

## **Black humor**

A dark, disturbing, and often morbid or grotesque mode of comedy found in certain modern texts, especially antinovels and Absurdist works. Such humor often concerns death, suffering, or other anxiety-inducing subjects. Black humor usually goes hand in hand with a pessimistic world-view or tone; it manages to express a sense of hopelessness in a wry, sardonic way that is grimly humorous.

EXAMPLES: Thomas Pynchon's *V* (1963), Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1961), and John Kennedy Toole's novel *A Confederacy of Dunces* (1980) contain a great deal of black humor. *Little Shop of Horrors*, originally a Roger Corman film that was made into a long-running musical and then remade as a movie (1986), contains many instances of black humor. Other contemporary films utilizing black humor include *Eating Raoul* (1982) and *Fargo* (1996). The writer and illustrator Edward Gorey consistently incorporates black humor into children's books; in *The Gashly'crumb Times* (1962), Gorey presents each letter of the alphabet via the name of a child who met an untimely death: "A is for Amy, who fell down the stairs. B is for Basil, assaulted by bears...."

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