

## Doing the "Right Thing": Comedy and Political Satire in Grade 8

*Jamie Highfill*

To be culturally literate is to possess the basic information needed to thrive in the modern world. The breadth of that information is great, extending over the major domains of human activity from sports to science. It is by no means confined to "culture" narrowly understood as an acquaintance with the arts. Nor is it confined to one social class. Quite the contrary. Cultural literacy constitutes the only sure avenue of opportunity for disadvantaged children, the only reliable way of combating the social determinism that now condemns them to remain in the same social and educational condition as their parents. That children from poor and illiterate homes tend to remain poor and illiterate is an unacceptable failure of our schools, one which has occurred not because our teachers are inept but chiefly because they are compelled to teach a fragmented curriculum based on faulty educational theories.<sup>1</sup>

—E. D. Hirsch

It is widely accepted that schools across America are failing our children, and teachers as easy scapegoats are consistently blamed for students' mediocre achievement. Arkansas's schools are no exception. Arkansas, like many other states, does not have a set curriculum for each grade level. Rather, it has standards that are touted as a curriculum. In fact, the standards in the English language arts are language arts skill sets posing as a curriculum in something called a curriculum framework. This essay describes the literature curriculum I developed for grade 8 students