

# 3 Types of Irony

## Situational, Verbal, Dramatic

**Irony** is a literary device -- which has been defined as “saying one thing and meaning another.” Irony may also occur when a situation is the opposite of what is expected (such as a pickpocket getting pick-pocketed). There are three types of irony:

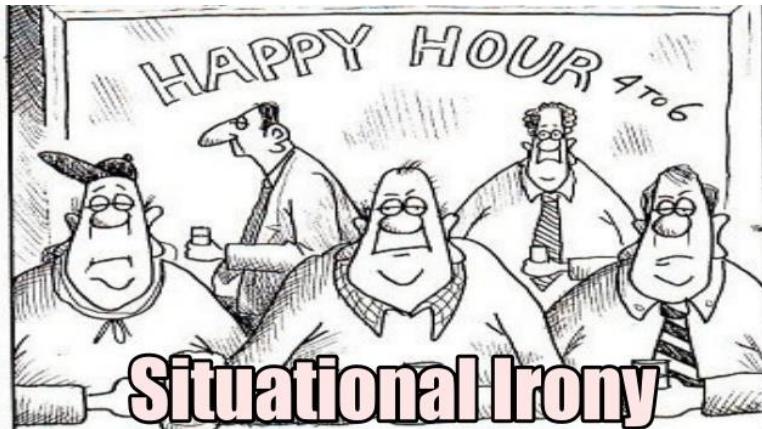
**Verbal irony** occurs when what the speaker says is the opposite of what he meant. Verbal irony differs from sarcasm in that sarcasm is usually conveyed through a tone of voice. Verbal irony can be understood by an intelligent reader because it depends on using words with different meanings. W.C. Fields once said, “Giving up smoking is easy. I’ve done it many times.” This statement might appear to assert that giving up smoking is easy, but if the smoker has to give it up over and over again, then, the opposite is true. It’s not the tone of his voice that makes this funny, but the use of the words.

“What great weather we’re having!”



**Dramatic irony** occurs when the reader/audience knows something that the characters do not. When watching a staged production of *Othello*, for example, the audience knows that Desdemona is innocent and that her husband, Othello, is jealous over nothing. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo wonders at how lovely and pink Juliet’s cheeks are for a dead person, but the audience knows she is not dead, only sleeping. So take that Romeo.

**Situational irony** occurs when a situation is oddly appropriate (as in the pickpocket getting pick-pocketed). When, in the 1990's, a fire broke out in the Burke Fire Station, it was ironic. A fire station is the last place that one would expect to have a fire. In examples of situational irony, the focus is on the situation more than the words, though someone might be talking.



**It may be “Happy Hour” but no one really looks all that happy.**

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### **Example of Irony from Real Life**

Every year since 1965, the “Charlie Brown Christmas Special” plays on TV, now a classic and fan favorite seasonal TV show. In it, Charlie Brown feels upset by the over-commercialization of the season and wonders what Christmas is really all about. The original show comes in just over 25 minutes long. However, as reported recently in the Washington Post, “Peanuts Worldwide, the company that shepherds all things Charlie Brown and

Snoopy, confirmed ... that the Emmy-winning special was edited down to come in at about 22 minutes — the available running time once you account for ads. That's right: The heartwarming special that sounds a clarion call against the over-commercialization of Christmas had fallen prey to too many commercials at Christmas.”

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/comic-riffs/post/a-christmas-wish-dont-cut-down-my-charlie-brown-christmas/2011/12/06/qlQAcZ4fcO\\_blog.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/comic-riffs/post/a-christmas-wish-dont-cut-down-my-charlie-brown-christmas/2011/12/06/qlQAcZ4fcO_blog.html)