

The Use of Humor to Help Promote Critical Thinking in a General Biology Classroom

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In an effort to promote critical thinking among general biology students, a series of cartoons were collected for each of the major topics covered in a general biology course. Cartoons were used as an attention-gathering device. One question and five multiple-choice answers for the question were written for each cartoon. The cartoon, question, and answers were all made into a transparency. The transparencies were projected, and the students were asked to identify an interpretation, a conclusion, an assumption, and/or an observation from the given answers. All analyses were based on the cartoon being used. An *interpretation* is defined as an explanation of a situation that is based on no data. By contrast, a *conclusion* is an explanation of a situation which is based on data. An *observation* is what can be experimentally measured, and an *assumption* is a belief based on no evidence. If the student is asked to identify a correct answer, he or she is also asked to explain why the one answer is correct and why the other answers are incorrect. According to Piagetian theory a concept is completed when a student can justify his or her answer.