates and are wreaking much more heinous revenge than the monster might have. A series of vignettes shows various motivations and methods. The end of the story is strangely poignant. The monster, Sheldon's only friend, wants to go home, so they leave.



Adolf Hitler: the Larry King Interview

Adolf Hitler: the Larry King Interview Summary

The 20th-century German dictator responsible for World War II and the Holocaust, Adolf Hitler is the lead celebrity interviewed one night on CNN's Larry King Live. Before introducing his guest, King summarizes Hitler's career: head of the fledgling Nazi Party, imprisoned after a failed coup bestselling book, German Chancellor and finally Führer. Over the ten years of his rule in Germany, Hitler presides over the Munich Olympics, a failed marriage, "one helluva World War," and (purportedly) "cowardly demise by his own hand."

Hitler admits his bad name and the risk that anyone takes to interview him. He admits to having been a vicious demon, but insists that he now hates the "very angry guy" he had been. Nowadays he lives an ordinary life. Without making excuses, Hitler notes the psychological impact of going through school "with one testicle and the nickname Shitler," which makes him vow revenge on his tormentors. Hitler had kept thinking that he could stop at any time, but after seizing Czechoslovakia, Poland had seemed so close at hand. He recalls wondering at the Munich Party rallies in 1942 what he is doing; he hates crowds.

In 1945, with Allied Forces closing in on Berlin, Hitler remains in denial. Lover Eva Braun tries to organize an intervention but he shoots all of the participants as betrayers. Hitler escapes from the bunker wearing Eva's clothing, but the mustache attracts attention. He decides that he must get his life together.

When King suggests that Braun may have been attracted to Hitler only because he is the Führer, Hitler bristles and suggests that King has been married to seven or eight beautiful women only because of his broadcasting fame. King quickly goes to the phones to field viewers' questions for Hitler. Viewers typically laud the program and small talk about how it helps their lives. King is curtly appreciative and prompts a real question.

When asked about cloning, Hitler admits that the Nazis try it but fail. He readily admits that opponents fear that another Hitler will be produced, but insists that personality, character, and intelligence cannot be genetically duplicated. Hitler believes in "nurture over nature," and is still pained by school children giving him wedgies and ripping his beloved lederhosen. Hitler also laments deporting or killing his best scientists and technical people, the Jews. Attacking Russia just as the West is nearly finished is not bright.

Hitler has been seeing a psychiatrist for years and has found peace, but his therapist says "put up or shut up" about responsibility for his life. Hitler plugs a new book, *Mein Comfortable Shoes*, and lists upcoming television appearances. He expects to stand

trial for crimes against humanity on Court TV and probably be executed. He will defend himself.

Adolf Hitler: the Larry King Interview Analysis

Larry King Live is known for asking blunt questions of controversial celebrities. This sixteenth story presents a transcript of King's interview with Adolf Hitler, who has just resurfaced after being confirmed dead in 1945. Stewart does a particularly fine job capturing King's style and mannerisms. After summarizing Hitler's life story, King admits reluctance to conduct this interview. Hitler understands completely the emotions that his very name evoke. He repudiates the "old" Hitler without excusing his actions in any way. In the course of the interview he admits many mistakes. Hitler has been seeing a therapist, who has told him that he must return to the public eye and take responsibility. Several times Hitler suggests that maltreatment by school mates has had an influence on his aggressiveness, but he favors nurture over nature in the great debate over personality.

Hitler reveals a continuing interest in science, insisting that if he were cloned, the clone would not have his personality character, or intelligence unless his upbringing were duplicated. Hitler admits to having heard about the film, *The Boys from Brazil* starring Sir Lawrence Olivier, but has not seen it and hears the performances are thin and it runs too long. He wonders at the foolishness of deporting or killing his best scientists (Jews) and invading Russia. Wrapping up, King plugs Hitler's new book, *Mein Comfortable Shoes*, a take-off on *Mein Kampf*, the Nazi bible, and asks about "what's next" for him. Hitler will appear on the program, *Politically Incorrect*. Given Bill Maher's more incisive style of interviewing, one can imagine how Stewart would treat that. Hitler observes, tongue in cheek, that his "old work" appears regularly on the A&E network, and in two weeks he will be tried for crimes against humanity—and possibly executed—on Court TV. The story concludes with a non-sequitur: starlet Loni Anderson promoting her latest tell-all book.



Lenny Bruce: the Making of a Sitcom

Lenny Bruce: the Making of a Sitcom Summary

Late in 1960, Fred Silverman, a production assistant at ABC Television discovers a hilarious comedian, Lenny Bruce, and recommends getting him under contract before NBC or CBS is able. He next reports a successful meeting with Bruce. Silverman doubts that a Jewish Davy Crockett show will succeed, but considers a comic Audie Murphy might work, particularly if it were set in Nebraska. Bruce is excited about finding "Roach and Head" at ABC. Silverman has been assured that Bruce's itching and nodding off are the result of allergy medicine.

Risen to Vice-President of ABC Programming, Silverman writes a memo to Bruce critiquing Bruce's pilot script, written on cocktail napkins. He offers a series of suggestions about toning down the title ("Have a Heartland" rather than "Schmucks"), character and dialog, best friend, wife, daughter, and plot. It is all a matter of "tweaking," as, overall, they are off to a great start.

Days later, Silverman thanks Bruce for quick turn-around on responding to the script notes, but observes that Bruce appears to have switched to an entirely different project, rather than addressing the critique. The Lone Ranger Is a Fag would create problems of plagiarism, which ABC cannot abide. Again, the basic idea can be tweaked. With his memo Silverman returns an offensive photograph that he is sure Bruce has enclosed by mistake.

Silverman's final memo, to Bruce's agent and attorney, Jack Sobel, regrets having to terminate Bruce's contract with ABC after Bruce appears at the studio naked to protest the proposed changes. He corrects Bruce's assertion that Silverman is "spawned from an unholy tryst involving Senator McCarthy and Mother Cabrini."

A postscript describes how Bruce's idea becomes The Dick Van Dyke Show, and how the comedian dies on 3 Aug. 1966 while working on a children's show, Uncle Lenny's Guide to All Things Penal.

Lenny Bruce: the Making of a Sitcom Analysis

The seventeenth story is set forth as a series of memos between Fred Silverman, a rising executive at ABC Television, concerning his discovery of an upcoming comedian, Lenny Bruce. The Big Three networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) are competing fiercely for new sitcoms. Silverman sees Bruce as an opening act and reports to superiors that ABC must get him under contract. That Bruce undoubtedly shows his true colors in the act that Silverman sees turns the story line into pure farce.

The body of the story has Silverman gently critiquing Bruce's proposal for a show that the 21st century would label "politically incorrect." The 1960s would condemn virtually



every aspect. Still, Silverman patiently and sincerely offers tame alternatives for the pornography, racism, drug addiction, and violence that Bruce wishes to showcase. Thanks to Jon Stewart's eye and ear for detail, younger readers who have never heard of Lenny Bruce will appreciate who he is. They may not, however, catch how Stewart's (and Bill Maher's, mentioned in the preceding story) brand of humor is part of Bruce's legacy.



Microsoft Word '98 Suggested Spelling and Usage

Microsoft Word '98 Suggested Spelling and Usage Summary

Microsoft Word's spell-check facility offers suggestions for a list of words, names, and phrases that Jon Stewart admits to using improperly in this book. Stewart suggests rereading the book, making the suggested corrections.

Microsoft Word '98 Suggested Spelling and Usage Analysis

The final story consists of a list of words, phrases, and names for which Microsoft Word suggests alternatives. Some are amusing, particularly the "no suggestions" that Word offers for the most off-color terms and for lawyer Alan Dershowitz. Real spell-check bloopers are well-attested and much more amusing. The story, however, helps the reader think back over the whole of an enjoyable volume of wry humor.



Characters

John F. (Jack) Kennedy appears in Breakfast at Kennedy's

The 35th President of the United States, Jack Kennedy is pictured in 1935 as a fun-loving senior student at the prestigious Choate school, long before the legend of Camelot. As a sixth-former, Jack is "top dog" and greatly beloved for his wit and for his way with the girls. He seems a bit sad, however, being the only Catholic at Choate, and therefore bonds with the unnamed narrator, the school's only Jew. Jack invites him to join him and roommate and best friend, Lemoyne (Lem) Billings, to Hyannis, MA, for a romping weekend with the family.

The narrator finds charming the sharp chiding that Jack aims at his being Jewish and dismisses the fact that he misses all the fun, being put to work on an irrigation system for the family compound. Jack also aims painful barbs at unfortunates, including Lem, whom he calls "big, ugly, retarded, chickenshit."

The story more broadly lampoons the Kennedy family's famous idiosyncrasies that come out during and after Jack's presidency. His father, "Mr. K," is a charitable soul, who nevertheless takes over the narrator's father's business in lieu of suing the son for trespassing, and who imprisons his own less-than-perfect children in a dungeon.

"Mrs. K" gives birth to sufficient children to offset those lost in rough-and-tumble athletic competitions. Jack's moody brother Robert tortures himself over an innocent political error, Edward (Teddy) as a toddler has already turned into a ladies' man, and wanders back from a tragic tricycle accident, leaving retainers to find the expensive vehicle—and presumably his female companion—in the water. Sister Rosemary, lobotomized to control mood swings and later institutionalized, becomes the whole horde of children held under ghastly conditions beneath the mansion.

William (Bill) Gates, III appears in The Devil and William Gates

The Chairman of Microsoft Corporation, Gates overcomes youthful bad luck and goes on to become President of the United States and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the entire World, thanks to a deal he makes with the Devil. The popular stereotype of Gates' nerdy appearance and uncommanding manner of speech are played up.

The spoof of the Faust legend begins in May of 1975, when at age 20, Gates is frustrated that his "317 Flushes Blue" invention is surpassed by a 2,000-flush product. He swears to give his soul to the Devil and is instantly relieved when Beelzebub fails to appear. Next morning, however, the Dark One does arrive to settle business. Gates' fears are calmed as the Devil prints a contract from his notebook computer, granting Bill



25 years of worry-free life. Gates grows rich, marries, and is happy and admired—even by the Devil, who finds Gates a marvelous client.

At the close of 25 years, Gates fears the Devil's return and prepares a neat "powerful leveraged buyout package" to offer him. Gates makes a brilliant visual presentation using his Microsoft software and offers first-class entertainment (Luciano Pavarotti and classing Star Trek episodes), but the Devil is unimpressed. He leaves Gates overnight to settle his affairs.

Gates uses the time to modify the Devil's hotel bill, cancel his credit card, change the registration on his Mercedes and report it stolen, and exchange his fingerprints for a "crack-addicted prostitute." The Devil has to admit defeat and hands over all power to Gates, who becomes even more merciless, forcing Beelzebub to proctor an MTV chat room, a task that drives Beelzebub insane before killing him.

The story's opening, which assures readers that Gates has died, suggests that stories about his continued meddling in every aspect of human life are not exaggerated or untrue.

Adolf Hitler appears in The New Judaism; and Adolf Hitler: the Larry King Interview

The 20th-century German dictator responsible for beginning World War II and the Holocaust, Hitler is mentioned in "The New Judaism" as the killer of six million Jews during the Third Reich, and is pictured in his youth as adding "no offense" to an anti-Semitic diatribe. Only later does he manifest himself as a monster.

Hitler is the primary character in an interview with CNN broadcaster Larry King. By way of introduction to his viewers, King summarizes Hitler's career: president of the Nazi Party, imprisonment after a failed coup, bestselling book, German Chancellor, and finally Führer. Over the next ten years, Hitler presides over the humiliating Munich Olympics, a failed marriage, "one helluva World War," and (purportedly) "cowardly demise by his own hand."

Hitler is candid and amiable throughout the interview. He admits that it is risky for anyone to interview him and admits to having been a vicious demon. Now, however, he hates the "very angry guy" he had been. Nowadays he lives an ordinary life. Without making excuses, Hitler notes that he had gone through school "with one testicle and the nickname Shitler," and receiving savage wedgies that rip his beloved lederhosen. He vows vengeance on his tormentors, but as history rolls forward always believes that he can stop at any time. After annexing Czechoslovakia, however, Poland is too close at hand to resist. He recalls wondering at the Munich Party rallies in 1942 what he is doing; he hates crowds.

In 1945, with the Allies closing on Berlin, Hitler remains in denial. His lover Eva Braun tries to organize an "intervention," but he shoots the participants, including Martin



Borman, as betrayers. He escapes the bunker wearing Eva's clothes, but the mustache attracts attention. Hitler decides that he must get his life together.

When asked by viewers about cloning, Hitler admits that the Nazis try it but fail. He readily admits that opponents fear that another Hitler will be produced, but he insists that personality, character, and intelligence cannot be duplicated. Hitler believes in "nurture over nature," and laments deporting or killing his best scientists and technical people, the Jews. Hitler has been seeing a psychiatrist for years and has found peace, but his therapist says "put up or shut up" about responsibility for his life. Hitler plugs a new book, *Mein Comfortable Shoes*, and lists upcoming television appearances. He expects to stand trial for crimes against humanity on Court TV and probably be executed. He will defend himself.

Avram the Waiter appears in The Last Supper, or the Dead Waiter

An 1st-century CE Jerusalem artisan/poet forced to wait tables, Avram goes about his job with an air of disdain. He is particularly annoyed when a party of thirteen arrive at the popular Jerry's Restaurant near closing time and act despicably. In a manuscript supposedly found in the Sinai in the late-20th century, Avram describes serving their table, where the miserly disciples act like juveniles, bickering and doing pranks. Avram is not surprised when one of them betrays Jesus, whom he finds to be a good tipper. It is later discovered that Avram's manuscript is a hoax, being written in Magic Marker.

Beelzebub / Ruth Marx appears in The Devil and William Gates

Known by a wide variety of aliases: the Devil, the Dark One, the Beast, the Stranger, Satan, the Beastmaster, the Master of All Things Evil, Lucifer, and—thanks to Bill Gates—Ruth Marx, Beelzebub first appears in his classic guise, with hooves, horns, smelling like burnt cake, and disemboweling the Gates' family dog. He claims to be a gay ex-Merchant Marine chum. Beelzebub visits Bill Gates in May of 1975 to seal the deal on Bill's soul, which he has promised in order to succeed in business.

Twenty-five years later, with Bill a worldwide success, Beelzebub returns, driving a black Mercedes, wearing a tuxedo and cape, and staying at Seattle's Regency Hyatt. Bill is prepared to buy out Beelzebub, who is unimpressed by his brilliant sales presentation and entertainments, shows how he controls lawyer Alan Dershowitz and entertainer Kathie Lee Gifford, and gives Bill overnight to tie up loose ends. Bill uses the time to change the Beelzebub's hotel bill, cancel his credit card, change the registration on his Mercedes, report it stolen, and exchange his fingerprints for a San Diego "crack-addicted prostitute," Ruth Marx. Beelzebub gives up and hands over all power to Bill, who mercilessly assigns him as a proctor in an MTV chat room under the screen name "Ol' Scratch." Beelzebub dies miserable and insane.



