

TUTORIAL

Irony is the difference between expectations/appearances and reality; when what is said, what happens, or what is known doesn't match up with what was meant, what appeared to be the case, or what we expected to happen.

Within works of fiction, any of the following could be considered ironic: structural elements of the story line (such as a setting, character, main events, etc.), the tone of the writer/narrator, specific statements, dialogue, or even behavior.

There are many types of irony that are created through different types of contradictions.

- What is said vs. What is meant: verbal irony (understatement, hyperbole, sarcasm)
 - Example: saying “not bad” when you mean to say “excellent job”
- What the reader and writer know about a situation (whether past, present, or future information) vs. What the characters know about the same situation: Dramatic Irony
 - Example: The most famous example of dramatic irony is one of the last scenes of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The audience and the playwright know that Juliet is not actually dead, but that she has taken a potion to make it appear as though she is dead. Romeo does not know this; he believes she has actually died, which causes him to take his own life.
- What is expected to happen vs. What actually happens
 - Example: In Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story “Rappaccini's Daughter,” the reader could easily expect that the antidote given to Beatrice would cure her of her poisonous touch; however, the antidote actually kills her.
- What appears to be true vs. What is actually true
 - Example: From the details given to the reader in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, it **appears** that Mr. Hyde has killed Dr. Jekyll. In the **reality** of the novel, Mr. Hyde and Dr. Jekyll are the same person!