

# Poems with Irony Examples

## 1. "The Unknown Citizen" by W.H. Auden

Irony: The poem ironically praises an average citizen, highlighting the dehumanizing aspects of modern society.

## 2. "Richard Cory" by Edwin Arlington Robinson

Irony: The wealthy, enviable Richard Cory surprisingly commits suicide, showing appearances can be deceiving.

## 3. "This Be The Verse" by Philip Larkin

Irony: Larkin ironically advises the reader not to have children, though that advice itself is passed down from parents.

## 4. "Harlem (Dream Deferred)" by Langston Hughes

Irony: Questions the American Dream, contrasting the idea of freedom and equality with the reality faced by African Americans.

## 5. "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" by Dylan Thomas

Irony: Encourages fighting against death, yet acknowledges the inevitability of it.

## 6. "Home Burial" by Robert Frost

Irony: A poem about home yet focuses on the discord and emotional distance between a husband and wife.

### **7. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T.S. Eliot**

Irony: Titled a "Love Song," but the poem is a monologue filled with self-doubt and existential dread.

### **8. "Ozymandias" by Percy Bysshe Shelley**

Irony: A once-mighty king's statue lies ruined, undermining his claim of eternal power.

### **9. "The Waste Land" by T.S. Eliot**

Irony: Combines religious and cultural symbols to create a narrative of disillusionment and decay.

### **10. "A Modest Proposal" by Jonathan Swift (poetic prose)**

Irony: Suggests eating babies as a solution to poverty, starkly highlighting the inhumanity of class disparity.

### **11. "To His Coy Mistress" by Andrew Marvell**

Irony: Contrasts romantic idealism with the urgency of human mortality.

### **12. "Because I could not stop for Death" by Emily Dickinson**

Irony: Personifies death as a polite suitor, challenging conventional portrayals.

### **13. "The Charge of the Light Brigade" by Alfred Lord Tennyson**

Irony: Celebrates valor in the face of a catastrophic military blunder.

### **14. "My Last Duchess" by Robert Browning**

Irony: The Duke proudly displays a portrait of his deceased wife, yet reveals his own monstrous behavior.

**15. "Sonnet 130" by William Shakespeare**

Irony: Subverts the typical love sonnet by using unflattering comparisons.

**16. "One Art" by Elizabeth Bishop**

Irony: Claims that "losing isn't hard to master" while depicting deep emotional loss.

**17. "Fire and Ice" by Robert Frost**

Irony: Discusses the end of the world in a casual, almost indifferent tone.

**18. "Acquainted with the Night" by Robert Frost**

Irony: A walk through the city at night reveals more isolation than companionship.

**19. "Dulce et Decorum Est" by Wilfred Owen**

Irony: Decries the notion that dying for one's country is glorious and honorable.

**20. "The Emperor of Ice-Cream" by Wallace Stevens**

Irony: Juxtaposes the frivolity of ice-cream with the gravity of death.

**21. "Anthem for Doomed Youth" by Wilfred Owen**

Irony: Contrasts the romanticized view of war with its gruesome reality, using religious imagery to highlight the absurdity.

**22. "Lady Lazarus" by Sylvia Plath**

Irony: Employs biblical references to examine themes of rebirth and death, ironically challenging the permanence of dying.

### **23. "The Hollow Men" by T.S. Eliot**

Irony: Explores the emptiness of modern life, ironically through rich, complex language and religious imagery.

### **24. "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost**

Irony: While seemingly about the virtue of taking the road less traveled, it subtly suggests that choices do not matter much in the end.

### **25. "If—" by Rudyard Kipling**

Irony: Lists virtues in a tone that borders on the authoritarian, questioning the very virtues it extols.

### **26. "A Poison Tree" by William Blake**

Irony: Explores the growth of anger, which ironically nourishes and grows like a tree, leading to tragic consequences.

### **27. "The Tyger" by William Blake**

Irony: Queries the existence of good and evil, using the ferocious tiger as an ironic symbol for innocence.

### **28. "Mirror" by Sylvia Plath**

Irony: Describes a mirror as truthful but reveals the anxiety and deception involved in self-perception.

### **29. "Death Be Not Proud" by John Donne**

Irony: Personifies death and diminishes its power, ironically treating it as a trivial aspect of life.

### **30. "Invictus" by William Ernest Henley**

Irony: Proclaims mastery over fate while acknowledging the constraints and challenges of the human condition.

### **31. "A Dream Within a Dream" by Edgar Allan Poe**

Irony: Speaks about the impermanence of everything, even as the words themselves strive for a kind of immortality.

### **32. "The Caged Bird" by Maya Angelou**

Irony: The free bird ironically represents imprisonment within societal norms, while the caged bird symbolizes the freedom of singing against oppression.

### **33. "Pied Beauty" by Gerard Manley Hopkins**

Irony: Celebrates diversity and imperfection in nature while using a rigid, structured form.

### **34. "The Flea" by John Donne**

Irony: Uses a flea as a symbol of love and intimacy, contrasting its triviality with the complexity of human relationships.

