

Irony in Poetry

Purpose

I can analyze how irony develops a central idea in poems.

Directions

With your partner, read the poem below out loud. **Discuss** and **agree** on the answers to the questions about it.

“The War Works Hard”

By Dunya Mikhail

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| <p>[1] How magnificent the war is!
How eager and efficient!
Early in the morning
it wakes up the sirens</p> <p>[5] and dispatches ambulances
to various places
swings corpses through the air
rolls stretchers to the wounded
summons rain from the eyes of mothers.</p> <p>[10] It produces the most questions
in the minds of children
and urges families to emigrate.</p> <p>The war continues working, day and night.
It inspires tyrants</p> <p>[15] to deliver long speeches
awards medals to generals
and themes to poets.
It contributes to the industry
of artificial limbs</p> | <p>[20] provides food for flies
adds pages to the history books
achieves equality
between killer and killed
teaches lovers to write letters</p> <p>[25] accustoms young women to waiting
fills the newspapers
with articles and pictures
builds new houses
for the orphans</p> <p>[30] invigorates the coffin makers
gives grave diggers
a pat on the back
and paints a smile on the leader's face.
It works with unparalleled diligence!</p> <p>[35] Yet no one gives it
a word of praise.</p> |
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Vocabulary:

Sirens = 
tyrant = evil king

dispatch = send

corpse = dead body

stretcher = 
invigorate = inspire with energy

artificial limb = metallic arm or leg

1. What is the author's tone towards war in the first two lines?

☐ positive ☐ negative ☐ neutral

2. Which words in these two lines best show this tone?

3. Because of these words, what do you **expect** the rest of the poem to say about war?



Get the teacher to sign off on your work before you go to the next step. **Teacher approval: Y / N**

4. How does the rest of the poem convey **the opposite** of your expectations? Be specific, citing words and phrases that are the opposite of what the first two lines say.
5. Most of the time, authors use irony to **criticize** something. What do you think Mikhail criticizes with the irony in this poem?
6. There are three types of irony: verbal, situational, and dramatic. Read about them below, then answer the question.

Verbal Irony	Definition: Verbal irony is when a speaker says one thing but means the exact opposite. Example: In the middle of a terrible rainstorm, you say, "What lovely weather we're having".
	How to write about verbal irony: (Author/Character) says "____", but actually means the opposite because ____.
Situational Irony	Definition: Situational irony is when the actual result of a situation is the exact opposite of what we would usually expect. Example: A person posts on Instagram how social media is really bad for your mental health.
	How to write about situational irony: The moment is situationally ironic because the reader expects [event A], but instead, [event B] occurs.
Dramatic Irony	Definition: Dramatic irony is when the audience or reader knows something that the characters in a story do not. This knowledge can create suspense or humor. Example: In a comedy, a character is looking for their glasses, but the audience can see they are on top of their head.
	How to write about dramatic irony: An example of dramatic irony occurs when the (audience / reader) is aware that _____ , while [character's name] remains oblivious.

What type of irony does Mikhail use in her poem? How do you know?

Exit Ticket

Directions

Work **individually**. Read the poem "Rites of Passage" and then in paragraph of 6-10 sentences concisely explain:

- How the poem is ironic.
- What the poem criticizes.

"Rites of Passage"

By Sharon Olds

As the guests arrive at my son's party
they gather in the living room--
short men, men in first grade
with smooth jaws and chins.
Hands in pockets, they stand around
jostling, jockeying for place, small fights
breaking out and calming. One says to another
How old are you? Six. I'm seven. So?
They eye each other, seeing themselves
tiny in the other's pupils. They clear their
throats a lot, a room of small bankers,
they fold their arms and frown. *I could beat you*
up, a seven says to a six,

the dark cake, round and heavy as a
turret, behind them on the table. My son,
freckles like specks of nutmeg on his cheeks,
chest narrow as the balsa keel of a
model boat, long hands
cool and thin as the day they guided him
out of me, speaks up as a host
for the sake of the group.
We could easily kill a two-year-old,
he says in his clear voice. The other
men agree, they clear their throats
like Generals, they relax and get down to
playing war, celebrating my son's life.

	3 points	2 points	1 point
Irony	☐ You identify the irony in the poem by clearly and accurately describing how: ☐ the poem sets up the reader's expectation ☐ the poem conveys the opposite of that expectation	☐ You somewhat identify the irony in the poem by accurately describing only one of these elements of irony: ☐ the poem sets up the reader's expectation ☐ the poem conveys the opposite of that expectation	☐ You attempt to identify the irony in the poem, but incorrectly identify both of these elements of irony: ☐ the poem sets up the reader's expectation ☐ the poem conveys the opposite of that expectation
Text Evidence	☐ You cite relevant text evidence for both the expectation and its opposite.	☐ You cite relevant text evidence for either the expectation or its opposite, but not both.	☐ You don't cite relevant text evidence for either the expectation or its opposite.
Central Idea	☐ You clearly and accurately describe how the author uses the opposite of the reader's expectation to criticize a specific belief, attitude, or institution in society.	☐ You describe how the author uses the opposite of the reader's expectation to criticize something general in society.	☐ You attempt to describe how the author uses the opposite of the reader's expectation to criticize something in society, but your description is inaccurate or unclear.
TOTAL	_____ out of 9		