



Irony, Conflict, and Symbolism in Literary Text — Grade 10

Ohio Standards Connections

Reading Applications: Literary Text

Benchmark A

Analyze interactions between characters in literary text and how the interactions affect the plot.

(Grades 8 - 10)

Indicator 1

Compare and contrast an author's use of direct and indirect characterization, and ways in which characters reveal traits about themselves, including dialect, dramatic monologues and soliloquies.

(Grade 10)

Benchmark F

Identify and analyze how an author uses figurative language, sound devices and literary techniques to shape plot, set meaning and develop tone.

(Grades 8 - 10)

Indicator 7

Recognize how irony is used in a literary text.

(Grade 10)

Lesson Summary:

Students will read one short story that includes clear and compelling examples of conflict, irony and symbolism. Students will create a chart depicting contradictions between a character's actions, desires and words. This chart will then be used to write responses to literature about the interactions of the characters, the pacing of the plot and the use of literary techniques to set meaning and develop tone.

Estimated Duration: *Three hours if students read the short story during class.*

Pre-Assessment:

Students are given one prompt or a choice of two and instructed to write for 5-10 minutes, including as much detail as possible within the time limit. Sometimes, students are asked to share their writing with a partner or a small group, or they are asked to respond to one or two questions related to the prompt.

Students are asked to write about a conflict with someone they knew well. The following questions need to be answered in the text:

- What did it take to resolve the conflict?
- What were the details and how long did the conflict last?
- How did you feel about the other person during the conflict?

Students are instructed to change the names of those involved in the conflict to protect their own or another's privacy.

Scoring Guidelines:

This writing is often scored for completion rather than given a precise grade. The following scale may be used to quickly assess this assignment.

3 = Response to the prompt indicates a thoughtful approach to the topic and includes enough detail for clear connections to the topic to be made.

2 = Response needs details and a stronger connection to the topic.

1 = Response is off task with only a few lines written.

0 = Response is totally off task; no written response.

Post-Assessment:

- Students may be asked to find examples of irony, conflict, symbolism and character interactions in a given text. They may also, for example, write an essay exploring the meaning of one symbol and its relationship to the entire work.
- Another possibility is to have students identify a symbol and discuss in essay form how this symbol appears and reappears or changes throughout the text.
- A third possible approach to an essay is to have students imagine themselves as one of the characters in a story. The students could use a Venn diagram to show the likenesses and differences between a character and themselves and write a personal essay outlining some of those similarities or differences, providing samples from both their own lives and the life of a character revealed in a story.

Other Related Ohio Standards

Reading Applications: Literary Text

Benchmark C

Identify the structural elements of the plot and explain how an author develops conflicts and plot to pace the events in literary text.

(Grades 8 - 10)

Indicator 3

Distinguish how conflicts, parallel plots and subplots affect the pacing of action in literary text.

(Grade 10)

Writing Applications

Benchmark A

Compose narratives that establish a specific setting, plot and a consistent point of view, and develop characters by using sensory details and concrete language.

(Grades 8 - 10)

Indicator 6

Produce informal writings (e.g., journals, notes and poems) for various purposes.

(Grade 10)

Benchmark B

Write responses to literature that extend beyond the summary and support references to the text, other works, other authors or to personal knowledge.

(Grades 8 - 10)

Indicator 2

Write responses to literature that organize an insightful interpretation around several clear ideas, premises or images and support judgments with specific references to the original text, to other texts, authors and to prior knowledge.

(Grade 10)

Scoring Guidelines:

	Content	Conventions
4	The writing deals creatively and insightfully with the prompt. It includes ample support through explanation and examples. There is a logical structure and all aspects of the prompt are covered well giving the writing a sense of completeness and wholeness. The writing demonstrates a mature command of the language, including precise word choice.	Sentences are complete, except when fragments are used purposefully. Subject/verb agreement and verb and noun forms are generally correct. With few exceptions, the conventions of punctuation, capitalization and spelling are followed.
3	The writing is related to the topic with adequate supporting ideas or examples, although development may be uneven. Logical order is apparent, although some lapses may occur, there is a sense of completeness. Word choice is generally adequate and precise.	Most sentences are complete. There may be occasional errors in subject/verb agreement and in standard forms of verbs and nouns, but not enough to impede communication. The conventions of punctuation, capitalization and spelling are generally followed.
2	The writing demonstrates an awareness of the topic but may include extraneous loosely related material. Some supporting ideas or examples are included but not developed. An organizational pattern has been attempted. The writing may lack a sense of completeness, or wholeness by not addressing all aspects of the prompt. Vocabulary is adequate but limited and occasionally vague.	Readability is limited by error in sentence structure, subject/verb agreement, and verb and noun forms. Demonstrates knowledge of punctuation and capitalization. With few exceptions, commonly used words are spelled correctly.
1	The writing is only slightly related to the topic, offering few supporting ideas or examples. There is little or no evidence of an organizational pattern. Development of ideas is erratic, inadequate, or illogical. Limited or inappropriate vocabulary obscures meaning.	Gross errors in sentence structure and usage impede communication. Frequent and blatant errors occur in basic punctuation and capitalization, and commonly used words are frequently misspelled.

