Irony

David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction*

Remind yourself of Lodge’s definition of irony on page 14 and make a note of this definition.

Montgomery et al. *Ways of Reading*

**Verbal irony**

Montgomery et al. identify two main types of irony. You have already studied the first type, *verbal irony* (p.27), and analysed its component parts (pp.27-8). *Sarcasm* is a type of verbal irony. What is the main difference between the two? (Answer on page 30.)

**Situational irony**

1. The second type of irony is *situational irony*. Write a definition below (page 30).

2. On pages 31-2, participants who do not fully understand events (therefore creating situational irony) are identified. List these participants below.

   1. 
   2. 
   3. 
   4. 

3. Separating the reader from the participant is termed as ‘______________’ the participant (p.32).

4. *Historical irony* is a form of situational irony. What is historical irony? Explain this below in your own words (p.32)

5. *Dramatic irony* is another form of situational irony. Explain this below in your own words (p.32)

**Mechanisms of irony**

1. According to Montgomery et al., what is the main difference between verbal irony and lying? (pp.33-34)

2. How can we see this attitude of disbelief?
3. Montgomery et al. also state that irony can sometimes be unclear. If this is the case, why use irony at all? (p.37)

Activities

1. Now read the extract and answer the questions on pages 37-39.

2. How many different types of irony are used in the text you are studying? Analyse examples, and discuss what the author is actually commenting on, linking your points to the themes of the novel.
Irony

Answers!

David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction*

Remind yourself of Lodge’s definition of irony on page 14 and write this definition below: ‘saying the opposite of what you mean’

Montgomery et al. *Ways of Reading*

Verbal irony

Montgomery et al. identify two main types of irony. You have already studied the first type, verbal irony (p.27), and analysed its component parts (pp.27-8). Sarcasm is a type of verbal irony. What is the main difference between the two? (Answer on page 30.) With sarcasm, an exaggerated tone of voice shows disbelief.

Situational irony

1. The second type of irony is situational irony. Write a definition below (page 30) in your own words.

   It involves a conflict between what two people (or two groups of people) know:
   - the participant in the event (the situation) understands things in a way that is not correct
   - the reader (from outside the situation) understands events correctly.

2. On pages 31-2, participants who do not fully understand events (therefore creating situational irony) are identified. List these participants below.

   1 A child
   2 Someone with cognitive impairment
   3 A non-human e.g. alien or animal
   4 A foreigner

3. Separating the reader from the participant is termed as ‘othering’ the participant (p.32).

4. **Historical irony** is a form of situational irony. What is historical irony? Explain this below in your own words (p.32)

   The participant’s understanding of events may be different to a later, better, fuller understanding of them. (E.g. a participant’s predictions about what will happen will be wrong. The modern reader will know this.)

5. **Dramatic irony** is another form of situational irony. Explain this below in your own words (p.32)

   A form of irony seen in the theatre: a character on stage believes something that the audience knows to be false.
**Mechanisms of irony**

4. According to Montgomery et al., what is the main difference between verbal irony and lying? (pp.33-34) **With verbal irony, the attitude of disbelief towards the proposition is made clear. With lying, the attitude of disbelief towards the proposition is concealed.**

How can we see this attitude of disbelief? **With the written text, you can see this attitude of disbelief through ‘exaggeration and overemphasis, including hyperbole, emphatic (insincere) statements of belief, extensive use of superlatives or exaggerations in speaking’**.

5. Montgomery et al. also state that irony can sometimes be unclear. If this is the case, why use irony at all? (p.37)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>By saying that we do not believe something, we are actually communicating that we <em>do</em> believe it to be true.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>It might express the view that we can never be certain in our knowledge and beliefs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>It can confirm the narrator’s voice as the voice of truth.</td>
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**Activities**

1. Now read the extract and answer the questions on pages 37-39.

2. Your teacher will direct you towards an extract from *Pride and Prejudice*. Analyse the use of irony.