

POTENTIAL CHOICES FOR COMEDY PAPER

*Aladdin*  
*An Ideal Husband*  
*All of Me*  
*Analyze This*  
*As Good as it Gets*  
*Arsenic and Old Lace*  
*Beauty and the Beast*  
*Beverly Hills Cop I, II*  
*Big Business*  
*Big*  
*The Book of Life*  
*The Breakfast Club*  
*Bridget Jone's Diary*  
*Bringing up Baby*  
*Chances Are*  
*City Slickers*  
*Dave*  
*Dead Poet's Society*  
*Dirty Dancing*  
*Doc Hollywood*  
*Dream Machine*  
*Enchanted*  
*Ever After*  
*Father of the Bride*  
*Fool's rush In*  
*Forget Paris*  
*Four Weddings and a Funeral*  
*Fried Green Tomatoes*  
*Frozen*  
*French Kiss*  
*Ghost*  
*The Gods must be Crazy*  
*Good Morning Vietnam*  
*Good Will Hunting*  
*Harvey*  
*Il Posatino*  
*Just One of the Guys*  
*Kindergarten Cop*  
*La Cage a Foux/The Birdcage*  
*Leap Year*  
*Lost in America*  
*Life is Beautiful*  
*Little Mermaid*  
*Meet the Parents*  
*Mickey Blue-eyes*  
*Miss Congeniality*  
*Moonstruck*  
*Mulan*  
*My Best Friend's Wedding*  
*My Big Fat Greek Wedding*  
*Mrs. Doubtfire*  
*My Best Friend's Wedding*  
*Notting Hill*  
*Leap Year*  
*Love Actually*  
*The Nutty Professor*  
*Only You*  
*Overboard*  
*Pretty in Pink*  
*Pretty Woman*  
*Pump Up the Volume*  
*Pride and Prejudice*  
*Princess Bride*  
*Return to Me*  
*Runaway Bride*  
*Say Anything*  
*Sabrina*  
*Shall We Dance (Japanese and American)*  
*Shawshank Redemption*  
*Shrek I, II*  
*Sixteen Candles*  
*Sleepless in Seattle*  
*Some Kind of Wonderful*  
*Some Like it Hot*  
*Splash*  
*Strictly Ballroom*  
*Sure Thing*  
*Tangled*  
*Ten*  
*The Truth About Cats and Dogs*  
*The Wedding Banquet*  
*Tootsie*  
*Trading Places*  
*Victor/Victoria*  
*When the Cat's Away*  
*While You Were Sleeping*  
*Working Girl*  
*You've Got Mail*



### COMEDY PAPER Requirements and Rubric

1. Provide a copy of one published film review.	5	
2. Your final copy should be 1 1/2 to 2 pages single space written in the form of a movie review. Rough drafts may be double spaced leaving room for comments by peer editor.	5	
3. Include <b>at least</b> two meaningful quotes from the film. Have pen and paper when watching.	10	
4. Initially introduce the names of Producer/Director, as well as important selected actors and their character names. Be precise at all times. Alternate details with your commentary.	10	
5. <b>Do not “tell the story”</b> . In your introductory paragraph provide a brief description of the situation: “A young princess must leave her home (castle) to seek her older sister. She enters a frozen world of discovery.”	10	
6. Use at least two successful Comedy techniques that you think especially contribute to the success of the film: the use of two worlds, Menander plot, mistaken identify, rising of inferior character, <i>cognito</i> scene, escape and defying authority, rebirth and new society, situational humor, etc.	25	
7. Identify several stock characters: <i>eiron, alazon, adulescens, virgo, senex, servus</i> “tricky lave” <i>miles gloriosus, pedant, parasitis, pantaloon</i> . Describe stock character choice and/or subtly explain, or use these terms alongside a statement about character or plot: <i>Miles gloriosus</i> Gaston is sure that he is God’s gift to all, while <i>virgo</i> Belle sees him as a nuisance and a hothead. <b>Do not start a paragraph stating</b> “There are many typical stock characters in this film...”	25	
8. Include a comment or two on any one of the following: the cinematography, music: use of original songs (name of songwriter) or other music, sound effects, unique animation, or artistic design of settings. <b>Remember it takes a village to produce/direct a film/play</b> . Everyone is important.	5	
9. Include a sentence or two about a weakness of the film. Since you are a very competent reviewer you realize that not all is perfect: one character might be weak or one character might overshadow the others, etc. Perhaps the plot does not always support your “willing suspension of disbelief.” It should be obvious that you recommend the film. Remember you have chosen this film because it is one that one could watch many times—always waiting for certain humorous, moving, or powerful scenes.	5	

