Beginnings and irony

Beginnings

David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction, pp.3-8*

Read the article and answer the following questions.

1. According to Lodge, when does a novel begin? (p.4)
2. Now list nine different ways of beginning a novel (pp.7-8).

Montgomery et al. *Ways of Reading*

3. Montgomery et al. call the beginnings of novels *entry strategies*. List four entry strategies mentioned on page 51.
4. Read the first paragraph of the text you are studying. Which of Lodge’s or Montgomery et al.’s strategies are used? Or has another strategy, not yet discussed, been used?

Irony

Montgomery et al. quote the first paragraph of *Pride and Prejudice* on page 27 of the *Critical Anthology*. Look at pages 27 and 28 and find the answers to the following questions.

1. What is their definition of verbal irony?
2. What are the two component parts of verbal irony?
3. With irony, does the writer believe that the proposition is true?
4. In the first paragraph of the novel, what are the two propositions?
5. Does Austen believe these propositions?
6. How do we know?

David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction, p.14*

7. Lodge also discusses irony. What is his definition?
8. He also quotes the opening sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*. How, he claims, is the reader alerted to the fact that the statement is ironic?
9. Therefore, what is the ironic sentence a comment on?
10. Therefore how would you, the reader, summarise the main theme of the novel?
Beginnings and irony

Answers

Beginnings

David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction, pp.3-8*

Read the article and answer the following questions.

1. According to Lodge, when does a novel begin? (p.4)

   Range of options but no definitive answer – when does an embryo become a person? With preliminary work? When ‘brooding’ on the novel? With the opening sentence?

2. Now list nine different ways of beginning a novel (pp.7-8):
   - Description of physical setting of story
   - In the middle of a conversation
   - With the author introducing him/herself
   - With a rude gesture at literary tradition
   - With a philosophical reflection
   - By pitching character into extreme jeopardy
   - With a ‘frame-story’, explaining how the novel was discovered
   - With a witty pastiche (intentionally imitates another piece of writing, often to ridicule or satirise)
   - In the middle of a sentence

Montgomery et al. *Ways of Reading*

3. Montgomery et al. call the beginnings of novels *entry strategies*. List four entry strategies mentioned on page 51.
   - Title of the narrative
   - Epigraph (quotation from elsewhere)
   - ‘Abstract’ (summary of what is to come)
   - Orientation (introduction of place and/or character)
Beginnings and irony

Ironic

Montgomery et al. quote the first paragraph of *Pride and Prejudice* on p. 27 of the *Critical Anthology*. Look at pp. 27 and 28 and find the answers to the following questions.

1. **What is their definition of verbal irony?**
   ‘where we do not mean what we literally say; instead we imply an attitude of disbelief towards the content of our utterance or writing’

2. **What are the two component parts of verbal irony?**
   a) a proposition
   b) an attitude towards that proposition

3. **With irony, does the writer believe that the proposition is true?**
   No

4. **In the first paragraph of the novel, what are the two propositions?**
   a) ‘a single man in possession of good fortune must be in want of a wife’
   b) ‘It is a truth universally acknowledged …’

5. **Does Austen believe these propositions?**
   No

6. **How do we know this?**
   Both propositions are exaggerated.

**David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction, p.14***

1. **Lodge also discusses irony. What is his definition?**
   ‘saying the opposite of what you mean’

2. **He also quotes the opening sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*. How, he claims, is the reader alerted to the fact that the statement is ironic?**
   The reader is alerted to the ‘false logic of the proposition about single men with fortunes …’

3. **Therefore, what is the ironic sentence a comment on?**
   ‘a particular social group obsessed with matchmaking’

4. **Therefore how would you, the reader, summarise the main theme of the novel?**
   A range of responses are acceptable.