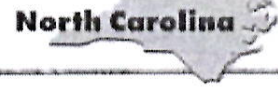


Focus Lessons



Lesson 8: Irony

Authors often intentionally shape our expectations of what will happen, planting clues that lead us to assume a certain outcome. However, sometimes authors introduce a **plot twist** (an unexpected turn of events), so that what happens is the opposite of what we *thought* would happen. **Situational irony** exists when the actual outcome of a situation is the opposite of the reader's expectation. Frequently, authors use situational irony to make a larger point or prove a lesson.

DIRECTIONS: Read the following passage about a boy named Igor and the lesson he learned. As you read, put a star next to any plot twists in the story. Then answer the questions that follow.

- 1 There once was a boy called Igor. Igor was usually a kind, sweet-natured boy, but he had one fatal flaw. Whenever it came to getting presents, he turned into a brat!
- 2 There were five children in Igor's family: Boris and Elena were older, Tania and Ivan were younger, and Igor was in the middle. By some strange coincidence, all these children were born within five days of each other. So their parents always had one giant birthday party, with five cakes and games for everyone. Everything always went smoothly at these parties, until the time came to distribute the presents. The five children gathered around the mound of presents, their eyes wide with excitement. "Here's one for you, and one for you," said Igor's father, placing a box in each child's arms.
- 3 Afterwards, all the children beamed with joy and thanked their parents and friends. All the children, that is, except for Igor. When he opened a present, he looked at it with eyes dimmed by disappointment. Then he gazed with meaningful eyes at Boris's stack of presents. If Igor got a crane and Boris got a truck, Igor wanted that truck. If Igor's shirt was blue and Boris's shirt was red, it was the *red* shirt that Igor pined after. Whatever he got, his brother Boris's presents were *always* better.
- 4 "The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence," said his father with a hearty voice. "You've got to remember that." Igor didn't know why he kept on talking about grass. Igor didn't care about grass, but he *did* care about presents.
- 5 This went on, year after year, until the birthday party when Igor turned eleven. After the birthday games, the cakes and cookies, there was a hush of excitement when Igor's mother announced, "Kids, it's present time!"

Focus Lessons



6 One by one, the children unwrapped their gifts...and something very strange happened. For once, Igor *liked* his presents. He had received a football jersey, a fishing pole, and a baseball cap. He privately thought that his presents were far superior to Boris's. But the last thing he wanted was to admit this to his parents! Out of habit, he put on a sulky face, and fiddled listlessly with his gifts.

7 "What do you think of your presents, Igor?" asked his mother.

8 "They're okay," he said with a slow, sad voice that suggested otherwise.

9 "You know what, Igor?" his mother said. "Those are *Boris's* presents. I talked to all your friends, and we switched all the presents around. All Boris's presents are yours, and your presents are his. So you got exactly what you wanted."

10 "But I really *liked* the presents this year," he said. "Can I keep them?" His parents' mouths dropped open. Then, after a moment of shocked silence, they began to laugh. The children at the party joined in. Soon, Igor began to laugh too.

11 "I guess nothing ever turns out like you plan it to," he said.

12 That night, he thought about his father's words, and it suddenly dawned on him what they meant. "I know," he thought. "Next birthday, I'll play a trick on everyone by *liking* my presents and saying so!"

13 And he did. From that birthday on, for whatever the reason, Igor never sulked about his presents again.

1. At what points in the story did you experience an outcome that was the opposite of your expectations? Identify these sections and explain why they are ironic.

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For more information on irony, see *Glencoe Literature, Course 3*, pp. 124, 696, and R5.