### **General Definitions of Comedy\***

1. A Comedy is a serious play which deals with love and makes people laugh.\*
2. Comedy is the rising of an inferior character who gains respect in the end. \*
3. Comedy is the maneuvering of a young man toward a young woman with marriage as its end. \*
4. "Comedy normally presents an erotic intrigue between a young man and a young woman which is blocked by some kind of opposition, usually paternal, and resolved by a twist in the plot."
5. While tragic writers tend to view man in the context of a universal human condition, Comic writers often take a hard look at their immediate society satirizing its customs and institutions.
6. Comedy is designed not to condemn evil, but to ridicule lack of self-knowledge.\*
7. Comedy is one response to the human need to "let go" or to transcend the everyday world. Human beings, if they remain truly human, never lose the childlike need to play, and they certainly need to be able to laugh at their own and at others' shortcomings, and to remember that life is not all earnestness and work.

\*Remembering Professor Richard M. Hosley, Professor of English Literature and Shakespearean scholar. 1921-2004. He was instrumental in the rebuilding of the Globe Theatre in London. See his name in the museum next to the Globe. Check out Special Collection, University of Arizona Library.

#### **Reinventing the Globe: A Shakespearean Theater for the 21st Century**

[www.nationalbuildingmuseum.net/.../Exhibition%20Scr...](http://www.nationalbuildingmuseum.net/.../Exhibition%20Scr...)

2007 - Jon Greenfield, based on research by **Richard Hosley** and John Orrell ... The university later built a 5/6-scale replica of the **Globe** stage .... **By permission of Special Collections, University of Arizona Library, .**

## COMEDY EVOLVES

### OLD COMEDY:

- Side by side with Incredible growth of DRAMA and TRAGEDY (*tragedoieia*—Greek word for “goat song”)
- 3 tragedies then a comedy—competitions for best pay. Elements of Dionysian festival—gross sexual jokes about fertility, large masks—silly stuff. Still maintained initial liturgical dance to Dionysius.
- **Aristophanes** great Old Comedy writer, wrote *Clouds*, *Frogs*, *Wasps*, one can tell big masks involved. **But he also wrote *Lysistrata*** the first anti-war-pro-women play, a good story to tell; it still has Komos or sexual overtones. He was reprimanded by the state and forced to go back to old form.

### NEW COMEDY:

- **MENANDER**—great Greek comedic writer. 342-291 BCE
  - None (maybe 1) of his plays are extant—but Plautus and Terence claimed they borrowed all plots from him—so did Shakespeare, and so do we.
  - **MENANDER PLOT:** Comedy is now about everyday life: Boy loves girl of choice, father blocks, boy defies father or society and goes after girl anyway. Later the twist in plot comes by a **cognito a recognition (twin concept)** scene—Jack will get the right Jill in spite of parents or society, or their own foolishness. Ultimately everyone is happy.
- **PLAUTUS AND TERENCE** –100 years later in Rome
- **PLAUTUS’ MENAECHEMI** or *The Brothers Menaechmus*. Menaechmi means **TWINS** in Greek and now **comedy is much about mistaken identity**. Shakespeare used this play and the **comedy of situation** as the base of *The Comedy of Errors*. *Plautus’ play* incorporate various **Roman stock characters** including the parasite, the comic courtesan, the comic servant, the domineering wife, the doddering father-in-law and the quack doctor.
  - **ROMAN COMEDY:** See stock character sheet. *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* incorporates all one needs to know about the basic Roman comedy plot and stock characters used by Plautus and Terence. Use these names when speaking of any of Shakespeare’s comedies. Adulescens meets with virgo—they run away or plan a secret marriage. Senex finds out about it—stops it all. What must be understood is that the virgo is really an acceptable social mate—she is after all some long lost daughter who was taken by pirates, thought to be dead etc.—so in the *cognito* scene we recognize that she is perfect. She is recognized by a birth mark, or a ring given as a child. This is the essence of comedy **the rising of the inferior character**. (Cinderella’s story, Princess in *Tangled*) Maybe she was to be sold to the miles gloriosus—he will end up being her brother—**double plot:**the servus and ancilla will get together—multiple marriages and celebrations at end of comedy—as in Shakespeare.
  - The comedic writers defied and satirized play the order of the great Roman Empire and the patriarchal family unit :father is the authority figure—obeyed-supposed to be wise, prudent, thrifty. These fathers are buffoons, henpecked. Slaves who are to be obedient, submissive are crafty, witty—understand who really has the power—know how to get their way. *Miles gloriosus* makes fun of Rome’s great military –he is really a coward—puts on a great show. The authority of the society is challenged.
- **Italian Commedia Dell’Arte: flourished in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries**

