Contents

Introduction	VIII
 1 The nature of humour • Principles of humour – Fun with words – Grammatical ambiguities 	1 3 5 7
TranspositionsMixing styles	, 8 9
 Language in context Dashing expectations Clever connections Logic, or lack thereof Satire, parody, irony, and sarcasm 	12 13 14 14 16
 2 What do people joke about? The cultural background Beliefs and attitudes Subject matter Insults 	22 22 26 30 44
Where humour is to be foundProfessional humourAmateur humour	48 49 50
 4 Laughs in the lexicon Compounds Blends Prefixes and suffixes Euphemism 	54 55 56 60 62

	Colourful languageNames	63 66
5	 Puns Basic puns Puns across word boundaries Puns involving phrases Cross-language puns Substituting a similar word 	68 68 77 77 79 80
6	 Grammatical ambiguities Which part of speech? Scope Participial clauses Co-ordination Missing subjects and objects Pronouns and other problems of reference 	81 82 85 87 88 89 90
7	Jokes Stories Books Book titles Shortest books Blonde jokes Cannibal jokes Dumb jokes Definitions Generalizations and exhortations Graffiti Headlines	95 96 99 99 100 100 102 103 105 105
	 Headlines How many x's does it take to change a light bulb? Knock knock! Oxymora and other self-contradictions Questions Signs Stickers Tom Swifties Wellerisms 	107 108 109 109 113 113 115 115

	What do you get if you cross x with y?What is the difference between x and y?	11 <i>7</i> 118
8	Wit	119
9	Language in context	126
10	 Errors Slips of the tongue and mispronunciation Accents and lisps Malapropisms Misinterpretations Misspellings Mispunctuation Grammar as she is spoke Logic or lack thereof 	131 134 136 139 143 146 148
11	Rhymes Nursery rhymes Children's verses Adult verses Limericks Clerihews Verse today	155 158 160 162 164 166
12	Beyond a joke	168
	Notes and sources	171
	References and further reading	174
	Index	177