### **35. "The Chimney Sweeper" by William Blake**

Irony: Addresses social injustice through the lens of childhood innocence, making the tragedy more poignant.

### **36. "Phenomenal Woman" by Maya Angelou**

Irony: Celebrates the strength of a woman not in her physical attributes, but in her confidence and self-assurance.

### **37. "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge**

Irony: A tale of penance and redemption that ironically brings suffering through the act of storytelling itself.

### **38. "Cross" by Langston Hughes**

Irony: Discusses the complex issue of mixed racial heritage with a tone that oscillates between bitterness and acceptance.

### **39. "In Flanders Fields" by John McCrae**

Irony: Idealizes the sacrifice of soldiers but highlights the futility and destruction of war.

### **40. "Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou**

Irony: Uses the imagery of rising despite all the historical and personal challenges, subverting the expectations set by oppression.

### **41. "Annabel Lee" by Edgar Allan Poe**

Irony: Portrays a haunting, idealized love that endures beyond death, yet is tinged with the darkness of loss and obsession.

### **42. "Ode on a Grecian Urn" by John Keats**

Irony: Celebrates the eternal beauty captured on the urn, but emphasizes its separation from the ever-changing world of human experience.

### **43. "Mending Wall" by Robert Frost**

Irony: Explores the irony of building walls to maintain relationships, questioning whether "good fences make good neighbors."

#### **44. "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" by Robert Frost**

Irony: The enchanting, tranquil woods ironically represent the allure of abandoning life's responsibilities.

#### **45. "The Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams**

Irony: The poem's simplicity contains vast implications for the importance of small, everyday things, ironically elevating a mundane object.

#### **46. "I, Too" by Langston Hughes**

Irony: Poses as a response to Walt Whitman's inclusive vision of America, highlighting the irony of racial segregation in a 'free' country.

#### **47. "Digging" by Seamus Heaney**

Irony: Compares the act of writing to the physical labor of digging, highlighting the irony in their differences yet inherent connectedness.

#### **48. "Sonnet 18" by William Shakespeare**

Irony: Questions the power of poetry to immortalize beauty, ironically through a poem that has itself become immortal.

#### **49. "The Rape of the Lock" by Alexander Pope**

Irony: Mocks societal values through the exaggerated importance of a stolen lock of hair, highlighting the triviality of high society disputes.

#### **50. "Warning" by Jenny Joseph**

Irony: Contrasts the expectations of old age with a rebellious, youthful spirit, ironically looking forward to the freedom that comes with aging.

**51. "To an Athlete Dying Young" by A.E. Housman**

Irony: The young athlete's early death preserves his glory, ironically turning tragedy into a form of triumph.

**52. "A Psalm of Life" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**

Irony: Urges living life fully but acknowledges the daunting reality of mortality.

**53. "Sonnet 29" by William Shakespeare**

Irony: Expresses envy and despair but concludes with contentment, highlighting the changeability of human emotions.

**54. "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time" by Robert Herrick**

Irony: Advocates seizing the day while paradoxically reminding the reader of the ticking clock of mortality.

**55. "The Second Coming" by W.B. Yeats**

Irony: Evokes apocalyptic images to describe a crumbling society, ironically using religious language to depict chaos.

**56. "How Do I Love Thee?" by Elizabeth Barrett Browning**

Irony: Professes an infinite, immortal love but is bounded by the limitations of human expression.

**57. "Prufrock's Pervigilium" by T.S. Eliot**



Irony: Echoes classical themes to present a modern landscape of indecision and despair.

### **58. "Caged Bird" by Maya Angelou**

Irony: Depicts the caged bird's song as both an expression of freedom and a reminder of its confinement.

### **59. "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" by Oscar Wilde**

Irony: Written from prison, it condemns society for its moral hypocrisy.

### **60. "After Apple-Picking" by Robert Frost**

Irony: Discusses the weariness that comes after fulfilling duties, yet questions the value of the harvest.

### **61. "The Waste Land" by T.S. Eliot**

Irony: Paints a bleak picture of post-war society, ironically through rich literary and cultural references.

### **62. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T.S. Eliot**

Irony: Presents a character full of desires but too timid to act on them, revealing the irony in human indecisiveness.

### **63. "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" by Sir Walter Raleigh**

Irony: Serves as a cynical response to pastoral love poems, questioning their overly romanticized depictions.

### **64. "Because I Could Not Stop For Death" by Emily Dickinson**

Irony: Personifies Death as a kind suitor, ironically contrasting the common fear of dying.

### **65. "Ozymandias" by Percy Bysshe Shelley**

Irony: Depicts the ruined statue of a once-great king, emphasizing the impermanence of power and human accomplishments.

### **66. "My Last Duchess" by Robert Browning**

Irony: The Duke's monologue about his late wife reveals more about his own possessive nature than her alleged flaws.

### **67. "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" by Dylan Thomas**

Irony: While imploring others to resist death, it acknowledges the inevitable demise we all face.

### **68. "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" by Langston Hughes**

Irony: Draws from historical rivers to explore African American history, juxtaposing the strength of rivers against the struggles of black people.

