

Irony

Irony is a rhetorical device by which a writer expresses meaning contradictory to the stated one. He may make it clear that the meaning he intends is the opposite of his literal one, or he may construct a discrepancy between an expectation and its fulfillment or between the appearance of a situation and the reality that underlies it. Irony is a form of speech in which the real meaning is concealed or contradicted by the words used. Irony involves the perception that things are not what they are said to be or what they seem. Irony is, therefore, a matter of perceived and real attitude or values of the speaker, rather than a difference between the denotative meanings of the words a speaker uses.

- a. **Situational Irony** -incongruity or discrepancy between what exists and what should exist
Examples of ironic incidents might involve the eviction of a landlord from his home, or the death of a priest killed by a falling cross.
- b. **Verbal Irony** - incongruity between what is said and what is meant
An example of verbal irony might be a response such as “Well done” or “Great job”, said in an angry tone to a worker who has done something wrong.
- c. **Dramatic Irony** - a situation in which the reader shares with the author knowledge of present or future circumstances of which a character is ignorant

Heavy-handed irony, in which a speaker emphatically states the flat opposite of the truth - perhaps with accompanying body language to deny the words - exemplifies the form of irony called sarcasm. People may particularly employ sarcasm for the purpose of ridicule, mockery or contempt, frequently uttering a sarcastic phrase. When used in literature, sarcasm is often referred to as verbal irony.

The expression “irony of fate” stems from the notion that the gods (or the Fates) are amusing themselves by toying with the minds of mortals, with deliberate ironic intent. For example:

Ludwig van Beethoven’s loss of hearing;

The rain that sets in immediately after one finishes watering one’s garden, following many days of putting off watering in anticipation of rain.

Situations resembling poetic justice, but lacking the aspect of justice, may also be ascribed to the irony of fate.