“U.S.A.!’ and ‘We’re number one!’ it is my favorite combination in comedy: ‘arrogance-ignorance’...”

How to Write Like Sarah Silverman



Conversation as a Concept

Sarah Silverman Tackles Trump | The New Yorker Festival

Silverman has really gotten good at turning comedy into a conversation. The audience can change it’s emotion and it’s perception of what is going on in an instant. When you launch into a story: *“I remember dating this guy. He was the first guy I ever dated who lived in a house. And one morning he went outside and he was hoisting up the American Flag on a flagpole. And it scared me.”* In the instant that you tell this story and the audience sees the pictures. They forget

that you are doing jokes. Then, when you start describing another part of the story the audience forgets again.

Why is that Important?

When they forget that this story is supposed to be funny, when you get to the part that is designed to get the laugh, the surprise that occurs is bigger, because for that previous instant it was just a story.

Storytelling is About Tension and Release

Sarah Silverman is an excellent storyteller. Listen to how she takes her time in this clip. Really uses the story and the building of tension to bring the audience to a big release laugh.

Sarah Silverman's Sister Hates This Joke

Silverman's Approach to Comedy

Early in Sarah Silverman's career, she was more of a joke and bit teller. She seemed to be on this trip to tell rape jokes. She wanted to be daring and was part of that old school comedian's club where daring or shocking subject matter was in. Let's take a look at this clip from Comic Relief.

Comic Relief 2006 - Sarah Silverman

> Wow look at these houses. These houses are made in New Orleans I am so excited to be here and so excited to be a part of this.
>
> I am such a charitable person I constantly am giving and you know completely anonymously…
>
> And my skin is so thin you know…just my heart… I see these CARE commercials on television with the the kids with the big bellies and the flies buzzing around their heads and these are one and two year old babies, you know nine months pregnant and it breaks my heart. Thank You. And I don't give money because I don't want them to (WHISPER) spend it on drugs.

But But I give you know, in my way I give.

I sent this past summer 15 Really fun cowl neck sweaters to this village in Africa. In just really fun colors and expecting nothing by the way. They sent me--here I go. They sent me a postcard thanking me and it said thank you and that there were enough sweaters for every member of the village to get one and that they were delicious.

That's why I do that.

I take birth control pills because I do a lot of fucking. Thank you.

I take it to regulate my menstrual cycle and because I do a lot of fucking, but it's so it's so Harmonish you know like I want some other kind of birth control some other kind of contraception, so I'm always asking my friends what they use.

Like I always ask. Like I asked my friend Charlie what he and his wife use for birth control. And he said they Oh he just comes on her face. So we're gonna try that.

I don't want to have a baby I think I just I don't want like natural childbirth. I don't know what the technical word is but like are like vagina babies. I think it is. I just my genes are poisoned. And I know that for a fact my sister Laura is kind of like the the family historian you know, and she found out were Russian and Polish you know, Jews. She found out that the village that our great great great grandmother came from and Russia was raped and pillaged by an I don't even know it pillage means but definitely raped by Mongolians

by Mongols. So I'm I am part Mongolian rapist and I will be totally honest with you. I love it.

I just feel like it gives me street cred or something like it's so and I also feel like even back then. Even while my my great great great grandmother was being raped even then I think she knew you know this is it's gonna be funny someday. Yes, not No. Yes.

I'm gonna adopt. I do. I'm crazy about kids. And I'm definitely going to adopt I'm definitely going to adopt from China. Definitely a boy from China because I don't know I heard like somebody. Somebody told me the girls they're like useless or something.

You know what I love off the subject. I love how Palestinians and Jews hate each other. It tickles me because honestly what's the difference? They're Brown and pushy. It's like sweet potatoes hating yams. I guess it's like animal instinct or something. I don't know. Like birds eat eggs.

