

Irony is a term with a range of meanings, all of them involving some sort of discrepancy or incongruity. It is a contrast in which one term of the contrast in some way mocks the other term. It is not to be confused with sarcasm, however, which is simply language designed to cause pain. The story writer uses irony to suggest the complexity of experience, to furnish indirectly an evaluation of his material, and the same time to achieve compression.

Three kinds of irony may be distinguished here:

Verbal irony, the simplest and, for the story writer, the least important kind, is a figure speech in which the opposite is said from what is intended. The discrepancy is between what is said and what is meant.

In **dramatic irony** the contrast is between what a character thinks and what the reader knows to be true. The value of this kind of irony lies in the comment it implies on the speaker or his expectations.

In **irony of situation**, usually the most important kind for the story writer, the discrepancy is between appearance and reality, or between expectation and fulfillment, or between what is and what would seem appropriate.