

Verbal irony in the possibility of evil

Literature



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There are three types of irony: situational irony, verbal irony, and dramatic irony. Verbal irony is when a character or the narrator says something but doesn't mean it or means something else; usually involves sarcasm. Dramatic irony is when the reader of the story has more knowledge on the plot than the characters. Situational irony occurs when a character is intending for something to happen but the opposite or something unintentional occurs; an example is a prank that has gone wrong and backfires at you.

An example of situational irony in Shirley Jackson's "The Possibility of Evil" is: "Miss Chandler, the librarian, and Linda Stewart's parents would have gone unsuspectingly ahead with their lives, never aware of the possible evil lurking nearby, if Miss Strangeworth had not sent letters to open their eyes (Jackson, 253). This is an example of situational irony because Miss Strangeworth believes that she is ridding the town of evil but little does she know her plan is actually backfiring and doing the opposite; the letters that she writes brings and influences evil in the town.

This example of situational irony has a considerable effect on the readers because it reveals a lot about Miss Strangeworth's attitude and character. It shows that Miss Strangeworth believes that she is always right and narrow minded due to how she is oblivious to how the town is reacting to her letters. Another example of irony in this short story is when Miss Strangeworth exclaims to Helen Crane, "Nonsense.

All babies are different. Some of them develop much more quickly than others" (Jackson, 251). This is an example of verbal irony because Miss Strangeworth doesn't mean what she says at all and this is proven when she

writes in a letter to Mr. and Miss. Crane saying, “ Didn’t you ever see an idiot child before? Some people just shouldn’t have children, should they? ” (Jackson, 252).

This example of verbal irony once again reveals the true nature of Miss Strangeworth and it shows that she is “ two-faced”, cunning and very sneaky. This example of irony has a large effect on how the reader’s perceive Miss Strangeworth because in the beginning of the story she seemed like an innocent old lady who cared a lot about her roses and liked giving out compliments and encouragement.

But all of a sudden you see her writing negative things about the people she was giving compliments to. This piece of irony also explains why know one accuses Miss Strangeworth for writing the letters. Due to the fake facade that Miss Strangeworth puts up no one suspects her of writing such letter to the town. In conclusion there are many examples of irony in stories and they have many effects, like putting a twist to a story, to create a comic atmosphere or to create suspense for the reader!