Similar stories, stock characters, love intrigues, clever tricks to get money or outwit some simpleton. Long-lost children, plotting maids, bragging captains, aged fathers and wily widows. Each gentleman had his parasite, each woman her confidante. Witty dialogue that must go like a merry game of ball or spirited swordplay, with ease and without pause Actors capable of making a stock character fresh and individual. **Comic Relief** important part of every play *lazzi’s* who had nothing to with the play itself could pantomime acting, do acrobatic feats, juggle, wrestle, physical enactment of bawdy or sexual humor. **Music, song dance** at any time **Masks worn** by stock characters who were easily recognized as soon as appeared on stage. **See Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*. San Francisco’s prize-winning Conservatory Theatre’s rowdy *Commedia dell’arte* production.**



## STOCK CHARACTERS

### GREEK PROTOTYPE COMEDIC CHARACTERS:

From Socrates' style of teaching—play dumb ask questions.

1. 1. **alazon**—dumb, unaware of self, thinks he is God's gift to the world, women, or academics. Arrogant, needs to get over self. Needs to be shown how ridiculous he is, how he adheres to rules excessively. We love to see him put down, to be made the fool of. Daily we suffer such fools.
2. 2. **ieron**—witty, but **plays dumb or the fool** to bring out *alazon* fools in Shakespeare.

### BASIC ROMAN PLOT STOCK CHARACTERS:

1. **adulescens** –young man, handsome, “marriageable” sees beautiful girl. Falls in love at first sight. He can be main character or a dumb *alazon* like Lucentio in *TofS*.
2. **virgo**—beautiful Virgin although she appears a *courtisan* or a *slave* (Roman) servant (Shakespeare) She is not suitable—not marriageable—against the societal norms.
3. **servus** “Tricky slave” adulescens has a slave as in Roman times—in Shakespeare the character has a servant—a *confidant*, Grumio and Tranio in *TofS*; . *Servus* is very smart—probably the smartest person in the play.—he sees reality—he is an *ieron*; he knows how to manipulate everything and everyone. He is witty. Feste in *12<sup>th</sup> N*. He can arrange a liaison.
4. **ancilla** Virgo also has a slave/servant. Sets up dual plot—double wooing.—lower class upper class. Sir Toby Belch and Maria in *12<sup>th</sup> Night*,
5. **senex**- (senate “wise”) The FATHER of adulescens—patriarchal setup—what father says is law (made fun of in Roman comedy) that which will BLOCK OR THWART the lovers. Henpecked—baffoon—eyes wander to pretty women, a weak man
6. **matrona**- wife, mother, real power in the house—a shrew—smarter than husband
7. **courtisan**—or **meritrix**— madam or prostitute or the one who runs the slave house—usually with the Virgo—appears to own her—treats virgo as if her own daughter (why she is a virgin) (*Little Orphan Annie* contains a mean courtisan or meretrix)
8. **leno**—male version of slave dealer—in Roman comedy sells women slaves.—control of the *virgo*. Cruel—out for money, manipulating.
9. **miles gloriosus** –the pride of Rome- the soldier, the macho man who thinks he is God's gift to women and men, but really a coward. As in Gaston in *Beauty and the Beast*. Song in *Funny Thing Happened* “I'm Miles gloriosus...” great. Almost always an **alazon**.
10. **pantaloon**—“dirty old man” usually a foolish old man you can trick too. Gremio in *Tof S*.
11. **pedant**—an *alazon* –one who thinks he is an intellectual—tries to impress all but is really a fool who like to hear himself talk. Bores people. He is the expert—but not really—always defining etc.
12. **parasitis** --he who leeches off the system. Shakespeare may call him a *sponge*-soaks up what he can get. Sir Toby Belch



