



"When Alanis Morissette says, 'An old man turned ninety-eight, won the lottery, died the next day..' that's not irony. That's a coincidence. But if the old man turned ninety-eight, won the lottery, died the next day, because he was run over by the armored truck carrying the cash he won... that would be ironic."

Comedic Irony



Overview

Definitions of Irony

Let's look at irony. Irony has taken on different meanings over the years. If we were to look at the dictionary's definition of irony, we would find a few definitions than the definition most commonly applied in comedy.



- the expression of one's meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite, typically for humorous or emphatic effect: " Don't go overboard with the gratitude, " he rejoined with heavy irony (Typically this is connoted as sarcasm).
- a state of affairs or an event that seems deliberately contrary to what one expects and is often amusing as a result: [with clause] : the irony is that I thought he could help me. The irony is that he saved his church using money from a porn operation
- (also dramatic or tragic irony)a literary technique, originally used in Greek tragedy, by which the full significance of a character's words or actions are clear to the audience or reader although unknown to the character.

4 Primary Ways to Use Irony in Comedy

1. Sarcasm
2. Saying it without saying it
3. Where the audience knows but the hero does not
4. In the disconnect between intentions and actions -- George Carlin

One way to use irony which we do every day is to give someone a sideways compliment:

"I was having sex with my girlfriend and she said, "You're the perfect size, my ex-boyfriend was so big he hurt me."

Exercise

Write me 1-3 sideways compliments like the one above.



Sarcasm 101

https://youtu.be/_ZW-AZ2mNeA?si=fv3ZPZ28vvbdBfSW

Long form example: *You won't believe how much money I saved.*

<https://youtu.be/noMkydq4cd4?si=G4aus98vda1uxcvV>

Sarcasm

Let's look at a comedian who is called one of the most sarcastic comedians in comedy,
Bob Zany



▶ The Most Sarcastic Comedian Of All Time. Bob Zany - Full S...

*"At home, we have a new security system. **We just play FoxNews 24/7**, so everybody thinks we have a gun."* Bob Zany

These types of jokes are very popular in the U.K. British comedians love to do jokes where the audience needs to be privy to certain bits of information for them to understand the joke. It's dripping with sarcasm. If you don't have this information, you haven't been paying attention to the news, or current developments.

In the above joke, if you don't know that FoxNews is predominantly a big supporter of guns, then you're out of the loop on the joke.

You ever do a joke and say, "I guess you had to be there...?" That's the idea behind these types of jokes.

Jokes that require some kind of:

- Historical knowledge
- Knowledge of celebrity culture



- Current events
- Sports knowledge
- Knowledge of popular culture
- Music
- Movies
- Local events or locations

"Hey Jerry, What's the story?!"

Popular Culture:

50 Shades of Grey is to literature what Candy Corn is to Vegetables--

Bill Maher

*I went to an antique store, Sears. -- **Bob Zany***

Celebrity Culture: *If Kanye West was food, he'd be egg salad.*

You can hear the sarcasm in his voice.

Using irony in this fashion can make the joke feel a little configurational; meaning the audience has to solve part of the puzzle. They know what's going on.

It was once thought that comedic irony was only used when we used sarcasm. And although it can be very effective in comedy it's not the only way

Saying It Without Saying It

You know, when you start out in this business there are a lot of 'nay-sayers' and dream busters who say, "Bob you'll never perform across the street from B&H Pharmacy in downtown Provo... I've arrived, baby!"

You don't look old, you look like Father Time did Karate on your face.

You look like your face got slapped by the hands of time. The big hand. Twice.



Exercise

Write 1-3 jokes telling someone they are:

- Old
- Lazy
- Promiscuous
- Sexy

But don't tell them they are the word you chose. You can use the *"I'm not saying you look (WORD), but...."* trope to get there.

Where the audience knows but the hero does not

I once dated a girl who had an identical twin, but she didn't think I knew this. So on our second date, she decided that she would have her sister answer the door wearing nothing but a towel. So I go up to the door, ring the doorbell and sure enough, her sister Jennifer answers the door and says, "I'm ready for you..." Twenty minutes later, my date, Stephanie comes home and is like, "So did I fool you?"

I said, "Not really, you don't have that birthmark on your labia."

So in this scenario, I'm telling the audience the story by being in the scene and narrating the scene at the same time.

Here's where newer comedians get confused when telling stories. You can tell the audience the joke, be in the scene, play the other characters in the scene (don't play more than two other characters), and seamlessly go back and forth between them, but you have to be careful to be sure the audience knows. Be extra careful with your use of pronouns. If you have more than one male character, use first names instead of pronouns.



▶ Sarcastic Humor - Comedian Keith Alberstadt



The Disconnect Between Intentions And Actions

Simple, but ironic scenarios:

- The more you rush, the more time it seems to take.
- Isn't it ironic that we buy garbage bags just to throw them away?
- The more you need a vacation, the harder it is to find the time to take one.
- It's funny how the more money you make, the more you seem to need.
- The healthier a food seems to be, the more it seems to taste like cardboard.
- You ever realize that the guys who drone on and on about how much they love their wife are the ones who are most likely to be cheating on them?



See how these short snippets kind work against each other. They are observational, behavior type concepts.

Exercise

Write 1-3 sentences like the ones above to demonstrate the disconnect between an intention and an action. They can be simple observations.

In the Jim Jefferies piece below, Jefferies talks about how a lot of gun owners say “I’m a responsible gun owner because I keep my guns in a safe.” And Jefferies responds by yelling, “Well, then they’re not much use then are they!”

What other situations are people involved in where their actions are counter to their words?

 **Jim Jefferies -- Gun Control (Part 1) from BARE -- Netflix Sp...**

 **Comedian Jordan Klepper on finding irony in everyday life**

Other Examples Of Simple Irony

- Have a Nice Day - Cop as he’s issuing you a ticket.
- Calling out the name of another when making love.
- Claiming you only use the best while using the generic.
- Being meticulously put together on the outside while you have a sink full of dishes and a messy house.
- The priests who are “God-fearing” as they diddle little boys.
- The English teacher who can’t spell.



- The film director who doesn't understand dramatic irony.