Irony and Satire
Objectives

By the time you finish taking notes on this presentation, you should be able to understand the definitions of key vocabulary related to irony and satire and identify examples of each:

- Irony (verbal irony, situational irony)
- Paradox
- Oxymoron
- Satire (parody, caricature, hyperbole)
Irony

The concept of irony can sometimes be hard to grasp for many students. However, understanding irony can be key to understanding many works of literature.

At its most basic, irony occurs when what appears to be happening on the surface level is quite different from what is actually going on.

Understanding irony requires a student to consistently read between the lines of a text, to recognize those moments when the reality of a situation is different from the surface-level appearance of it.
Types of Irony

Irony can be broken down into several different forms, many of which may actually already be familiar to you. This playlist is going to cover the following types of irony.

- Verbal irony
- Situational irony

An additional type of irony, dramatic irony, is covered in the Dramatic Form playlist.
Verbal Irony

Verbal irony is a type of irony in which the literal meaning of a written or spoken statement is the opposite of what is actually meant by it.

Verbal irony is somewhat similar to the concept of sarcasm, though they are NOT exactly the same.

Sarcasm usually has a somewhat mean or biting tone. Verbal irony can be sarcastic, but it isn’t always.
Example of Verbal Irony

The opening lines of Jane Austen’s novel *Pride and Prejudice* are:

“It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.”

Stating, in simple terms, that all rich dudes want to get married. Sounds fine, right?

Well, actually, in the rest of the book, **all of the rich male characters seem to be completely uninterested in getting married**! So, as we read the rest of the book, we realize that Austen means the opening lines to be *ironic*!
Situational Irony

Situational irony is a type of irony where there is a strong difference between what you expect to happen in a situation, and what actually happens.

Sometimes the outcome of an ironic situation can be humorous, but at other times it can be serious as well.
Example of Situational Irony

In the movie *The Wizard of Oz*, the character Dorothy thinks she has to travel to the great Emerald City to find the powerful wizard to send her home.

However, when she reaches the City, she finds out that the wizard is actually a bumbling fool and she had the power to go home the whole time herself. The situation turned out to be completely different from her expectations.
Paradox and Oxymoron

The concepts of paradox and oxymoron are related to irony, but aren’t quite the same thing. Still, they are worth knowing alongside irony.

A **paradox** is a statement that seems to contradict itself, but also seems to contain some level of truth.

An **oxymoron** occurs when two seemingly contradictory words are put together in one phrase.
Example of Paradox

The premise of George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* is that all of the animals on a farm revolt and drive away the old drunken farmer who owns them. They start their own society, led by the pigs. The new “government” has a set of laws, including:

“All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.”

On its face, this statement makes no sense -- however, the contradiction ultimately helps Orwell achieve his purpose. He is making a commentary on how unfair and unequal governments that claim to treat everyone equally actually are.
Examples of Oxymoron

Oxymorons are usually just a short phrase. Here are a few examples:

*silent scream*

*cold fire*

*sweet sorrow*

In all of these examples, the two words contradict one another. However, these contradictions help to create deeper and more complex meanings than what the basic meanings of these words imply.
Satire is a genre of literature that is closely related to the idea of irony. In works of satire, an author attempts to expose and/or criticize the corruption or absurdity of a person or society using humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule.

Usually, the purpose of this is to try to improve that person or society through this criticism.

Some terms related to satire include hyperbole, parody, and caricature.
Examples of Satire

Satire is everywhere in society! One recent, prominent example is the fake news show *The Daily Show*. The show mocks and ridicules some of the more ridiculous aspects of American politics. The most satirical parts of the show come with the “correspondents” who take on exaggerated personas in order to demonstrate how ridiculous current events and American politics really are.
In this video, *The Daily Show* satirizes the idea that the name of the Washington football team (the Redskins) is anything but hugely offensive.

It does this by *juxtaposing* interviews with a group of Native American activists with interviews with ignorant Washington fans, to demonstrate how ridiculous the idea that “Redskins” is anything but offensive is.
Hyperbole, Parody, Caricature

Three techniques often used in works of satire are hyperbole, parody and caricature.

**Hyperbole**: an exaggerated claim or statement that is usually not meant to be taken seriously

**Parody**: an imitation of a particular style, artist, or genre that utilizes exaggeration to create humor

**Caricature**: in literature, a description of a person in which some characteristics are exaggerated to create a critical, comic effect
Is this example Irony or Satire? Explain

GOING SOMEPLACE WARM FOR SPRING BREAK?

YEAH. I JUST HOPE THIS THING DOESN'T GIVE ME TAN LINES.

STUDENT LOAN DEBT
Is this example Irony or Satire?