

Irony in Poetry

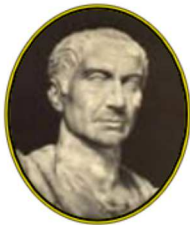
Below are passages from literature. Each passage uses irony to make a point. Write a brief paragraph explaining the irony in the passage.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

[An old seaman is telling a listener about one voyage. Here the ship has just become becalmed in the middle of the ocean, not moving and far from land. The crew has begun to run out of water to drink.]

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.



Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare

Act III, Scene II

[Brutus has conspired with other senators to murder Julius Caesar. At Caesar's funeral, Mark Anthony, Caesar's true friend, delivers a funeral oration. Anthony has promised Brutus that Anthony will not blame the conspirator's for Caesar's death. Below is the beginning of Anthony's oration.]

ANTONY: Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears!
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them,
The good is oft interred with their bones;
So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious;
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest—
For Brutus is an honorable man;
So are they all, all honorable men—
Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.
He was my friend, faithful and just to me;
But Brutus says he was ambitious,
And Brutus is an honorable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome,
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill.
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept;

Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,
And Brutus is an honorable man.

Irony in Poetry

Below are passages from literature. Each passage uses irony to make a point. Write a brief paragraph explaining the irony in the passage.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

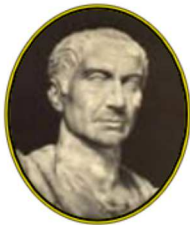
[An old seaman is telling a listener about one voyage. Here the ship has just become becalmed in the middle of the ocean, not moving and far from land. The crew has begun to run out of water to drink.]

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.

Student's answers will vary. Answers should include references to the following:

The irony is that in the middle of the ocean, the thirsty sailors are surrounded by water, which they cannot drink because it is saltwater.



Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare

Act III, Scene II

[Brutus has conspired with other senators to murder Julius Caesar. At Caesar's funeral, Mark Anthony, Caesar's true friend, delivers a funeral oration. Anthony has promised Brutus that Anthony will not blame the conspirator's for Caesar's death. Below is the beginning of Anthony's oration.]

ANTONY: Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears!
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them,
The good is oft interred with their bones;
So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious;
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest—
For Brutus is an honorable man;
So are they all, all honorable men—
Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.
He was my friend, faithful and just to me;
But Brutus says he was ambitious,
And Brutus is an honorable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome,
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill.
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept;

Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,
And Brutus is an honorable man.

Anthony uses irony by repeating that Brutus is an honorable man, even though Brutus has falsely accused Caesar of being ambitious, and Brutus led the conspiracy to murder Caesar.