

Irony analysis of the gift of the magi assignment

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Chase Tidmore Intro To Lit Analyst Ms. Sheperis 10/20/11 Irony Within " The Gift of the Magi" " Irony is a disciplinarian feared only by those who do not know it, but cherished by those who do", Soren Kierkegaard knew what he was talking about when he said these famous words. " The Gift of the Magi", written by William Sidney Porter, often known by his pen name O. Henry. It is a short story depicting literary elements of irony, romance, and Porter's sense of twist endings, and is all about a poor couples Christmas.

Because of the end results of Della and Jim's sense of self sacrifice, " The Gift of the Magi" displays almost a word for word example of what irony is defined as. Irony is a rhetorical literary device, literary technique, or situation in which there is a sharp incongruity or discordance that goes beyond the simple and evident intention of words or actions. In this sense, the world irony would mean speech that means the opposite of what it is actually intended to be used. Irony could be broken into a few different categories: verbal irony (most commonly sarcasm), dramatic irony, and situational irony.

For something like situational irony, the actions or events in a story will usually be enacted by a specific character and unbeknownst to the character, their action will have an effect that is completely opposite of their desired intentions. " Romeo and Juliet" was a great example of this, because the lovers tried to fake their deaths, only to actually die in the process (this is, of course, a very morbid example). Porter does a much better example of situational irony in " The Gift of the Magi" when he writes his twist ending to fit into ironic story at the end. The Gift of the Magi" is a great example of irony, situational irony to be specific. If one were to look again at what " situation irony" is, Merriam-Webster would define the term as " irony

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involving a situation in which actions have an effect that is opposite of what was intended, so that the outcome is contrary to what is expected". This is laid out first when Della learns that Jim had bought her a beautiful set of tortoise shell combs with bejeweled rims for her (once) beautiful hair. This example is a textbook example of what situational irony is.

Della had spent hours and hours looking for a way to make any money so that she could buy Jim the perfect gift, but the only way she could make any money was to get rid of her most prized possession: her hair. Leaving the story at this would have been a great romantic endeavor, but the author decided that he would display a masterful element to change the entire dynamic of the tale by having Jim bring home a set of beautiful combs for her. Now lets recap, situational irony is when actions that have an opposite of the intended effect.

So with that definition repeated, the readers see that even though Author William Porter spent a majority of the story having Della selling her "rippling and shining.... cascade of brown waters", only so that her majestic combs be deemed useless. However, the ironic twists do not end with a set of tortoise shell combs. It has already been established that the irony was evident with Della gift from Jim, but what about his gift? Della sold her hair so she could buy a "... platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design... She sells her brown locks of hair so her husband can have the perfect accessory to his most prized possession, his generations old pocket watch. So Della may have a useless gift of combs that she can not use for her short hair, but at least she was able to get a great gift for Jim right? Before that is answered, do not forget that Porter spent a little time explaining that Jim only made 20 dollars <https://assignbuster.com/irony-analysis-of-the-gift-of-the-magi-assignment/>

a week. So how did he manage to buy the most beautiful set of combs when they were clearly out of reach of his budget?

Simple, he sold his watch so he could get enough money, only to receive a chain for said watch. That was the irony train making its shipping route come in full circle. Once again, irony is an action that is that is opposite of its intentional effect. What the author presented the audience with is a young poor couple that literally sold their most prized possession, hair and a pocket watch respectively, out of love for one another, only to receive accessories for the very items they just sold.

This is something that is usually only seen on TV sitcoms, for example, when two people wear the same outfit in an embarrassing fashion. It was clearly dumb luck (or misfortune, depending how the reader reads it) that on the same day each lover sheds their precious material good to do what they feel is more important, to make their respective spouse happy, no matter what. Situational irony is any actual irony involving a situation in which action have a have an effect that is opposite from what was intended, so that the outcome is contrary to what is expected.

The situational irony set in place Porter's world of Jim and Della's house is almost tangible it is so obvious. What the audience has is a wife who sold her hair to buy a chain for a pocket watch, only to receive combs that were bought from the earnings of said sold watch. The story ends on a quirky note, a note that one might feel could be a deep and meaningful lesson in life. Jim tells Della of the ironic situation that they had put themselves into, only to follow up by asking her to put the pork chops on the oven for supper.