

Name _____

Date _____

Irony

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. Verbal irony is the use of language to mean something different or opposite from its literal meaning. Verbal irony is often used to create humor and might come in the form of sarcasm, overstatement or understatement. A particularly common example of verbal irony involves weather. Reacting to a hurricane by saying, “what lovely weather we’re having” is verbal irony. The inclement weather and, in some cases, the speaker’s tone makes it clear that she is speaking ironically. While she says the weather is “lovely,” she actually means the weather is terrible.

Read the following passage.

After staying up late playing video games, Desmond rose from a deep sleep and made his way to the kitchen. Rubbing his eyes, he struggled to read the clock on the microwave across the room. As the numbers came into focus, he quickly realized it was well after 1:00pm. Looking up from the newspaper, his father adjusted his glasses.

“Glad to see someone’s up early,” he said.

“I...was up late studying,” Desmond stammered.

His father laughed, shook his head and kept reading.

Which detail from the passage is an example of verbal irony?

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| A. As the numbers came into focus, he quickly realized it was well after 1:00pm. | B. “Glad to see someone’s up early.” |
| C. “I...was up late studying.” | D. His father laughed, shook his head and kept reading. |

2. Situational irony occurs when results do not match expectations. When an author makes use of situational irony, the opposite of what would normally be expected occurs.

Read the following passage.

“If you’re entering a spelling bee, you better know your history,” DeAnna mumbled as she thumbed through a long list of winning words from past National Spelling Bees. Words like “insouciant” and “xanthosis” were fresh on her mind, but none stood out more than “esquamulose.” “Ess-qualm-you-lows,” she mouthed slowly, “E-S-Q-U-A-M-U-L-O-S-E.” For some reason, she had a feeling some of these words might show up in her school-wide spelling bee.

Standing on stage she felt confident and prepared. The first round gave way to the second and the second to the third and fourth. The final word rang through the auditorium. “Esquamulose,” her principal said. Before Mr. Trujillo could even finish a repetition, DeAnna had spelled the word correctly. Confetti fell and a trophy was placed in her outstretched arms. Beaming with pride, she gazed at her prize, slowly taking in each engraved letter: SPELLING BEE CHAMPIEN. “I guess a win’s a win,” DeAnna laughed, tucking the misspelled trophy under her arm.

Which of the following is the best example of situational irony found in the passage?

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| A. The spelling bee trophy had a misspelled word on it. | B. The reader already knew DeAnna could spell esquamulose. |
| C. The final word was a winning word from a past National Spelling Bee. | D. DeAnna spelled the word before her principal could finish pronouncing it. |

3. Dramatic irony occurs when the audience knows something a character does not. When an author employs dramatic irony, the audience is no longer wondering what will happen. Instead their focus shifts to when and how something will be revealed. The horror genre is known for its use of dramatic irony to build suspense. If the reader already knows something evil lurks behind a closed door, dramatic irony is the reason a reader feels tension as a character reaches for the doorknob.

Read the following passage.

Weeks after a successful bank robbery, Dwight needed to clear his mind. He decided it was safe to go for a drive. He let his arm hang out the window — a welcome breeze after 25 days in hiding. As he began to relax, something flashed in his rearview mirror: police lights. His heart dropped as he frantically searched his mind for an alibi. Pulling over slowly, he stared straight ahead as the police car inched up alongside him.

“Your back tire is flat,” the police officer scolded without leaving his car.

“Excuse me?” Dwight replied sheepishly.

“Your back left tire. It’s flat,” the officer said. “You should go get that filled up.”

“Oh, right. Thanks,” Dwight murmured as the police car accelerated away.

Which of the following best describes the use of dramatic irony in the passage?

- A. Just as Dwight began to relax, he saw police lights flashing in his rearview mirror.
- B. Dwight thought it was safe to drive and ended up getting pulled over almost instantly.
- C. The reader knows Dwight is on the run from the police, but the police officer does not.
- D. The reader expects the police officer to arrest Dwight, but he only warns him about a flat tire.
4. Irony is a literary device, but irony can also occur in real life with no author at all. While authors plan the use of irony in books, short stories and movie scripts, everyday events may just happen to unfold in an ironic way. In most cases, real life irony is situational irony. When a mismatched juxtaposition of expectation and reality occurs, that particular situation could be described as ironic. For example, a driving instructor who never learned how to parallel park or the fact that James Naismith, the inventor of basketball, had a losing record as a coach.

Which of the following statements best expresses the central idea of the passage?

- A. Irony is a literary device used to create a mismatch between expectation and reality that does not apply to real life.
- B. Irony is a literary device used by authors to add humor to their work and keep their audience engaged and invested.
- C. Irony is both a literary device and a way to describe a set of circumstances in which expectations do not match reality.
- D. Two examples of irony are a driving instructor who never learned to parallel park and James Naismith’s losing coaching record.

5. When it comes to situational irony, the word “ironic” is often misused to describe a peculiar occurrence or coincidence. One way to remember the correct definition of situational irony is to keep expectations in mind. This form of irony exists when reality does not match expectations. In other words, situational irony takes place when the outcome of an event is the opposite of what one would typically expect to happen. Let’s say Tori just started a new job as a skydiving instructor. On her first day, she arrives and notices two of her coworkers are wearing the exact same shirt she is. This is certainly a coincidence, but it is *not* ironic. It may be surprising or odd, but wearing a certain shirt does not necessarily run counter to expectation. Now, let’s say she shows up for her first day of work and two of her coworkers are afraid of heights. This *is* ironic. Most people would never expect a skydiving instructor to have a fear of heights. For a situation to be truly ironic, the opposite of, or something very different than, normal expectations must occur.

The author of this passage would most likely agree with which of the following statements?

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| A. The word “ironic” is a synonym for coincidental. | B. The word “ironic” is not a particularly specific term. |
| C. The word “ironic” is often misunderstood and overused. | D. The word “ironic” only applies to situations involving strangers. |