

# Monty Python and the Holy Grail



Much of the humor in Monty Python and the Holy Grail derives from the pure absurdity of its characters and situations. King Arthur roams the British countryside on an imaginary horse, evil enemies can only be appeased with offerings of shrubbery, and the knights of the Round Table battle a bloodthirsty killer bunny, to cite just a few examples. The movie contains a great deal of such explicit comedy, but much of its humor works on a more subtle level, plot and dialogue shrewdly satirizing the unjustness of such Arthurian conventions as autocracy, severe social class distinctions, and vainglorious codes of chivalry.

There are many examples of parody throughout Monty Python and the Holy Grail. In fact, the whole movie itself is a parody. In "Holy Grail" the group unleashes its comic satire upon their homeland of Britain and its greatest legend, King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. The narrative is centered around Arthur's divinely ordained quest for the Holy Grail, and the exploits of his most trusted knights in its pursuit. Contained amidst the off the wall comedy and timeless absurdity, are very real satirical insights into the medieval way of life for every social distinction and the two most powerful forces of the age, the Church and monarchy. From peasants wallowing in the mud to the mighty company of Arthur's knights, the people of England are represented wholly.

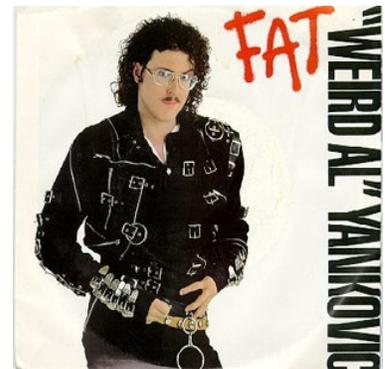
Monty Python is considered *both* parody and satire.

A **parody** imitates another work to make fun of it or to ridicule it. Synonyms include caricature, travesty, skit, satire, farce, and spoof. *Parodies are not done to be serious; instead they are for laughs.* The original work is not damaged by the parody, but is just used for comedy. An example of parody is the work of Weird Al, where he changes words around in famous songs for amusement. A **satire** attempts to make a point when it imitates another



work. *It uses humor to influence people's opinions or to try and change something.* Satire is usually funny or at least clever; but, its main

objective is to criticize something or someone. Satire may criticize the attitudes of people or an industry in general. An example of political satire would be the works of Stephen Colbert, where the intent is to point out certain things that are wrong or need to be changed.

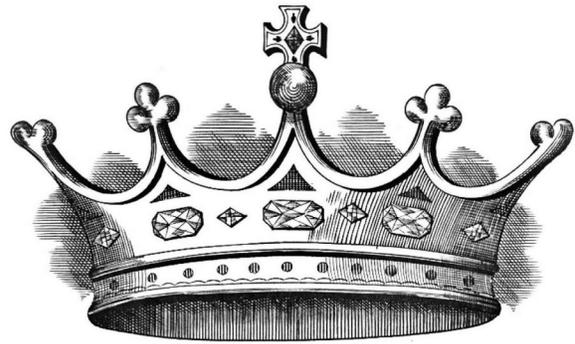


Thus, while both parody and satire imitate and/or make fun of another work, like a play, piece of literature, movie, or song, there are some differences. Both of them are humorous; the main difference is the intent of the imitation. A parody is done for fun and entertainment whereas a satire may be entertaining, but makes a point.

# Examples of Parody/Satire found in the movie clips!

## Chivalry/Heroism

In the Middle Ages the Knight (esp. the legendary Arthurian Knights) were deemed to represent the height of chivalry (a knight's code of honor and conduct) and heroism. How does the movie mock this idealistic, yet archaic belief?



## Government

Near the opening of the film, King Arthur comes into contact with a peasant couple who have some ideas about government that are not to his taste. What is the satiric comedy found in this scene with Arthur and the peasant Dennis?

