

Literary Devices In the Bible: Dramatic Irony

This lesson may be used in conjunction with any work of literature that employs dramatic irony.

GRADE LEVEL

7-12

TIME REQUIREMENTS

1 Period (50 min)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will:
- Analyze dramatic irony found in selected biblical events/passages
- Identify the dramatic irony found in specific work of literature being used

JOURNEY TO EXCELLENCE CONNECTIONS

- Acceptance of God
- Interpersonal Relationships
- Intellectual Development
- Communication Skill
- Personal Management
- Aesthetic Appreciation

MATERIALS

- ✓ Overhead with two definitions of dramatic irony
- ✓ Copies of Bible passages containing dramatic irony

PRE-ACTIVITY

Optional: If student pre-knowledge does not already include an understanding of irony, this could be addressed first

ACTIVITY

Define

1. Ask if anyone knows what *dramatic* irony is and how it differs from basic irony; write student ideas on board
2. Present definitions (on board, overhead, or handout) and discuss

Analyze

1. Pass out selected Bible passages containing dramatic irony. Discuss each using the following questions:
 - Where is the dramatic irony in the passage?
 - What makes it ironic?
2. Suggested explanation (for teacher reference only)

John 11:45-50 (NIV)

- a. Where: "You know nothing at all! 50You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."
- b. Dr Irony: Even though Caiphas' words are an exaggeration of the temporary political scene and he simply wants to destroy Jesus once and for all, the reader knows that, in reality, Jesus must die in order for the nation (and all of us) to be eternally saved.

John 19:16b-20 (NIV)

- a. Where: 19Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.
- b. Dr Irony: Although the sign is meant to mock Jesus and is considered false by those involved, the reader (audience) knows that it actually is true that Jesus is, in fact, the long-awaited King of the Jews.

Definitions of Dramatic Irony

Dictionary.com

Irony that is inherent in speeches or a situation of drama and is understood by the audience but not grasped by the characters in the play.

American Heritage Dictionary

The dramatic effect achieved by leading an audience to understand an incongruity between a situation and the accompanying speeches, while the characters in the play remain unaware of the incongruity.

Dramatic Irony: Biblical Examples (NIV)

John 11:45-50: The Plot to Kill Jesus

45Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him. 46But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. 47Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin.

"What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. 48If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

49Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! 50You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."

John 19:16b-20: The Crucifixion

So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. 17Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). 18Here they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

19Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. 20Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek.