

Definition for and variations of Satire

SATIRE: A literary device that exposes human weaknesses or social evils. Satire may use exaggeration, wit, irony, or humor to make its point. The satirist may adopt a tone ranging from good natured humor to biting ridicule or scorn. Satire may serve to entertain, to instruct, or to reform or bring about action. Satire may use many genres as its vehicle, including drama, poetry, short stories, novels, essays. Satire may also occur in dance, video media, cartoons, and other art forms.

The satiric styles of two Roman poets, Horace and Juvenal, became models for writers of later ages. The satire of Horace is mild, gently amused, yet sophisticated; whereas, that of Juvenal is bitter and vitriolic and full of moral indignation.

Two subcategories of satire include:

- A. Caricature** — A humorous picture that exaggerates or distorts certain qualities of a person in order to create a ridiculous effect. In literature caricature is frequently associated with satire or parody. Its true intent is not to criticize just one individual but rather to ridicule a societal group or a social practice. The ultimate aim of caricature is to ridicule in order to correct a weakness.

- B. Parody** — A humorous imitation of the style, characters, or subject matter of serious writing. Parody is a form of satire. Parody is designed to ridicule a work or to point up or exaggerate its characteristics.

Techniques (strategies) of Satire [Satirists use of combination of these strategies to create satire]

- Irony
 - Verbal: Where you say the opposite of what you mean. Sarcasm is a form of verbal satire.

 - Situational: Where the opposite occurs from what you expect. Ex: A person dying in a train crash after not taking a plane because he was afraid to fly.

 - Dramatic: Where the audience knows what is happening, but the characters don't. Ex: In Romeo and Juliet, the audience knows that Juliet is alive at the end, but Romeo doesn't.

- Inversions: Taking something we normally think is good and making it bad, or taking something bad and making it good to point out the foibles, weaknesses, or problems in society.

- Exaggeration

- Hyperbole (great exaggeration)

- Understatement - the opposite of exaggeration. Down playing.

- Juxtaposition - Putting two opposites together so that the characteristics of each stand out more. Ex: In Huckleberry Finn, the violence of the scene with the feud and death of Huck's friend, which is followed by the very peaceful scene of Huck and Jim floating on the river.

- Puns and other plays on words

- Unexpected twists

- Use of a persona (a fictional narrator or speaker through whom the author/poet speaks)