Lemoyne (Lem) Billings appears in Breakfast at Kennedy's

A sixth-former at the prestigious Choate school, Lem is the roommate and best friend of John F. (Jack) Kennedy, and often the target of his wit. Jack talks about "big, ugly, retarded, chickenshit Lem."

Lenny Bruce appears in Lenny Bruce: the Making of a Sitcom

A foul-mouthed, drug-addicted satirist whose heyday was in the 1960s, Bruce is pictured in a series of communications with executives at ABC Television pushing a sitcom concept whose potential the network people appreciate but need to tone down considerably. They see him as "a comer," ABC's answer to Danny Thomas and Jack Benny. When Bruce shows up at the studio naked his contract is voided. ABC apologizes for over-zealous security personnel hurling him from a third-floor window.

Gerald R. Ford appears in Lack of Power: the Ford Tapes

The 38th President of the United States, Ford is lampooned as bumbling and confused in a funny but vicious story supposedly based on lost tape recordings recently found in his son's garage, which is home to his Presidential Library. Many have been taped over.

Ford becomes president when Richard M. Nixon resigns in disgrace over the Watergate Affair. Nixon's downfall is the voice-activated recording system in the Oval Office, which has not been shut off as Ford takes over. The tapes show Ford's first day, bribing the steward not to tell Mr. Nixon that he has been looking at things on his desk. It shows him preoccupied by a nice pen when asked to sign Nixon's pardon; allowed to keep it, he promptly sticks himself in the eye. His mistakes Brezhnev for Kissinger, because they both have accents and chokes on his hat during a campaign strategy meeting. He wrestles all day with a Coke bottle instead of a major foreign policy issue. On the day after Jimmy Carter succeeds him, he is still in the Oval Office, watching television.

Michael Green appears in Five Under Five

A 4.5-year-old from Manhattan, the home-schooled Jewish boy already suffers anxiety disorders. He has spent three years confined in an oxygen seam tent and changed his name from Hyman Yid so that people will not get the wrong idea. Conté Nast believes he will be a high-powered executive or serial killer.



Eileen Hanson appears in A Very Hanson Christmas, 1996-1999

The wife of Gary Hanson and mother of Zach, Taylor, and Isaac, who become chart-topping pop singers and idols to millions of girls "whose life ambition is to someday get breast implants," Eileen writes annual Christmas letters to family and friends. In 1996, with the boys playing small-time local venues, she is upbeat about home-schooling them in smothering Christian fashion. By Christmas of 1997, the band is turning big business with fan club letterhead, an official website and many knock-offs, and business problems, thanks to husband Gary's ineptitude. Eileen issues no update in 1998 and in 1999 reports on being treated for substance abuse and suspected of embezzling funds. She is bitter towards everyone and everything, somewhat suicidal, but cocky about her riches. God is dead, she declares.

Chelsea Jameson appears in Five Under Five

A five-year-old girl from Atlanta, GA, Chelsea is predicted to be an important 21st-century figure, probably in communications. She already has a boyfriend, Jake.

Señor Jangles appears in Local News

The talking Chihuahua who stars in Taco Bell commercials, Señor Jangles is killed during a "physical altercation" in an Anaheim, CA, "adult entertainment establishment." Discovered on a Los Angeles street corner, Jangles performs minor roles before becoming the Taco Bell spokesman. Recently he has been moody about commercial roles and had been taking pain-killers for hip dysplasia. Jangles is killed by James MacPherson, who takes offense at some of his comments. Only one punch is thrown and Jangles dies saying "Ay caramba" (Oy vey).

Jesus Christ appears in The Last Supper, or the Dead Waiter

A 1st-century CE Messiah (one of many), Jesus accompanies his twelve disciples to dinner at Passover to Jerusalem's trendy Jerry's Restaurant. The disciples act like juveniles, but take everything that Jesus says as though it were the Word of God. Avram the waiter, who narrates the tale, describes Jesus as pretty normal, performing none of the miracles and speaking none of the great words that are widely attributed to him. The table conversation is fairly banal. The party orders water to wash Jesus' feet at the table and shares a single glass of house red wine. Avram is not surprised when one of them betrays Jesus, whom he finds to be a good tipper.



Henry Kissinger appears in Lack of Power: the Ford Tapes

The U.S. Secretary of State under presidents Richard M. Nixon and Gerald R. Ford, Kissinger appears twice in the story of the "Ford Tapes." First, he and Chief of Staff Al Haig approach Ford about signing a full pardon for Nixon, but Ford fixates on Haig's fancy pen. Kissinger induces Haig to give it to Ford as a present in exchange for a signature. In the second instance, Ford mistakes Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev for Kissinger, because both have heavy foreign accents.

Larry King appears in Adolf Hitler: the Larry King Interview

Larry King is the host of a nightly call-in talk show on CNN. It allows viewers around the world to ask questions of the celebrities he attracts. When King asks interviewee Adolf Hitler about his beautiful wife, Eva Braun, Hitler takes offense at the suggestion he could get her only by being a powerful man, and points out that King's "physical presence" is "mildly disturbing." Without the power of Larry King Live, King would not be on his seventh or eighth wife. To change the subject, King quickly goes to the phones to field viewers' questions.

Leonardo da Vinci appears in Da Vinci: the Lost Notebook

The great man of the Italian Renaissance known for detailed drawings of scientific subjects, Leonardo is here depicted in his early years, more interested in inventions serving the purpose of pleasure. When the notebook disappears in 1485, Leonardo suspects Mona Lisa, because her face "knows something."

Luke appears in The Last Supper, or the Dead Waiter

Luke is portrayed as the lead man during Jesus dinner at Jerusalem's popular Jerry's Restaurant. He and Avram the waiter trade attitude in a 20th-century New York City-flavored standoff.

James MacPherson appears in Local News

A 43-year-old unemployed long-haul trucker, MacPherson kills Señor Jangles, Taco Bell's talking Chihuahua, during a "physical altercation" in an Anaheim, CA, "adult entertainment establishment." MacPherson is said to have taken offense at some of Jangles' inebriated comments. Only one punch is thrown. MacPherson is jailed pending arraignment on second-degree murder charges.



Maggie Lynn Pratt appears in Five Under Five

An eight-year-old from Hollywood, CA, Maggie is put on the list of "Five to Watch" because her father is a powerful publicist. It may take plastic surgery to make her pretty and her talents are unknown.

Cary Streisand Rent appears in Five Under Five

A 45-month-old creation of Cryotech Institute, Cary is the product of a genetic marriage between an MIT physics genius, a Broadway lyricist and, accidentally, a rare breed of Persian cat, giving him an enormously oversized cranium, eight nipples, and a tail. He is already an accomplished physicist and neurologist the government hopes soon to have him developing futuristic weapons systems.

Javier Sanchez appears in Lack of Power: the Ford Tapes

A White House steward for 23 years, Sanchez opens and closes the story of Pres. Gerald R. Ford's tapes. In the beginning, Sanchez tries, unsuccessfully and frustratingly, to convince the new Chief Executive that he, not Richard M. Nixon, is in charge. A day after Jimmy Carter is inaugurated, Sanchez is surprised to find Ford still in the Oval Office, watching television. He informs him that the delicious cake Ford remembers is from the inauguration. Ford talks down to Sanchez using ethnically-offensive baby talk.

