

Where the word irony comes from

- In classical Greek comedy, there was sometimes a character called the *eiron* -- a dissembler: someone who deliberately pretended to be less intelligent than he really was, and often spoke using understatement.
- The word *irony* is nowadays used in several slightly different ways, but they nearly all retain the idea of dissimulation, or a discrepancy between what is said and what is really the case or between what is expected and what really happens.

Verbal irony

- Sometimes known as linguistic irony, it is the use of words to convey something other than, and especially the opposite of the literal meaning of the words, to emphasize, aggrandize, or make light of a subject.
- Contains the explicit or apparent meaning and a second, often mocking, meaning running counter to the first.
- Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) opens with the words, "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife". Here, the explicit meaning is undermined by the suggestion that single women want a rich husband.

Socratic Irony

- Socratic Irony is when a person pretends to be ignorant of something or someone in order to expose the weakness of another's position.
- Utilized in a debate or argument, one party may feign a lack of knowledge about a topic and thus will make the other party explain his/her position in great detail.
- It is in explaining the topic, that hopefully the person will expose the fallacy or weakness in the position.
- This takes its name from the ancient Greek writer Socrates, who often in his philosophic dialogues takes the part of the *eiron* and asks apparently foolish questions which actually move the debate in the direction he wants.

Structural irony

- Structural irony is built into texts in such a way that both the surface meaning and deeper implications are present more or less throughout.
- One of the most common ways of achieving structural irony is through the use of a *naïve hero* or *naïve narrator*, whose simple and straightforward comments are at variance with the reader's interpretation.
- This depends for its success on the reader understanding the author's intention and perceiving an authorial presence behind the *naïve persona*.
- Swift's satire *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) is narrated by the gullible Gulliver, who finishes up trying to behave like a horse because he's been convinced horses are superior to men.

Dramatic Irony

- Also known as Tragic Irony, is employed to heighten the suspense in a given situation.
- Dramatic irony derives, again, from classical Greek literature/theatre. It refers to a situation in which the audience has knowledge denied to one or more of the characters on stage.
- The character speaking may realize the irony of his words while the rest of the actors may not; or he or she may be unconscious while the other actors share the knowledge with the spectators; or the audience may alone realize the irony.
- A perfect example is in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, when Romeo commits suicide when he believes Juliet to be dead.



