

English 2

IRONY, SARCASM, SATIRE

Irony: the discrepancy between what is said and what is meant, what is said and what is done, what is expected or intended and what happens, what is meant or said and what others understand, or two or more incongruous objects, actions, persons juxtaposed. Sometimes irony is classified into types:

- in **situational irony**, expectations aroused by a situation are reversed;
- in **cosmic irony** or **the irony of fate**, misfortune is the result of fate, chance or God;
- in **dramatic irony**, the audience knows more than the characters, so that words and action have additional meaning;
- **Socratic irony** is named after Socrates' teaching method, whereby he assumes ignorance and openness to opposing points of view which turn out to be foolish.

Irony is often confused with sarcasm and satire.

- **Sarcasm** is praise which is really an insult; sarcasm generally involves malice, the desire to put someone down, e.g., "This is my brilliant son, who failed out of college."
- **Satire** is the exposure of the vices or follies of an individual, a group, an institution, an idea, a society, etc., usually with a view to correcting it. Satirists frequently use irony.

Life is filled with ironies, as in the following "true news stories."

1. The average cost of rehabilitating a seal after the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska was \$80,000. At a special ceremony, two of the most expensively saved animals were released back into the wild amid cheers and applause from onlookers. A minute later they were both eaten by a killer whale.
2. A psychology student in New York rented out her spare room to a carpenter in order to nag him constantly and study his reactions. After weeks of needling, he snapped and beat her repeatedly with an axe, leaving her mentally retarded.
3. In 1992, Frank Perkins of Los Angeles made an attempt on the world flagpole-sitting record. Suffering from the flu, he came down eight hours short of the 400-day record, to find that his sponsor had gone bust, his girlfriend had left him and his phone and electricity had been cut off.
4. A woman came home to find her husband in the kitchen, shaking frantically with what looked like a wire running from his waist towards the electric kettle. Intending to jolt him away from the deadly current she whacked him with a handy plank of wood by the back door, breaking his arm in two places. Till that moment he had been happily listening to his Walkman.
5. Two animal rights protesters were protesting at the cruelty of sending pigs to a slaughterhouse in Bonn. Suddenly the pigs, all two thousand of them, escaped through a broken fence and stampeded, trampling the two hapless protesters to death.
6. Iraqi terrorist Khay Rahnajet didn't pay enough postage on a letter bomb. It came back with "return to sender" stamped on it. Forgetting it was the bomb, he opened it and was blown to bits.