Fred Silverman appears in Lenny Bruce: the Making of a Sitcom

A series of memos shows Silverman discovering, promoting, negotiating with, and ultimately firing Lenny Bruce, a foul-mouthed, drug-addicted satirist in the 1960s. Silverman is first seen as a Production Assistant at ABC Television, hard-pressed to find talent that can compete with Danny Thomas and Jack Benny. As the memos continue, Silverman rises to Vice-President and President of ABC. He appreciates the potential of Bruce's sitcom proposal, but tries tactfully to get him to tone it down considerably.

Princess Diana Spencer appears in Pen Pals

Claiming to be Mother Teresa's biggest fan, the young wife of Great Britain's Prince Charles, heir to the throne, writes a disjointed letter to the aged Roman Catholic nun revered world-wide for her charity work among the poor and diseased. When she receives no answer, Diana turns petulant, then, receiving form letters from Teresa's order, understands that the nun is busy, but keeps on trying to establish a friendship. Diana rejoices when her divorce from boring Charles is finalized, she talks about



enjoying her freedom and suggests that they vacation together. Diana dies in a tragic accident and Teresa dies of old age. Her sisterhood writes to console Diana's father, suggesting that he dedicate a portion of her considerable fortune to the cause of her close pen pal.

Sheldon Francis Stein appears in Revenge is a Dish Best Served Cold

Thirty years after graduating from Hasbrook High School in 1968, Stein is ready to wreak vengeance on those who had never befriended him. Picturing himself (loosely) on the misfit main character in J. D. Steinbeck's *Catcher in the Rye*, Sheldon has, over the last five years, constructed a fearsome, living monster. Reviewing his checklist, he discovers that he has neglected to learn to drive, so the monster must walk with him to the school. On the way, it destroys a neighbor's Nativity and Santa display. Arriving in the gym, Sheldon is shocked to find that the majority of his classmates are already engaged in acts of terrorism against the small clique of popular kids. Sheldon and the monster go home to watch *Baywatch*.

Martha Stewart appears in Martha Stewart's Vagina

A media guru of home decorating and entertaining, emphasizing do-it-yourself crafts, Stewart publishes a magazine, *Martha Stewart Living*, and hosts a syndicated television program. This story spoofs her decorating advice by telling women how to dress up their vaginas for proper entertainment.

Mother Teresa appears in Pen Pals

The founder of Sisters of Charity religious order in Calcutta, India, Mother Teresa is revered world-wide for her charity work among the poor and diseased. Her sisterhood refers to her as a "Living Saint." Claiming to be her biggest fan, the young Princess Diana, wife of Great Britain's Prince Charles, heir to the throne, writes a disjointed letter suggesting that they be friends. The Sisters of Charity eventually reply with a form letter saying that Teresa is too busy to answer mail. Diana dies in a tragic accident shortly before Teresa dies of old age and her sisterhood writes to console Diana's father, suggesting that he dedicate a portion of her considerable fortune to the cause of her close pen pal.

Vincent van Gogh appears in Vincent and Theo on AOL Summary

Jon Stewart's alter ego as he enters various chat rooms on America Online (AOL), van Gogh is a 19th-century Dutch painter and "one of history's finest practitioners" of letter writing, engaging her in chat room correspondence with his brother, Theo. As



VincentVG, he writes about the joys and treachery of portraying human beings, of difficulties using the Internet, of fellow artist Paul Gauguin, with whom he briefly lives, of Claude Monet betraying the Impressionists, of Edgar Degas becoming a Graphic Artist because "a guy's gotta eat," of falling victim to online pornographers, of Thys Maris, of his mockery of art, "cursed finances," of a "budding romance" that turns out to be a sham, and becoming "the laughingstock of the entire electronic community," this because he accidentally cuts off his ear and mails it to his beloved. Van Gogh decides to give up painting in favor of "honest work." He asks Theo for tuition money to the DeVry Institute.



Objects/Places

America Online appears in Vincent and Theo on AOL Summary

An early online computer service, AOL is where Jon Stewart, posing as VincentVG (the painter Vincent van Gogh) experiments with communicating through letters with in the classic style with denizens of the Internet. He claims to present actual transcripts of chat room experiences, with spelling and syntax errors intact, but cybernames changed to "protect the innocent." He samples the AOL People, MTV, Business and Finance, and Best Li'l Chatroom locations.

Atachupulay, Peru appears in The Recipe

The site of an architectural dig in 1982, Atachupulay is a fabled Mayan city, described by Erich Van Daniken in his book, *Weird, Huh?*

Captain Crunch appears in The Cult

A children's cereal who box shows an old-fashioned sea captain, Captain Crunch is declared to be the savior of Jon Stewart's new cult, prophesied to spring to life from the box at 4:00 p.m., bringing on the Rapture. Stewart, as leader of the cult, declares the Captain had been "an all-powerful, benevolent leader," whose people live happily with a sugar rush until one day a leprechaun accuses the Captain of stealing his Lucky Charms and puts a spell on him until his righteous followers can pull the sword from the rock. When the Captain fails to save him from his mutinous disciples Stewart concludes that "sugared cereals are a death sentence."

Condé Nast appears in Five Under Five

A publishing company, principally of fashion magazines like *Vogue*, Condé Nast has its research team identify "five people to watch under the age of five."

Choate School appears in Breakfast at Kennedy's

An elite preparatory school in Connecticut, Choate is depicted as an all-Protestant establishment except for the Catholic John F. Kennedy and the unnamed Jewish narrator, whose father runs the commissary, thus gaining him admission.



The Hansons appears in A Very Hanson Christmas, 1996-1999; and Vincent and Theo on

A pop band formed in the 1990s whose sound is reminiscent of the 1970s and stands in stark contrast with prevailing Grunge, the Hansons consist of Zach, Taylor, and Isaac, who become chart-topping pop singers and idols to millions of girls "whose life ambition is to someday get breast implants." They are shown in this story as abandoning themselves to sex and drugs and claiming that their mother, who handles the business end, has been embezzling funds. In the second story, a participant in an America Online chatroom asks if others hate Hansons. Four do before HAAAAAR22 declares: "HANSON IS A BUNCH OF HORNY BUTT LOVING BROTHERS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

Hasbrook High School appears in Revenge is a Dish Best Served Cold

The school that Sheldon Francis Stein attends for only the last semester of his senior year, thanks to a family move Hasbrook for thirty years fills his mind with dreams of retaliation for never fitting in. Over the last five years, Sheldon constructs a fearsome, living monster to destroy the 30th reunion gathering. Arriving in the gym, however, Sheldon sees that the majority of his classmates are already engaged in acts of terrorism against the small clique of popular kids.

Hyannis, MA appears in Breakfast at Kennedy's

The Kennedy compound is described in 1935 as "a Catholic Oz." The Kennedy clan accomplishes a great many tasks before dawn. "Mr. K" is a charitable soul; "Mrs. K" regularly gives birth to enough children to offset those lost during athletic competitions, and any children that are less than perfect are locked away inside a darkened bunker beneath the the stairs to the servants' quarters. Jack dubs the wing of the house in which the narrator stays "Dachau."

Jerry's Restaurant appears in The Last Supper, or the Dead Waiter

An eatery suddenly popular in Jerusalem in AD 33 (Hebrew calendar: 3706) after Governor Pontius Pilate begins frequenting it, Jerry's is the scene for Jesus' last supper with his disciples. Avram the bitter waiter, records the event in a manuscript supposedly dug up in the Sinai in the late-20th century. It turns out to be a hoax, being written in Magic Marker.



