

Literary Element (page 774)

Irony

The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet, Act 4 WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Each form of irony relies on the fact that the reader or audience has certain specific information.

- In **verbal irony**, the audience must know the speaker’s true feelings in order to understand that the speaker is saying the opposite of what is really meant. In Act 2, Mercutio clearly does not think the Nurse is a “fair gentlewoman.”
- In **situational irony**, the audience must be able to foresee a predictable or intended outcome, in order to appreciate the reversal of expectations when an opposite outcome occurs. In Act 1, Benvolio brings Romeo to the Capulet ball to cure his lovesickness; ironically, Romeo meets and falls deeply in love with Juliet.
- In **dramatic irony**, the audience must know information that characters in the play do not know. In Act 3, Tybalt is furious that Romeo won’t fight; ironically, the audience knows that Romeo is married and is reluctant to fight his wife’s cousin.

ACTIVITY

Directions Using the first row as a model, complete the chart by noting what the audience knows about the situation, then identifying the type of irony involved.

Event	What the Audience Knows	Type of Irony
In Act 3, Scene 5, Juliet defies her mother: “I will not marry yet, and when I do, I swear / It shall be Romeo, whom you know I hate, / Rather than Paris.”	Juliet means the opposite of what she says: she loves Romeo and is already married to him.	verbal irony
When the Nurse advises her to marry Paris, Juliet says, “Well thou has comforted me marvelous much.”	1.	2.
Paris says that Juliet “weeps for Tybalt’s death.”	3.	4.
Capulet commands that the wedding feast be transformed “to black funeral.”	5.	6.

Reading Strategy (page 774)

Interpreting Imagery

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Imagery is descriptive language that makes a connection to one or more of the five senses: sight, hearing, touch, taste, or smell. By engaging a reader’s senses, imagery enables a writer to vividly express the experiences and feelings of a character. Shakespeare’s plays are rich with images, in part because they help his audience imagine that a bare stage is a moon-lit orchard, sun-soaked Verona street, or a tomb.

ACTIVITY

Directions Review the speeches in Act 4 listed in the chart below. Then analyze specific images and evaluate their effect, using the completed first row as a model.

Detail	Senses Evoked	Effect on the Reader
Juliet, Scene 1, lines 77–88 “O bid me leap, rather than marry Paris . . . or bid me lurk / Where serpents are; chain me with roaring bears . . .”	touch, smell, sight, hearing	Juliet is willing to face death in its most unpleasant forms to avoid dishonor. These images give the reader a clear idea of Juliet’s determination.
Friar Lawrence, Scene 1, lines 93–106 “Take thou this vial, being then in bed, And this distilling liquor drink thou off; When presently through all thy veins shall run / a cold and drowsy humor . . .”	1.	2.
Juliet, Scene 3, lines 15–16 “I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins / That almost freezes up the heat of life.”	3.	4.
Juliet, Scene 3, lines 33–54 “Shall I not be stifled in the vault / To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in . . .”	5.	6.

Active Reading Graphic Organizer

As you continue to examine the imagery in the play, you may wish to use a chart like the one above to record your notes. Ask your teacher for a copy of the Three-Column Table Graphic Organizer.

Selection Vocabulary Practice (page 774)

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Vocabulary

- lurk** *v.* to conceal oneself; to move about in a sneaky manner
stifle *v.* to smother for lack of air; to prevent from developing properly
revive *v.* to bring back to life; to give new strength
lament *v.* to express deep sorrow

EXERCISE A Practice with Context Clues

For each sentence, underline the words that would help readers understand the meaning of the vocabulary word.

1. Cory continued to **lurk** near the entrance, hoping to surprise Paula when she arrived.
2. A short rest and a long drink of water will **revive** a weary hiker.
3. After the death of the crown prince, the whole kingdom sank into a period of **lament** and sadness.
4. A heavy overgrowth of weeds will cut off sunlight and **stifle** the growth of the new plants.

EXERCISE B Applying Meanings

Write the best ending for each sentence below.

1. If an officer is looking for a place for his soldiers to **lurk**, he is probably setting up _____.
 A. an encampment B. an ambush C. a parade
2. If you **lament** a decision you have made, you are probably _____.
 A. proud B. inexperienced C. regretful
3. You could **revive** a wilting plant by placing it in _____.
 A. fresh soil B. total darkness C. a dry environment
4. You can **stifle** a flame by _____.
 A. using a match B. adding more fuel C. smothering it

EXERCISE C Responding to the Selection

Write a short monologue in which the Friar Lawrence attempts to comfort the Nurse without revealing that Juliet is still alive. Use at least THREE of the vocabulary words.