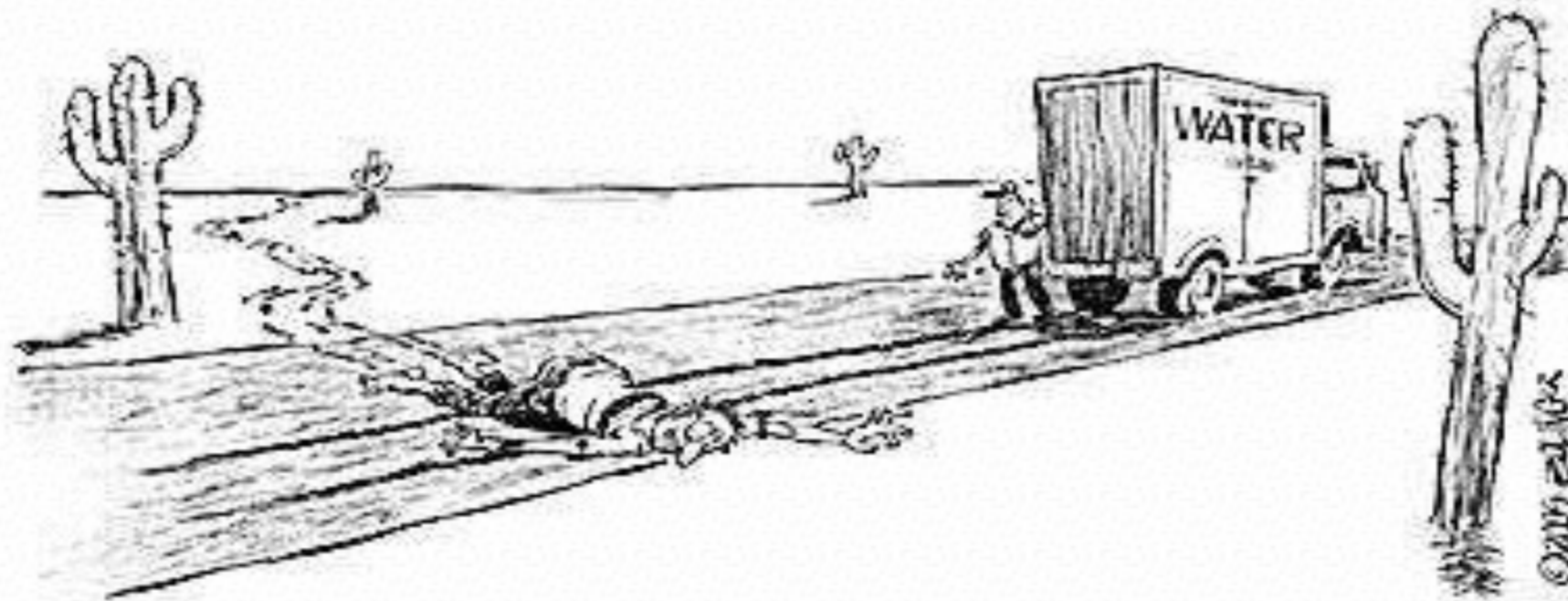
Cosmic irony

- This refers to writing in which life, or God, or fate, or some other powerful force seems to be manipulating events in a way that mocks all the efforts of the protagonist.
- A famous example is Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) in which the protagonist, largely through innocence in a world which is hostile to her, loses her virginity, her happiness and ultimately her life. Hardy's final comment on his character is that "The President of the Immortals...had ended his sport with Tess".

Situational Irony

- Situational irony results from recognizing the oddness or unfairness of a given situation, be it positive or negative.
- Even though a person typically cannot justifiably explain this unfairness logically, the coincidental nature of the situation is still very obvious to those evaluating it.
- The sense of being "unfair" or "unfortunate" is a trademark of situational irony.
- The unusual nature of the circumstances is obvious to everyone and yet, they are not wholly clear when you try to explicate them.

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Satire

- Usually strictly defined as a literary genre or form; although in practice it is also found in the graphic and performing arts.
- In satire, human or individual vices, follies, abuses, or shortcomings are highlighted and emphasized, ideally with the intent to bring about improvement.
- Although satire is usually meant to be funny, the purpose of satire is not primarily humor in itself so much as an attack on something of which the author strongly disapproves, using the weapon of wit.

Methods of Satire

- A very common, almost defining feature of satire is its strong element of irony or sarcasm.
- Exaggeration/hyperbole, juxtaposition, comparison, analogy, as well as the following methods are all frequently used in satirical speech and writing.

Methods of Satire

- parody-literary or artistic work that mimics in an absurd or ridiculous way the conventions and style of another work.
- burlesque-Literary work, film, or stage production that mocks a person, a place, a thing, or an idea by using wit, irony, hyperbole, sarcasm, and/or understatement. For example, a burlesque may turn a supposedly distinguished person into a buffoon or a supposedly lofty subject into a trivial one.
- double entendre-a word or expression capable of two interpretations with one usually risqué
- ridicule-words intended to belittle a person or idea and arouse contemptuous laughter.

Satire

HORATIAN SATIRE. In general, a gentler, more good humored and sympathetic kind of satire, somewhat tolerant of human folly even while laughing at it.

Named after the poet Horace, whose satire epitomized it. Horatian satire tends to ridicule human folly in general or by type rather than attack specific persons.

Satire

- **JUVENALIAN SATIRE**. Harsher, more pointed, perhaps intolerant satire typified by the writings of Juvenal.
- Juvenalian satire often attacks particular people, sometimes thinly disguised as fictional characters.
- While laughter and ridicule are still weapons as with Horatian satire, the Juvenalian satirist also uses harsh and hurtful diction and a slashing attack.