The Oval Office appears in Lack of Power: the Ford Tapes

The President's private office in the White House, the Oval Office in the time of Richard M. Nixon is wired with a voice-activated tape recording system that produces the evidence that forces Nixon to resign. In this story, his successor, Gerald R. Ford, has not been alerted to the system and a number of tapes still survive.

Seattle, WA appears in The Devil and William Gates

The hometown of William (Bill) Gates, III, Seattle becomes the headquarters for his rich and powerful Microsoft Corporation. Bill owes his phenomenal success to Beelzebub, the Devil, to whom he sells his soul in 1975, and whom he smarts out of paying the ultimate price by manipulating data. The Devil is shown staying in Seattle's Hyatt Regency hotel, near the Gates estate. The Hyatt offers "spacious rooms and competent if not spectacular service."

Sisters of Charity appears in Pen Pals

The religious order founded in Calcutta, India, to care for lepers and the starving, the Sisters of Charity respond with form letters to fan letters from Great Britain's Princess Diana until both women die within a short time of one another. Then the Sisters of Charity writes to console Diana's father, suggesting that he dedicate a portion of her considerable fortune to the cause of her close pen pal.

Taco Bell appears in Local News

The restaurant franchise that uses a talking Chihuahua as spokesman in its television commercials, Taco Bell is implied to be insensitive in forcing Señor Jangles to adopt a demeaning stereotype. The spokesman is said to be enthusiastic about moving away from commercial ventures to Broadway when he is killed in a bar fight.



Themes

Judaism

Born and raised a Jew, Jon Stewart regularly refers to his heritage in his stories, sometimes simply for flavor, and sometimes to make a point. In the opening story, "Breakfast at Kennedy's," his unnamed narrator is the only Jewish student at Connecticut's prestigious Choate Preparatory School, allowed to attend because his father runs the commissary. Jack Kennedy, the future president, is two years ahead of him and is the only Roman Catholic. As minorities they bond. Kennedy regularly jokes about his Jewish friend, calling his room the Yeshiva, defending him to others as a "terrific yid," chiding about "kikefights," and admiring his pluck as "The Zippy Zionist." When he visits the Kennedy estate at Hyannis, the narrator is given a room in a separate wing, jocularly labeled "Dachau," the infamous Nazi death camp of World War II. Still, the narrator insists that Jack is not prejudiced and cites the nasty things he says about his best friend, Lemoyne (Lem) Billings.

In "The New Judaism" Stewart speaks in his own voice, reacting to rabbinical predictions that intermarriage will destroy American Judaism in the 21st century. Stewart contends that Judaism is good at surviving hostile environments, and points to the Spanish Inquisition and Nazi Final Solution as examples. In the former, he has the cagey Inquisitor trip up a Jew by getting him to agree to have a "nosh" of "out-of-this-world lemon pound cake. In the latter, he allows that some Jews might find their religion unhealthy. He sees delicious fast food featuring bacon as the greatest threat. After comparing the three main divisions of American Judaism (and conveniently charting attitudes on a number of issues), Stewart suggests thoroughgoing modernizations along the lines of Christianity and advertising, including adopting a lovable mascot, "Jewey." He ends upbeat, because people need a comfortable religion.

"The Last Supper, or the Dead Waiter" satirizes snooty Jewish restaurant waiters and demanding customers obliquely, but showing Jesus and his disciples descending on a Jerusalem eatery during Passover. Stewart breaks out nearly every stereotype possible and doubtless more offends pious Christian readers than Jews. The story is entirely about attitude. "Five Under Five" includes a Jewish preschooler who has already developed adult anxieties and changed his name from Hyman Yid to Michael Green in order to avoid anticipated complications in life.

In probably the most controversial story, "Adolf Hitler: the Larry King Interview," Stewart shows King, a Jew, uncomfortable with interviewing the Nazi dictator who does not, as all believe, die in 1945. Hitler has lost his anger, laments deporting and killing all of his best scientists and technicians, all Jews, and even finds bagels delicious. He accepts full responsibility for his actions and expects to be executed for crimes against humanity. Finally, "Lenny Bruce: the Making of a Sitcom" is surprisingly empty of references to the comic's Jewish heritage, being wholly focused on his preoccupation with sex and drugs.



Christianity

While Judaism is sprinkled everywhere throughout most of the stories, Christianity also draws Jon Stewart's attention. Christianity, particularly the Fundamentalist, Evangelical variety, is central to "A Very Hanson Christmas, 1996-1999," which reproduces three annual Christmas letters written by Eileen Hanson, mother of a 1990s band that quickly goes to the top of the charts, cheered by frenzied young girls. The letters to family and friends counterpoise their rise to fame and fortune with the decline in the family's moral sense and Eileen's own loss of faith. The writing shifts from bubbly Evangelical "Jesus loves us" to "God is dead." In the first letter, Eileen describes how her children are home-schooled, with all the trimmings, including science fairs (disproving evolution) and athletics. At Christmas family members do not exchange gifts, but produce biblically-themed artwork for one another. They raise money for a neighborhood boy suffering a hair lip. Everything in their lives is about godliness.

By the next Christmas, fame is creeping into the Hansens' lives. Jesus still loves them, but the booming business is making Eileen colder and more calculating. She uses fan stationary and is happy that the neighborhood annoyance has been shipped away. Eileen sends out no greetings the third Christmas because she is undergoing treatment for substance abuse. In a hateful letter "to whom it may concern," she details how her life has gone to hell, spitting venom at her useless husband and sex- and drug-addicted brats. They have charged her with embezzling funds, unfairly she says, as she rubs her wealth into recipients' faces and declares "God is dead."

The opening story, "Breakfast at Kennedy's" posits friendship between Jack Kennedy and the unnamed narrator because Jack is the only Catholic at the Choate School and the narrator the only Jew. Jack shows little piety, cursing his friends and having "an easy way with the ladies." His mother gives birth frequently enough to make up for losses during family athletics; in one instance she goes into labor in the pew during Mass starting during the sermon and ending in time for the baby's First Communion. When he offers specific details about Catholicism they lack the ring of familiarity that comes from stories about Judaism.

In "Pen Pals," Princess Diana of Great Britain writes to Mother Teresa of Calcutta, India, held up by her sisterhood as a "Living Saint." Diana knows nothing about nuns, even that they do not marry or wear bikinis. The Sisters of Charity anger Diana by replying with form letters requesting donations. Diana has no idea that a Catholic nun might oppose her divorce from Prince Charles, or taking up with a new boyfriend, or that she would find it comforting that the couple is practicing safe sex. When both women die, the Sisters of Charity quickly hit Diana's father with a request for a tax-deductible donation.

Finally, in "The Last Supper, or the Dead Waiter," a manuscript newly-found in the Sinai Peninsula purports to offer a first-hand account of Jesus Christ's last day of freedom. Set in a Jerusalem restaurant, the atmosphere is Jewish, natural because Jesus and his followers are Jews. The later Christian calendar reckoning and the traditional Jewish



one are cleverly connected. The disciples are a contentious lot, fighting over who sits beside Jesus and what to order. They demand water to wash Jesus' feet at the table and a single glass of house wine to share among themselves. When the bill comes, all flee. Jesus does nothing out-of-the-ordinary, compared with the stories going about, of miracles and pithy sayings. He is a good, normal man and a generous tipper. The author is not surprised that one of his followers betray him but finds it sad.

Sex

Despite its suggestive title, sex plays a minor role in Jon Stewart's *Naked Pictures of Famous People*. It is lustily intimated in the opening story, "Breakfast at Kennedy's," where toddler Edward (Teddy) takes a young girlfriend on a tricycle ride near the water from which she does not return, and in "Lack of Power: the Ford Tapes," where the new President Gerald Ford guiltily ogles a copy of his predecessor's *Playboy* magazine, and first comes on full-force in "Martha Stewart's Vagina."

