

Literary Terms #10 – Irony

I. Irony - is a figure of speech which is a contradiction between what is expected and what actually occurs. Irony involves a contrast between appearance and actual reality.

A. There are 3 main forms of irony:

1. Verbal irony is the use of words to mean something different from what a person actually says.

Examples of verbal irony include:

“Thanks for the ticket officer you just made my day!”

A mother tells her son she enjoyed watching that horror movie "about as much as a root canal."

“I can’t wait to read the seven-hundred-page report.”

a. Verbal Irony and Sarcasm - Most of the time, sarcasm and verbal irony are used interchangeably. There is however a clear distinction between the two. In most cases, sarcasm is used to insult or to cause harm.

b. A statement like “Great, someone stained my new dress.” is ironic, while “You call this a work of art?” is sarcastic.

c. While verbal irony implies a different meaning to what is actually said, sarcasm is mainly used as a sharp and direct utterance designed to cause pain.

2. Dramatic Irony - Occurs when the audience is aware of something that the characters in the story are not aware of.

Example: If you're watching a movie about the Titanic and a character leaning on the balcony right before the ship hits the iceberg says, "It's so beautiful I could just die,"

3. Situational Irony - It involves a difference between what is expected to happen and what actually happens.

- a. Situational irony occurs when the exact opposite of what is meant to happen, happens.

Example: A fire station burning down, or someone posting on Twitter that social media is a waste of time.