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What's the difference between a crow? Both legs are the same length, especially the right one!" – and kids are set off to two hours of laughter about this nonsense joke.

A study stating that children laugh 400 times a day (i. e. 25 times more often than adults) has unfortunately turned out to be a scientific "hoax." But the tendency is indeed substantiated by research into humour: Children love to laugh a lot, often about things that do not even raise a wry grin from adults. They love funny sounds, language games and the small misfortunes that happen to others (Lyon, Kotthoff, Neuß). Humour is constructed on different levels: in little details, in the plot, the character or on the level of a single action (Schlote, Groß).

Producers know: Humour enhances a programme's attractiveness, makes educational programmes more interesting and often can serve as a way to tackle even difficult issues (e. g. Kleeman, Cahn, Arriaga).

But do children actually find such programmes funny? Reception studies reveal that children sometimes have a good laugh about some parts of a programme, but find other parts included by adult editors not to be funny at all. A recent intercultural comparative study found that there are a lot of similarities, but also culturally based differences. Further, differences are not just in the understanding of words, symbols or familiarity with the format; everyday life experiences mean, for example, that South African children will find it less funny than children in other countries when food is wasted or things of value are destroyed (Götz et al.).

Nevertheless, there are in fact some things all children find attractive, and this is exactly the form of concrete humour to which producers do not always attribute importance (Gollner).

In professional work for children it is necessary to perceive these sometimes subtle differences and seek to understand their forms of humour. For adults this is an entertaining challenge and a genuine source of enrichment. As Charlie Chaplin put it once:

Laugh and the world laughs with you.