### **69. "The Fish" by Elizabeth Bishop**

Irony: Captures a fish only to let it go, reflecting on the unexpected beauty in ordinary, grimy things.

### **70. "The Man He Killed" by Thomas Hardy**

Irony: Discusses the irony of killing someone in war whom one would otherwise treat as a friend.

### **71. "Those Winter Sundays" by Robert Hayden**

Irony: Reflects on the unrecognized sacrifices of a father, contrasting youthful ignorance with adult understanding.

### **72. "A Visit from St. Nicholas" by Clement Clarke Moore**

Irony: A cheerful Christmas poem that, read in another light, also highlights the materialistic aspects of the holiday.

### **73. "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" by William Wordsworth**

Irony: Finds solace in nature while highlighting the loneliness of the speaker, an ironic play on the idea of solitude and company.

### **74. "To His Coy Mistress" by Andrew Marvell**

Irony: Urges his love to seize the day, but the hyperbolic arguments subtly mock the conventions of romantic poetry.

### **75. "Sailing to Byzantium" by W.B. Yeats**

Irony: Longs for the timeless art of Byzantium, yet is written in a form that acknowledges the limitations of art and life.

### **76. "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe (Poetic prose)**

Irony: The narrator insists on his sanity while revealing his madness, creating a chilling irony.

### **77. "Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" by John Donne**

Irony: Speaks of a love so perfect that it transcends ordinary human experiences, yet exists within the confines of a deeply emotional poem.

### **78. "Jabberwocky" by Lewis Carroll**

Irony: Uses nonsensical words to create a coherent narrative, emphasizing the arbitrary nature of language.

### **79. "Birches" by Robert Frost**

Irony: Idealizes rural life while acknowledging the harsh realities of such an existence.

### **80. "Fire and Ice" by Robert Frost**

Irony: Discusses the end of the world in a detached tone, making the cataclysmic seem almost trivial.

### **81. "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge**

Irony: The Mariner survives his ordeal at sea only to be burdened with a lifelong curse, showing the irony in seeking redemption yet living in perpetual penance.

### **82. "She Walks in Beauty" by Lord Byron**

Irony: Depicts beauty in simple, pure terms, yet the subject remains complex and unreachable.

### **83. "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" by Thomas Gray**

Irony: Mourns the forgotten dead, but in doing so immortalizes them through poetry.

### **84. "London" by William Blake**

Irony: Criticizes the oppressive nature of the city, yet employs a structured form that mimics the very rigidity it condemns.

### **85. "The Hollow Men" by T.S. Eliot**

Irony: Expresses despair and emptiness but does so through complex, elaborate imagery and references.

### **86. "The Tyger" by William Blake**

Irony: Questions the nature of a creator who can make both the lamb and the ferocious tiger, a stark juxtaposition of innocence and terror.

### **87. "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost**

Irony: Celebrates the choice of the less-traveled path, but acknowledges that the impact of that choice is indeterminable.

### **88. "Dover Beach" by Matthew Arnold**

Irony: Contrasts the natural beauty of the sea with the harsh reality of human suffering, highlighting the disparity between ideal and reality.

### **89. "Kubla Khan" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge**

Irony: Presents an opulent vision that is ultimately interrupted and incomplete, exploring the limits of artistic creation.

### **90. "Song of Myself" by Walt Whitman**

Irony: Celebrates individualism but strives for universal inclusivity, capturing the complexity of human experience.

### **91. "A Noiseless Patient Spider" by Walt Whitman**

Irony: Compares the human soul to a spider, contrasting the grand quest for meaning with an insect's simple actions.

### **92. "If—" by Rudyard Kipling**

Irony: Enumerates various virtues but emphasizes that they are unattainable ideals, yet still worth striving for.

### **93. "Pied Beauty" by Gerard Manley Hopkins**

Irony: Praises all things “counter, original, spare, strange,” yet does so in a highly structured, formalistic manner.

### **94. "A Dream Within a Dream" by Edgar Allan Poe**

Irony: Questions the reality of existence within the framework of a poem, a creation of the author's imagination.

### **95. "Spring and Fall" by Gerard Manley Hopkins**

Irony: Addresses a child's sorrow over the dying leaves, but alludes to the greater sorrow of human mortality.

### **96. "O Captain! My Captain!" by Walt Whitman**

Irony: Celebrates the end of the Civil War and the survival of the Union but mourns the assassination of President Lincoln.

### **97. "The Emperor of Ice-Cream" by Wallace Stevens**

Irony: Juxtaposes the mundanity of life with the certainty of death, through the lens of an ice-cream social.

### **98. "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" by Wallace Stevens**

Irony: Explores multiple viewpoints of a single subject, each ironic in its attempt to capture the essence of something ultimately elusive.

### **99. "The Lady of Shalott" by Alfred Lord Tennyson**

Irony: The Lady is cursed to never look directly at reality, mirroring the artistic dilemma of portraying life while removed from it.

### **100. "Acquainted with the Night" by Robert Frost**

Irony: Discusses an intimate familiarity with darkness and isolation, yet does so in a form—the sonnet—that is traditionally associated with love and romance.

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