

“Hey Man, That Ain’t Funny!”
By Jack Bloomfield

Characters

Jay Letterman - Talk Show Host

Kevin Schaeffer - Host’s sidekick

TV Studio Announcer

Male Audience Member #1

Female Audience Member #2

Male Audience Member #3

Female Audience Member #4

***** Synopsis*****

A TV talk show host whose nightly monologue normally has the audience howling runs into a different kind of audience on this particular night. As a matter of fact, this audience becomes so upset with his brand of humor, they begin a monologue of their own in a face off with the host himself.

MESSAGE FOCUS: *Is all humor OK? When does it cross the line? When can humor be considered inappropriate?*

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Opening scene is the stage and studio of a late night television talk show. The studio announcer (through a P.A. system) is opening the show with the introduction of Jay Letterman (Host) doing his nightly monologue. A music intro is to be playing in the background. Kevin, his sidekick is off to one side of the stage with a guitar and stand up microphone. Jay enters center stage after being introduced by announcer.

The four audience member characters are spread out among the audience in the first few rows of the auditorium.

Announcer:

“It’s the EARLYNIGHT SHOW with your host, Jay Letterman. Featuring Kevin Schaeffer and the EARLYNIGHT SHOW Band. Tonight Jay welcomes from the new hit motion picture “My Way or the Highway,” Tom Cruise. From the musical world, special guest Nelly, and from The Fox News network, Bill O’Reilly. And now
JAAAAAAAAAYYYYYYYY LEEETTERMAN.”

(Jay comes out to roaring applause from the audience. Have stage hand hold up APPLAUSE cue card for audience participation.)

Jay:

“Thank you very much. Greetings and welcome to the EARLYNIGHT SHOW! It’s going to be a great show tonight. (looks over at his sidekick) Kevin, always nice to see you. How’s it going tonight?”

Kevin:

“Wow Jay, I’m really excited about tonight’s show. We’ve got some great guests tonight don’t you agree?”

Jay:

(looks back at audience) We have some exceptional guests tonight that are guaranteed to entertain you. (monologue begins) So let’s take a look at what’s happening in the news.”

“I turned on the TV today and saw a bunch of kids looking at a huge tote board with millions of dollars on it. At first I thought it was the sub totals for the Jerry Lewis Telethon. I found out though that it was just all the children Michael Jackson has paid off.
(pause before starting next joke)

(Jay Continuing)

This past Friday night on Dateline, the county sheriff claims there was a 2nd boy molested by Michael Jackson which was found out that Michael paid the family 2 million dollars. You know what that means? Not only did he molest the first boy, he cheated on him too.
(pause before starting next joke)

(Jay continuing)

Michael’s brother Jermaine claims”.... (audience member # 1 cuts Jay off as he starts another joke)

Audience member #1:

(stand’s up at the end of the joke and yells out) “Hey Jay, I don’t find your brand of humor very funny. Doesn’t the Michael Jackson case you are joking about involve young children who have allegedly been molested? Do you know any children personally that have been molested? There is nothing funny about it.”

Jay:

“OK, OK, I’m sorry. Maybe that is a little inappropriate. Oh well, in other news this week, the war in Iraq”

Audience member #2:

(briskly stands up and is visibly angry) “You’re doing it again man. How can you joke about the war in Iraq or any war for that matter? My son is serving in Iraq and we have not heard from him in over two weeks. Would you be joking about the war if your son was over there? You’re really getting me angry. Wise up my friend.

Jay:

“I never really thought about it that way. I’m very sorry and I’ll use better judgment from now on. So back to the headlines, Kobe Bryant’s attorney reported today that he’s now not sure if the timeline of the accusations matches.....

Audience member #3:

(Runs out into the aisle and up to the stage a few feet from Jay noticeably upset. Cuts Jay off right before he gets to the “punch line”) “You’re really pushing it now.”

Jay:

“What are you talking about?”

Audience Member #3

“Are you that stupid that you are going to joke about a man that is on trial for allegedly raping a woman? I thought you were going to let it go.

Jay:

“Just what are getting at?”

Audience Member #3

“Do you realize the pain and suffering that victims of rape go through? Are you aware of the damage that is caused from this all across the globe? Did you ever think that quite possibly some people right here in your audience have been a victim themselves? Please tell me if there is anything funny about a woman being raped. Is it possible that you live in such a protected world that you aren’t aware of what you’re doing?”

Jay:

“Hey, I make my living making people laugh.”

Audience member #4:

(Walks up and joins #3 at the foot of the stage.) “I’m sitting here listening to the jokes you’re telling one after another and am realizing that you a lot of your success is attributed to joking about the hardships of many people. The majority of your routine is telling jokes about very tragic life situations that people are experiencing on a daily basis. I wouldn’t call what you do talent. I would call it pretty pathetic. I suppose you think because your audience is laughing that it’s all about fun? What gives you the right to tear away at the dignity of human life by joking about their tragedy?”

Jay:

“Come on. Give me a break. It’s all done in fun.”

Audience member #3:

“Is that what you think? You and your nightly routine are one of the reasons that people often don’t respect one another in our society? Many people follow your lead in every day life and tell jokes about people who are gay, black, Jewish, overweight, and many other groups. Because of your exposure, you have a lot of influence on society and as of now, we all agree your doing a really bad job. You tear away at human dignity with your brand of humor and I think it’s time you woke up and either change your style of humor or find a new profession. Let’s get out of here.(audience members 1,2,3,& 4 and the folks they came with all turn around and exit the auditorium saying they have had enough.)

(Jay is standing on stage kind of shell shocked and stunned that his entire monologue was interrupted after every joke. He looks over at his sidekick and starts a dialogue.)

Jay:

“Wow man, those folks just rocked me. I didn’t realize it but almost all of my jokes are aimed at people who are in very tragic situations and are going through tremendous hardships. They’re right.”

Kevin:

“I wonder why it has never hit us until tonight?”

Jay:

“I guess cause nobody has ever stood up and spoke out before. I figured that each night, the audience has always been laughing at my jokes so it must be ok. Now that I’m thinking about it, why do people laugh at jokes that are about people’s tragedies and hardships?”

Kevin:

“I don’t know man. I guess if people don’t speak out, everyone thinks it’s cool.

Jay:

Should those folks that brought it to my attention be upset with me or with the audience that is laughing? Anyway Kevin, would you be willing to help me work on some new material? I realized tonight it’s probably time to make some changes.....

Fade to Black.....

THE END

Dialogue and Questions:

Why do we, the audience, laugh at inappropriate humor or at humor that degrades or tears down a human being or group of human beings?

Is all humor OK?

Do you find it hard to cut someone off who has started to tell a joke that you don’t feel comfortable with?

What are the groups that most jokes are aimed at?

How does inappropriate humor harm people?

Where do you draw the line with the jokes you tell or the ones you’ll laugh at?

Who are some of the other people/celebrities that have gone through hardships that shouldn’t be joked about? (O.J. Simpson, Bill Clinton, Robert Packwood, Catholic Priests, Monica Lewinsky....)

Why do topics such as the massacre at Columbine High School, the hurricane in New Orleans, the tsunami in Southeast Asia or the tragedy of 9-11 seem to be off limits for joke telling while other tragic topics seem to be OK?