The home decorating and entertaining diva offers readers sage advice on guaranteeing the success of "the party you're about to throw in your vagina." A reader's P.S. letter to the editor confirms that help is badly needed in this area. Martha Stewart's discussion is logically divided between "Exteriors" and "Interior." After stating categorically that "Hair is unruly. Get rid of it," she enthuses about the impression that one must make on a prospective lover and the dangers of various "treatments." Lingerie must not be too interesting in and of itself or too specialized, offending some of a different political point of view (viz., overtly IRA symbols when seeing a British gentleman). The "Interior" section twice reminds the reader that unplanned pregnancies are always a possibility, but rather stumbles through a series of over-the-top suggestions of furnishings (e.g., office equipment, Parisian folding chairs, and a Murphy bed). The final paragraph ends strong, relieving the fear that guests know that one has beneath glamorous, expensive jewelry and clothing "a vagina from Filene's Basement." One must never scrimp in this area.

"Da Vinci: the Lost Notebook" includes a page on edible underwear and "The Recipe" contains directions on suggestive dialog that presenters of awards ought to utilize to titillate the audience. Women in this role must be minimally intelligent and have breasts that are massively enhanced by surgery. "Vincent and Theo on AOL" is filled with men and women looking for sex in Internet chat rooms, generally with no response. "Revenge is a Dish Best Served Cold" portrays the anti-hero letting his parents believe that he is masturbating in the basement rather than reveal that he is building a Frankenstein monster. "Adolf Hitler: the Larry King Interview" has the aged Nazi dictator talking about the frustration of going through school with one testicle and the nickname "Shitler." When Larry King intimates that love Eva Braun is attracted to him only because he is the all-powerful Führer, Hitler responds that King is not that attractive, so power must explain the fact that he has had six or seven beautiful wives.

Sex and drugs are central to "Lenny Bruce: the Making of a Sitcom." The foul-mouthed 1960s comedian proposes a sitcom to ABC Television that includes a saxophone player

who can make "the Virgin Mary cum in her golden panties," a sweet-faced wife" whose "big tits and magnificent pink nipples" suggest casting Angie Dickinson, and a daughter who illustrates that "pimps and whores do not playmates make." Bruce responds to ABC's proposals to tone this down to make it more acceptable to the American viewing audience with a new project entitled, *The Lone Ranger Is a Fag*. ABC's "legal eagles" would like the main character to be heterosexual in order to eliminate ambiguity about his relations with his crime-fighting Indian partner. ABC Vice President Fred Silverman returns a photograph of "a woman checking her dog's genitals for ticks, using what appears to be her mouth," assuming that it has been sent by mistake and that it has "sentimental value." ABC voids Bruce's contract when he arrives at its headquarters naked to protest the company's interfering with the creative process. Bruce dies in 1966 while working on a pilot for *Uncle Lenny's Guide to All Things Penal*.

Finally, in "Microsoft Word '98 Suggested Spelling and Usage," the spell checker is unable to offer suggestions for a number of sexually explicit words and phrases included in this book.

Style

Point of View

In *Naked Pictures of Famous People*, satirist Jon Stewart seems out to prove true Marshall McLuhan's dictum, "the medium is the message." Stewart skillfully crafts stories around familiar formats that impose structure, including a series of first-person diary entries and a series of annual holiday update letters that show the writer's 180-degree change in outlook over the years.

Several times Stewart produces transcripts of events, including secret tape recordings made in the Oval Office, the freewheeling interchanges found in Internet chat rooms, a Larry King Live broadcast, and corporate memos dealing with a new television sitcom. The Larry King piece is particularly successful in capturing the host's well-known mannerisms, while the ABC Television memos show, in typical business doubletalk, how profit and prudery can and cannot coexist. Each capture a variety of first-person, present tense points of view, as do the personal correspondence of a fun-loving British Royal with a famous religious figure whose foundation answers with sterile form letters.

Stewart imitates a decorating tips column and the ubiquitous "people to watch" listings found in magazines. He utilizes several historical documents, including one that presents an earthshaking hypothesis but turns out to be a forgery, and another that may come from an alien civilization millennia ago. This story's robotic presentation of how to stage an awards presentation program is the volumes most unique offering. With help from illustrator Diane Dwyer he shows a carefree young Leonardo da Vinci's concerns with inventions that make life more fun.

Finally, a few stories are simple narration, some in the third person and some in the first person omniscient. At times one senses Stewart standing as the unnamed narrator, but most often he ascribes the stories directly to characters. In virtually all of the stories, he introduces anachronisms and blends fact (or legend) with fiction, usually with sufficient slapstick effect to tell the two apart. Even at his most solemn, Stewart is pulling the reader's leg.

Setting

The stories in Jon Stewart's *Naked Pictures of Famous People* span the globe and cut through all of human history, lampooning the foibles of, for the most part, real people.

In only a few stories is place a crucial element. These include "Breakfast at Kennedy's," which first looks at campus life at the prestigious Choate School in Connecticut in 1934 and then switches to the Kennedy compound at Hyannis, MA. "Lack of Power: the Ford Tapes" provides an insider's look in the White House Oval Office. "The Last Supper, or the Dead Waiter" harkens back to Jerusalem at Passover in the days of Jesus Christ, focusing on a trendy restaurant. The manuscript in which the story is told is found in the



Sinai by a German tourist beneath sands and a Starbucks. Finally, "The Devil and William Gates" depends on being set in Gate's hometown, Seattle, WA.

Other stories have distinctive atmosphere based on the places with which they deal. "A Very Hanson Christmas, 1996-1999" is set in the musical group's Midwestern home, but ventures abroad to show them enjoying fame while on a European tour. "Pen Pals" provides glimpses of life in Princess Diana's apartments in Buckingham Palace and the squalid streets of Mother Teresa's Calcutta, India." "Local news" is set in a seedy bar in Anaheim, CA, and references the racial discrimination found in Hollywood studios.

Another historical relic is recently unearthed in Peru, as told in "The Recipe." The finding is mentioned only in a postscript, but it is worth noting that Peru is popular among proponent of UFOs bringing advanced knowledge to the world. The main story line evokes any awards ceremony televised from anywhere in the world. Likewise, "Local News," dealing with a purely fictional and thoroughly dysfunctional middle-aged character, pictures Hasbrook High School, thirty years in the past when the popular crowd offends a newcomer and in the present as he plots revenge, could be anywhere and the tension would be the same.

"Da Vinci: the Lost Notebook" gives insights into a young man's interests in Renaissance Italy. "The Cult" takes place in a nondescript apartment but evokes the jungles of Jonestown, Guyana, and the "People's Temple," and Los Angeles' "People's Gate" cult house. "Vincent and Theo on AOL" takes place in various chat room on the Internet, with clever references to artist Vincent van Gogh, Stewart's alter ego, throughout his career in the Netherlands and France.

"Revenge is a Dish Best Served Cold" "Adolf Hitler: the Larry King Interview" takes place in the studios of CNN but evokes scenes from the Third Reich, and "Lenny Bruce: the Making of a Sitcom" in the executive offices of ABC Television in New York.

Four stories, "Martha Stewart's Vagina," "The New Judaism," "Five Under Five," and "Microsoft Word '98 Suggested Spelling and Usage," have no discernible locale.