Instructional Procedures:

- After the class has shared its pre-assessment responses through small group reporting, the teacher asks students to provide words or phrases that are linked to the stories they heard in their small group. Specific words dealing with emotions and reactions to the conflict provide a useful bank of words that are recorded on chart paper or the chalkboard under the heading **Resolving Conflict**.
- Students are assigned to read a selected text and are encouraged to look for

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ideas that have been recorded in the **Resolving Conflict** list.

3. Upon completion of the reading, students work in small groups or as an entire class to plot the main events of the story. This may be done on a continuum, focusing on the conflict and the rising action, culminating in the climax and following through to the falling action and resolution. This continuum is then plotted on the board graphically, so all students have the same information with which to work. The teacher then leads a class discussion, focusing on the following two major points:
 - The cause of the conflict
 - The reason the conflict continues and the way it gets resolved.
4. Once students understand the main events of the story, they work in small groups to focus on the relationship(s) between or among the main characters. Students are encouraged to generate their own questions about these relationships, and the questions are then written on the board for the whole class to review.
5. To help the students understand the concept of irony, the teacher starts by writing the following descriptions on chart paper or the chalkboard of what constitutes surprising, interesting or amusing contradictions in the story. Students then develop a graphic organizer listing the contradictions they notice between ways the characters act and their desires and the things the characters say and their desires.
6. To link irony and the role it plays in setting events of the plot into motion, the class divides the story into dramatic scenes that students will role play for the whole class. ***Each scene must include one example of irony***. The students work in teams and concentrate on clearly communicating the contradiction between a character's desires and his/her words or actions. Students may add monologues for characters, dialogues between characters or a narrator to effectively communicate the connection one event has on later events.
7. Prior to discussing any symbolism present in the story, it may be necessary to review what students know about symbolism. Students may be familiar with common political or religious icons (i.e., the swastika, the U.S. flag, the Confederate flag, the Christian cross, the Star of David or the peace sign). The key point students need to grasp is that strong emotions get transferred from belief or a concept to an object or symbol. Students then need to identify symbols within the text and categorize them: personal, political, social, religious, etc.
8. Some students can readily identify a personal possession that holds symbolic value for them. It may be an article of jewelry or clothing, a journal, an heirloom. Personal symbols play an important part in almost everyone's life.
9. The final assessment will pull all the parts of this lesson together. Students will answer one brief essay question about
 - irony
 - character interactions
 - symbolism

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Differentiated Instructional Support:

Instruction is differentiated according to learner needs, to help all learners either meet the intent of the specified indicator(s) or, if the indicator is already met, to advance beyond the specified indicator(s).

- Some students could listen to the story on tape or have the story read aloud to them by a tutor if needed. A template of a literary flow chart would help students see the connections clearly.
- Reading two or more stories containing similar elements adds depth to the lesson by encouraging students to analyze a second story (on their own if they are in an honors class) and then draw comparisons between the two stories. It further opens the door for analysis of the two authors' styles and points of view.
- Some students can create their own original skits that include irony.

Extension:

Following are ideas for all students to continue learning about irony, conflict, and character development:

- Situational irony allows the reader to know more about a situation than a character knows. An example of this is found in *The Story of an Hour*. In this short story, the protagonist dies of a heart attack that doctors assume has been brought on by the shock of seeing her deceased husband alive. Students can explore how the doctors' misdiagnosis lends itself to the irony of the story. Dramatic irony can often be an effective means for an author to have characters unwittingly reveal themselves to the reader.
- Conflict arises from a series of events in any text. An example of this is found in Susan Glaspell's play *Trifles*. This play is plotted on a pyramidal pattern in which there are three essential elements: the rising action in which tension builds to the second major division of climax, and the falling action, leading to where tensions are diminished in the resolution or denouement. Many plays also have a subplot or secondary action that reinforces or contrasts with the main plot. Students may wish to explore the subplot in a play like *Trifles* to determine what effect it has on the main plot.
- Generally, authors tell readers at the beginning of a text who the characters are. These characters come as protagonists, antagonists, or serve a supporting role. Often, their nonverbal exchanges reveal a great deal about them. Students may wish to explore how "what a character does not say" reveals more about the character than what a character "does say". Characters' dialogue also moves the action forward.

Homework Options and Home Connections:

Students may be called upon to bring in examples of personal items that have symbolic value for them, or they could bring in news photos of public symbols to share with the class.

Materials/Resources Needed:

For the teacher: Samples of graphic organizers, availability and knowledge of a variety of literary texts, knowledge of literary elements.

For the students: Text with selected stories.

Key Vocabulary:

- irony
- symbolism
- characterization
- graphic organizer
- protagonist
- antagonist
- conflict
- parallel plots
- subplot
- monologue
- dialogue
- Venn diagram