That's weird you know what I mean? I don't blame them because eggs are awesome, but they must be like, Oh God, I can't believe this came out of my pussy. So let's wrap this up. My point is that whether you're black or white or Asian, we're all the same, but well, but just those three. We're all the same. I'm not racist. I don't care if you think I'm racist as long as you think of a thin racist. Thank you. I went out with a Mexican guy. I don't think racist people go out

with Mexican guys. No, they're filthy. But I just want to say and I'm wrapping it up. It's just stupid jokes. And you know, this woman came up to me after the show and she was so angry and she was Mexican and I had done that ”Mexicans are filthy” joke and I think I think I said something about like blowing a Mexican and having diarrhea for a week or something…

she was she was so angry and she was like, “I'm Mexican. And guess what? I don't stink.” And it just it broke my heart like I had to explain to her that like, you know, you can't smell yourself.

Sarah Silverman evolved into more of a story teller. She’s all about telling stories. She takes that approach of just telling the story and letting the audience tell her where the laughs are coming from. It’s not my kind of approach to comedy, because I like to take the story and go back through the story and apply various techniques to the story to add humor.

Sarah Silverman Nearly Died Telling This Great Joke | Netflix Is A Joke

I almost died this summer. I really almost died this summer.

I was on the road had a shitty sore throat didn't think much about it kind of turned into a cold, that kind of thing.

Then I came home and I got that same sore throat again. So you know, I'm home and I go to the doctor, which I never do. So I went to the doctor, and he made me wait like a long time and I was gonna go like, Fuck this, but I stayed. He looks down my throat and he's like, we're going in the emergency room right now. I had a like an abscess at the top of my windpipe, which is where your breathing comes from.

So I'm like this abscess was either gonna grow another millimeter and stop my breathing and I would die or it was gonna explode and it's filled with poison and that would kill me.

Don't be scared. It's not gonna It's really rare. It's not going to happen to you unless it does. So I had to go to hospital.

And then um, they put me under like a general anesthesia like some sort of drug just to chill me out before surgery and like unbeknownst to me, they're telling my friend Amy and my boyfriend Michael. They're like, um, this is a very dangerous surgery. She might not make it.

You know, it's risky, blah, blah, blah. Meanwhile, I feel fine. And I'm just like, I'm not high enough. I was complaining that I wasn't high enough. And I can tell you exactly what



happened because Amy had the utter distaste to record this whole thing. You just see me going like I'm not high enough and then they're like, you're okay and then I proved to them that I wasn't high enough by explaining Brexit.

And I it was very nuanced and I had opinions and it was like really perfect. Like, you can hear the anesthesiologist go like wow she's right on. And then you see me like getting wheeled out and then like, Michael and Amy couldn't come with me like past the operating room doors or whatever.

So I like as I'm leaving. I said to Michael, which is something we like to do like if the elevator doors are closing or something like “I want to see other people” and then the last thing you see on the video is me looking at her into her phone and going like “play this in slow motion on my death reel.”

So so then I had this surgery and I lived and but it was really it was a rough week because I have very low blood pressure I guess and so they couldn't put me to sleep for it.

And so there I had to have once the surgery was done, they put a breathing tube down my throat. And then because it's human nature, if you're awake to pull something that's in your throat out, they had to tie my hands down. So every time I would wake up, I would go to pull this thing out of my throat and then I would see that my hands were tied down. And then I just thought about what anyone would think in that situation. Which is: *I've been captured by ISIS*.

And it was so scary and then like a sister would have to come to my side and be like, Sweetie, you're okay you just had surgery. They have to have your hand you know, and then I would understand, and then I would fall asleep and like a minute later I would wake up and the whole thing would happen again. And it was really scary. It was a nightmare. I don't remember like I was awake but I don't remember anything and there were a few funny stories like I would be really itchy.

The medicine that was in me was so itchy but my hands were tied down and my sisters would fight with the nurses to just let one hand free so I could scratch so they finally did. And it was like I had an itch like just the vagina Jewson and I it felt it was like so much relief. And then my friend John was standing in the corner and I guess I don't remember this. I was told this I pulled my hand out and then I like served it and then another time like my hands were tied down.

And then he was like, (ACT-OUT of him whiffing the scent) in my mind, I don't remember.

Oh, another time. I was told a nurse was in the room and I somehow like even though I had no mouth or hands, but I like made it clear to her like it was an emergency. I did tell her something and they had given me like paper and a pencil. And I'm writing and it's like so

important. And I finally finished and then I show it to her and she looks and it just says do you live with your mother? With a picture of a dick.

And I mean it's really proof that once your conscious mind is out of the way it's just like sheer comic genius.

1. Is there a reverse? Is there an expectation, imagery or an assumption I can shatter?
2. Are there two dissimilar ideas converging
3. Double-entendres (Wordplay)
4. Drop-in a Cliche reformation.
5. Add an analogy (Is-Like)
6. Inconsistencies in policy, persona, ethics, etc.

Can you Identify Her Techniques?

Asides.
Is she missing opportunities?

Ability to Relax and Just Tell the Story vs. Leaving Ink on the Table

There's so much to learn from Sarah Silverman about taking your time to just tell the story. However, I do think she gets a little lazy in the area of the jokes. She's letting the story go wherever it goes, but doesn't go back and use technique to further develop the jokes. She leaves a lot of ink on the table.

Taking on Difficult Subject Matter

Silverman talks about Christianity, separation of Church and State and Scientology

Sarah Silverman - Religion is Crazy

You know, nothing seems crazy when you're used to it. There's so much crazy shit everywhere. We're used to it and everything seems crazy when you're not used to it.

That's why so many comics make fun of Scientology, right? Because like, well, because it's a batshit crazy religion, but it's no more batshit crazy than like, every single religion. It's just new. You know?

Christianity is super old, but it's fucking crazy. I mean, it's you're born a sinner. By being born, you're a sinner, and you're going to hell. But you can just apologize and then you can go to heaven. If you're a murderer… same thing, it's just apologize, go to heaven.

You can be Hitler and go to confession and say Forgive me father, I killed 6 million Jews and the priesthood just be like, no problems say 10 'Heil Marys,' and Hitler goes to heaven. Hitler goes to heaven. Is the name of my band.

Scientology is weird because it's new. It feels weird in our ear holes to hear people worshiping a guy named Ron. We know Ron's in our life. He had to change his name to L Ron because there was another Ron Hubbard in the Writers Guild. That's how recent a religion it is.

And people who follow their religion to the letter of the law are just silly. I mean, I want to tell Hasidic Jews, 'I promise you God will not mind if you wear a nice cotton blend in the summer.' You're being fucking ridiculous!

But we live in the greatest country in the world, a country where we have freedom of religion and separation of church and state. Only we don't do at all, and nobody says anything because we're used to it. It says In God We Trust on our money. It says In God We Trust above the judges bench in a courtroom in a court of law where you have to put your hand on a Bible. The Christian Bible is not my Bible. I mean, if I tell the truth, it's because I tell the truth. Not because I put my hand on a book and made a wish. fucking crazy. That's craziness.

How I might dig deeper into this subject:

One of the things Silverman mentions is Scientology. (INVESTIGATE the inconsistencies)
Scientology had to sue to become recognized in the U.S. as a religion. In Germany, it's called an anti-constitutional sect, and the French call it a dangerous cult.
Scientology is not even a science.
Biology: The scientific study of living organisms
Cardiology: The scientific study of the heart
Proctology: The scientific study of assholes.
So the joke might be something like: "It's not even a real science. It would be more accurate if they called it proctology, the scientific study of assholes."



Your Assignment:

Punch-up Consultant
With each of these bits that are transcribed. Consider taking each sentence and coming up with jokes or laughs points to punch up those routines.

Use the steps listed earlier:

1. Is there a reverse? Is there an expectation, imagery or an assumption I can shatter?
2. Are there two dissimilar ideas converging
3. Double-entendres (Wordplay)
4. Drop-in a Cliche reformation.
5. Add an analogy (Is-Like)
6. Look for Inconsistencies in policy, persona, ethics, etc.