Language and Meaning

The various narrators of the stories in *Naked Pictures of Famous People* all share humorist Jon Stewart's incisive sense of humor and sharp eye and ear for detail. For the most part, he selects people and events about which there is sufficient popular knowledge (e.g., the Kennedy family's rough athleticism and Vincent van Gogh's severing an ear) for readers to identify immediately. He adds considerable detail to each story, some factual, some derived from fact, and some simply invented, interweaving it in delightful, often unexpected ways. A major, sometime subtle tool, is anachronism. There is nothing subtle about Stewart's use of exaggeration. He enjoys, but does not overuse, the technique of narrating an event and then adding crucial details that utterly change the meaning. Stewart is a wordsmith, unafraid of unleashing his vocabulary.



Stewart crafts a number of stories around familiar formats that impose structure, including diary entries, holiday letters, transcripts, and corporate memos. He is remarkably successful in capturing the characteristics of each medium in terms of specific vocabulary (including jargon) and the general flow of communications. Each character speaks with a distinct voice. Stewart captures particularly well the well-known and distinctive Larry King and Martha Stewart. The shocking comedian Lenny Bruce comes alive in the stodgy memoranda that issue from ABC Television offices, even though he is usually paraphrased, but occasionally quoted. Perhaps the most delightful use of language comes when he juxtaposes the language of instant messaging with the soulful pleadings of a troubled 19th century artist.

Many of the stories deal with Judaism, the faith and culture into which Stewart is born. He deals with all of life irreverently but lovingly inserts Jewishisms into even the least expected place (viz., translating the Taco Bell Chichuahua's dying words, "Ay caramba" as "Oy vey." He deals with Judaism as an insider, not worried about being politically correct. He takes less license with other ethnic groups.

Structure

Jon Stewart's *Naked Pictures of Famous People* consists of eighteen essays, titled but not numbered. Only a few have any interconnection of characters or places, and the few there are are almost incidental. If anything holds the book together, it is references to Stewart's Jewish heritage.

The opening story, "Breakfast at Kennedy's" offers a broad look at perhaps the most famous American family of the 20th century. It shows them at play long before the Camelot years, but captures each character's individuality. The sweeping exaggerations establish a certain tone that is carried throughout the book, but with varying degrees of success.

The second story, "A Very Hanson Christmas, 1996-1999," is about Any Mother's concerns for her family and the mechanics of loss of faith. One need not remember the Hansons as a specific musical group to appreciate the humor and pathos. "Lack of Power: the Ford Tapes" can be enjoyed without historical context, but recalling Pres. Ford's gaffs and stumbles makes the exaggerations more pointed. Martha Stewart is probably well enough known by everyone to picture her in "Martha Stewart's Vagina," and the outlandish plot causes eye-rolling. The quality of humor in this tale is particularly uneven.

"The New Judaism" is Stewart's most targeted study of religion, deftly describing the Jews' long and tragic history and suggesting ways to help Judaism become trendy enough to survive into the 21st century. "Pen Pals" describes gushing, privileged, conceited young Princess Diana trying to strike up a friendship with aged, ascetic Mother Teresa. Diana obviously knows nothing about her pen pal and demonstrates the fickleness of youth. Teresa's sisters respond with form letters until both women die and they then request the family to consider a hefty donation to their cause.



"Local News" kills off the Taco Bell spokesman, a Chihuahua, told in the style of a newspaper homicide story. "The Last Supper, or the Dead Waiter" purports to be an eyewitness account of Jesus' last day of freedom; the Jerusalem restaurant could be in Manhattan, and gives a thoroughly Jewish cast to the story. In "Da Vinci: the Lost Notebook," the writing takes a back seat to the illustrations, which capture the master's style quite well. In "The Cult," Stewart tries his hand at becoming a Jim Jones-like cult leader, claiming that Captain Crunch will rise from the cereal box to take believers to paradise. "Five Under Five" is a somewhat labored take-off on ubiquitous people-to-watch columns.

"The Recipe" is the most unique story, providing a detailed outline for how to run an awards program. It turns out to be an ancient Mayan manuscript, perhaps delivered to earth by aliens. "The Devil and William Gates" retells the Faust legend, having the billionaire founder of Microsoft owing everything to the Devil, to whom as a youth he sells his soul and as an adult forces to bend to his own will.

"Vincent and Theo on AOL" skillfully juxtaposes typical, banal, self-centered chat room gruntings with the pouring out of the tormented soul of artist Vincent van Gogh. It is particularly rich in allusions to other artists and naïvete about the nature of the Internet. "Revenge is a Dish Best Served Cold" is the story of an alienated middle-aged man seeking revenge on his classmates of thirty years earlier. Most of his classmates, it turns out, share his anger and act upon it more aggressively. The Frankenstein monster legend is incorporated.

"Adolf Hitler: the Larry King Interview" captures the legendary talk host interviewing the surprisingly alive Nazi dictator. It is rich in historical allusions and scientific musings. "Lenny Bruce: the Making of a Sitcom" captures the off-color comic of the 1960s with remarkable precision, counterpoising him to television executives who want to tone him down to make a marketable program. Finally, "Microsoft Word '98 Suggested Spelling and Usage" spoofs spell checkers. It is the weakest entry in this volume.



Quotes

"What I see now is a nightmare appealing only to the most hardened Coney Island carnies. A huddled mass of moaning and dilapidated 'humanity.' To my left vicious Siamese twins nip at my clothes; an elephant man with a demonic Irish twinkle in his eye bellows in my face; and on my right a corpulent mass with what appears to be an ass for a face threatens to drown me in its secretions. Incredibly, these ghouls all angrily claim to be full-blooded members of the family living upon these luxurious grounds, the Kennedys. They don't recognize the dementia of this statement or Mr. K's charity in assuming their custody. Although there are a few lost souls here whose only deformity appears to be a receding hairline, lazy eye or perhaps a weak chin, I think it best not to challenge their assertion as it appears to antagonize them." *Breakfast at Kennedy's* Analysis, pg. 8.

"I miss them so much. Do they care? Of course not. Hey, some crude garage mix of the little bastards rehearsing Christmas music just went to No. 1 on the Holiday Charts. Think Kenny G is choking on his own cock over that one? I believe these tiny ingrates, who I gave life to, could sing into a bag of their own shit and ten million girls whose life ambition is to someday get breast implants would spend their hard-earned abortion money just to cradle it in their arms.

"But hey! It was a great run, huh? Better to burn out than fade away! What do I care? I still have more money than any of you will ever have in a lifetime of being paid by the government not to grow corn." *A Very Hanson Christmas, 1996-1999*, pg. 18.

"Although lovemaking is a scheduled activity, most of us don't use the weeks of downtime effectively, and before you know it, it's the third Tuesday of the month, and he can't wait for you to primp. That's why I prefer a method of maintenance that requires less constant vigilance. You may find that it even allows for a little spontaneity. I have several ways of dealing with this age-old problem.

"First: Hair is unruly. Get rid of it." *Martha Stewart's Vagina*, pg. 33.

"INQUISITOR: Are you a Jew?

"JEW: No.

"INQUISITOR: Are you sure you're not a Jew?

"JEW: Yes.

"INQUISITOR: Oh well, sorry to trouble you. Would you like to stay for cake?

"JEW: Is it chocolate? I'm allergic to chocolate.

"INQUISITOR: It's an out-of-this-world lemon pound cake.

"JEW: Well, maybe just a nosh ...

"The Inquisitor smiles a sinister smile.

"JEW: Damn." *The New Judaism*, pgs. 40-41.

