Humor in *The Good Place*
How do you build up humor in comedies?

Brainstorm possible humor devices
The Good Place is a ‘fantasy comedy’

- Other types of comedy sub-genres are...
The Good Place is a fantasy comedy
Other types of comedy sub-genres are...

- sitcoms
- sketch comedy
- stand-up comedy
- parody (laughing at without condemning)
- satire (condemning)
- screwball comedy (bizarre, surprising - and improbable- situations or character)
- scatological humor

- political comedy
- black comedy
- Burlesque (literary, dramatic or musical work intended to cause laughter by caricaturing the manner or spirit of serious works, or by ludicrous treatment of their subjects)
- comedy of manners (takes as its subject a particular part of society - usually upper-class society- and uses humor to parody or satirize the behavior and mannerisms of its members)
- romantic comedy
Examples?

- sitcoms
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Humor devices

• Situational irony: it occurs when incongruity appears between expectations of something to happen, and what actually happens.

• Dramatic irony: when the situation in which the audience of a play knows something that the characters do not know.

• Irony: a state of affairs or an event that seems deliberately contrary to what one expects and is often wryly* amusing as a result.

• Slapstick: deliberately clumsy actions and humorously embarrassing events.

* ironically, dry humor
Humor devices: examples

• Situational irony: the whole Good/Bad Place concept with intruders.

• Dramatic irony: Tahani in relation to Jianyu, Michael in relation to Jianyu and Eleanor...

• Irony: Michael telling off Eleanor, Michael being a weak God...

• Slapstick: The storm in ep. 1, Chef Alice, people flying, colors choice, clowns and curtain’s music in Eleanor’s place...
Humor devices

- Wit: intelligent humor

- Sarcasm: Closely associated with irony. The term is often used to describe a kind of mean irony that is intended to hurt somebody.

- Satire: Witty attack on something somebody disapproves of. Usually meant as a critique of mankind's or society's vices, follies or shortcomings.

- Understatement: the presentation of something as being smaller or less good or important than it really is.
Humor devices: examples

• Wit: intelligent humor (not always successful in Michael and Chidi)

• Sarcasm: Trevor and people in The Bad Place.

• Satire: Kamilah’s character up to a extent, fake/bad Eleanor on Earth...

• Understatement: Trevor ‘What is it you said happened to you? The same thing that happens to half of all kids in America.’ → To undermine Eleanor’s traumatic childhood. (ep. 9)
Humor devices

• Hyperbole/Exaggeration

• Lack of knowledge

• Puns: play on words, wordplay

• Confusion
Humor devices: examples

• Hyperbole/Exaggeration: Chef Alice + Janet + Chidi + many of the celebrities mentioned

• Lack of knowledge: Eleanor, Jianyu

• Puns: Jianyu + Tahani –f.ex., impressionist, doughnut, lest we forget, keep calm, go nuts…

• Confusion: Fake vs Real Eleanor, Jianyu vs Jason Mendoza
Humor devices

• Misbehavior

• Sexual jokes

• Malapropism: the use of an incorrect word in place of a word with a similar sound, resulting in a nonsensical, sometimes humorous utterance

• Vulgar language
Humor devices: examples

• Misbehavior: Eleanor, Jianyu + people from The Bad Place
• Sexual jokes: Eleanor was ‘flattened by boner pill truck’, Eleanor banging with the barman, The Bad Place wondering how come while eating they don’t listen to hardcore porn in The Good Place.
• Malapropism (the use of an incorrect word in place of a word with a similar sound, resulting in a nonsensical, sometimes humorous utterance): Jianyu
• Vulgar language: Trevor goes ‘These horndogs are vibing like mofos’
  • Horn(y) + dog: horn dogs
  • Mo(ther) + fu(cker): mofo
Humor devices

• Parody: imitation of something where the aim is to poke fun at the original. Closely related to...

• Caricature/Stereotype: Exaggerated example of a specific type of character.

• Oxymoron (verbal opposites) & incongruity (situational).
Humor devices: examples

- **Parody**: decoration in Eleanor’s and Tahani’s house, the parties, most characters at some point...

- **Caricature/Stereotype**: all characters, but especially, Jianyu + Tahani + Kamilah + Chidi

- **Oxymoron (verbal) & incongruity (situational)**: Jianyu (defined as a “professional amateur DJ”) + Eleanor then and now
Humor devices

• Intertextuality: References that become winks.

• *Lazzi:* A short physical act of comedy; for instance, a short interlude of funny exaggerated violence, somebody falling, etc.

• *Pathos:* when a character is so emotional that it becomes laughable.

• Surprise: Being surprised is often funny. As a humorous device, surprise is related to incongruity.
Humor devices: examples

• Intertextuality: allusion to songs, to other TV shows, to food...

• *Lazzi*: Michael acting as a teen, Janet learning anew, Janet falling on the beach...

• *Pathos*: when a character is so emotional that it becomes laughable. (Tahani, Janet – for her lack of emotions)

• Surprise: ”Real” Eleanor’s appearance, Janet’s death on the beach with Jianyu’s appearance but Chidi being the one pressing the button.