**THE MENAECHEMI or THE TWIN BROTHERS**

**A synopsis of the play by Plautus**

MOSCHUS, a merchant of Syracuse, had twin sons who were like as two peas. When the boys were seven years old, Moschus took one of them, Menaechmus, with him on a business trip to Tarentum. There the boy became separated from his father and lost in the crowd. He was found later and adopted by a wealthy merchant of Epidamnus. In this city he grew to manhood and married a rich wife.

Meanwhile, so great was the grief of parents and grandparents for the lost boy that the remaining twin whose name was Sosicles was renamed Menaechmus. When the latter reached young manhood he set out with his slave, Messenio, to cover the known world in search of his twin. At the opening of the action, Menaechmus Sosicles and Messenio have just arrived at Epidamnus after six years of wandering.

Just prior to their appearance on the street where Menaechmus of Epidamnus lives, the latter has as usual been quarreling with his wife. To spite her he has stolen a rich mantle of hers to give to the courtesan, Erotium. He requests this lady to prepare a feast for himself and his Parasite, Peniculus, while they go to the market place to transact some business.

When she sees Menaechmus Sosicles, Erotium insists that he come in and eat the feast she has prepared. When he leaves she gives him the mantle along with a gold bracelet and requests that he have them repaired. Meanwhile, the wife of Menaechmus of Epidamnus discovers the loss of the mantle and makes such a scene that her husband attempts to recover the mantle from Erotium. That lady believes that her patron is trying to put something over on her and retires into her house in a rage leaving Menaechmus dinnerless without.

About this time the wife spies the visiting Menaechmus with her mantle and starts berating him loudly. When he disclaims all knowledge of her she calls her father and some servants to take him in custody, believing he has gone suddenly mad. This impression increases when, with the help of Messenio, Menaechmus spiritly resists. Finally the twin brothers are brought face to face but it never seems to occur to Menaechmus Sosicles that here is the twin he has been seeking. It is left for Messenio to unravel the tangle and thus win the gift of freedom. The comedy closes with plans for an auction of all the property of Menaechmus of Epidamnus, including his wife, that he may return with his brother to Syracuse.

## Shakespeare's Comedies:

**An extension of all that came before and more :**

- *Comedy of Errors*—from *Menaechmi* and use of twins but more complex with a double plot—*Twelfth Night*—even more complicated use of twins and psychological blocks, two worlds. *Tof S*, *MSND*, *Much Ado*—a little bit of everything....
- **Canadian critical theorist Northrop Frye** describes Shakespeare's use of the **two worlds of comedy: the Normal world and the Green World** (where much can happen), of the movement between these worlds: Frye associates this movement with "the old ritual pattern of the victory of summer over winter" and with "The death and revival of human beings".
- **What is important to note here is that the artist creates a world where many things can happen: all social restraints are removed; societal "shoulds" don't work any more.** One can be him/her self, can see what he/she was or pretended to be, and even laugh at self.
- **The normal individual can be freed from a humorous society, and a normal society is freed from the bonds imposed by humorous individuals.**
- **Usually people are in some kind of bondage (imposed by themselves or by society) THEY DO NOT KNOW THAT THEY ARE SLAVES TO PREDICTABLE, SELF-IMPOSED PATTERNS SOF BEHAVIOR.** The comedy brings out the ridiculousness of this **lack of self knowledge**. Shakespeare creates worlds and holds them up for comparison.

### Northrop Frye's Movement in Comedy

*Cognito scene*

A recognition takes place

A metamorphosis happens a reconciliation occurs