"Well, I've enclosed a get well card, including a bit of philosophy concerning friendship. I don't want to give it away but it's a drawing of two naked imps holding hands with the caption, 'Friendship is being there for the tough times.' I believe this has been the credo



for our relationship and have personalized the imps by hand to drive the point home. (I'm the imp with the full chest and you're the one with wrinkles." Pen Pals, pg. 57.

"Editor's note: After this piece was published it was brought to our attention that Avram's manuscript is not the only document pertaining to the life and times of Jesus Christ. A work titled 'The New Testament' was sent to our offices along with a large number of other pertinent volumes. We regret this oversight. Also, upon great scholarly review, Avram's manuscript was found to be written in Magic Marker, an implement not discovered until the early nineteen hundred and fifties. Again, our regrets. The Last Supper, or the Dead Waiter, pg. 71.

"(All is quiet in the room ... finally:)

"FOLLOWER #2: Let's kick his ass!!

"(A warlike shriek goes up and the mob attacks.)

"ME: Wait! Stop! Ow! Don't pull, it's not a toupee! ... Oh my God! It's THE CAPTAIN!

"(The room goes silent as all eyes shift to the cereal box.)

"ME: See? Do you see! The Captain hasn't moved, but for that one brief moment, we all believed again. We all believed in the possibility of our salvation. (Heads nodding, the believers are contemplating.) Remember those days. The believing day. Those were good times, huh—uhhhhh... (A steel-toed boot is applied to my midsection. As my former disciples descend upon me like hungry hyenas, tearing me limb from limb, I think of only two things: I'm going to lose my security deposit and sugared cereals are a death sentence.)" The Cult, pgs. 90-91.

"Cary was created 45 months ago by the Cryotech Institute. Funded by a rich gay couple from the Silicon Valley, Cary represents a new wave of generational trendsetters not born purely of human reproduction. Cary's the product of a genetic marriage between a high-powered MIT physics genius, a top Broadway lyricist and, quite accidentally, a rare breed of long-haired Persian cat. Watching Cary play with his sterilized toys you can easily see he has the carefree rambunctiousness of any young boy with an enormously oversized cranium, eight nipples and a tail. At just three years and some Cary is already an accomplished physicist and neurologist with incredible taste in window treatments. If the government prevails in their lawsuit, he will also soon be working on futuristic weapons systems. I think you'll agree the only thing that can stop our fourth member of this honored list is his own imagination ... and the distracting lure of a ball of yarn — or if he tries to sleep lying down like a normal boy." Five Under Five, pgs. 97-98.

"You see, for a while, Bill Gates was the biggest man in the country ... heck, the world. There wasn't one millisecond of a man's day that Bill Gates didn't have some or total control over. From your morning commute to the hot milk and biscuit you'd put down before bed it was all run through the auspices of Bill's say-so. It's been said that with the simple touch of a key he could give you explosive diarrhea or an orgasm that made you feel like the Lord Almighty was fellating you. They said Bill wasn't much to look at. Bookish, with wire-rim glasses and the kind of haircut that brings peals of laughter from old mates as they're scanning through your downloaded eighth-grade yeardiskette. They said he wasn't much to listen to either. But he sure could ruin people. They said



the entire state of Florida was deleted because Bill felt it wasn't tidy, sticking out the way it did into the Atlantic Ocean." *The Devil and William Gates*, pg. 108.

"VincentVG: I poured my soul out to this fraudulent suitor. Not to mention that in my haste to impress my beloved with a poem, I accidentally cut off my ear and mailed it to her/him. I am the laughingstock of the entire electronic community, and rightfully so. My only Oasis is you dear brother ... and the new modem you sent me.

"JIFFpoppy: rap sux

"Gra445Gri: I like them theyre sweet

"TuTuTu33: anybody wanna chat?

"Ton44Fgh: 11 dong diggity

"Prapper: WUZ UP PEEPS

"GREaaa69: 11

"VincentVG: I am through with painting. I will seek honest work. I am told of an Institute where a feeble failure such as myself can be redeemed to the world of the productive. It is called DeVry. If you could spare any morsel of currency it would be greatly appreciated. The courses do not come cheaply.

"TOTalPack: Any hot grrrrls wanna cyber IM me

"RuffRuff2: 11

"VincentVG: Anyone here like Alanis Morissette? Press 22

"Ton44Fgh: 22

"Prapper: 22

"JIFFpoppy: 22." Vincent and Theo on AOL , pgs. 126-127.

"A single bulb backlit the frame of the monster who seemed as peaceful in sleep as he was terrifying in his waking hours. Sheldon thought back to the day five years ago when he gave life to this powerful creature. The sacrifice, dedication and secrecy that had gone hand in hand with the project. His parents never knew. Sheldon had convinced them that his thousands of hours in the basement were spent masturbating. Botched experiments often made his lies more difficult, but his parents took to their graves the belief that sometimes when Sheldon ejaculated, there was an explosion and fire. Revenge is a Dish Best Served Cold

"KING: Well, Chancellor Hitler, I have—

"HITLER: Please call me Adolf.

"KING: Adolf. First of all, I have to say ... quite frankly, we were very reluctant to have you on.

"HITLER: I can't say I blame you for that. I mean, you hear the name Hitler...

"KING: Well, in the end we decided this show is about newsmakers. That's been my motto through forty years of broadcasting and critics be damned. I'm not about to stop now.

"HITLER: I don't know what you're talking about.

"KING: What do you say to all the people out there, the people who view you as a demon, the perpetrator of the most vicious—

"HITLER: Guilty as charged, Larry. Look, I was a bad guy. No question. I hate that Hitler. The yelling, the finger pointing, I don't know ... I was a very angry guy.

"KING: And this ... new Hitler?



"HITLER: I get up at seven, have half a melon, do the Jumble in the morning paper and then let the day take me where it will. Some days I'll fish, maybe hit the mall for an Orange Julius. The other day I spent seven hours in the park watching ants cart off part of a sandwich. Me!! The inventor of the Blitzkrieg ... When you stop having to control everything, it's very freeing." Adolf Hitler: the Larry King Interview, pgs. 140-141.

"Again, Mr. Bruce, please just take these suggestions as bricks to help you build ... buildings.

"Oh, and before I forget: You mistakenly enclosed a grainy black-and-white photograph in the envelope with your script. It is, I believe, a picture of a woman checking her dog's genitals for ticks, using what appears to be her mouth. The scribbled inscription says, 'Greetings from Miss America' and also that the dog's name is Fred. I am sending it back to you with the hope that its disappearance caused you no worry, as I imagine it must have sentimental value." Lenny Bruce: the Making of a Sitcom, pg. 158.



Topics for Discussion

Pick a historical character from the stories and describe how Jon Stewart deals with the facts you know about him or her and how you react to the humor that he draws from those facts.

Do you find Jon Stewart's spoofing of religion offensive? Do you think he intends to offend? Illustrate with at least two examples.

Marshall McLuhan is famous for saying, "the medium is the message." Which of Jon Stewart's stories best illustrates this thesis? Could the story you choose be told in any other manner and be as effective?

Most of the stories in this collection spoof real people from history, but he also deals with universal types and themes. Pick one of these and discuss it in detail.

Jon Stewart could be accused of stepping over the line when dealing with some people and events. Select the one that bothers you the most and describe why. Could the story be told in such a way as to eliminate the offense while keeping the humor?

This volume is full of allusions to the arts (literature, music, painting, and broadcast). Pick an allusion and describe how it functions in context, what it adds to the story, and the degree to which it is colored by exaggeration.

Does Jon Stewart seem comfortable or uncomfortable with modern culture? Discuss at least two examples to support your position.