

Academic Vocabulary for Collection 5

These are the terms you should know
as you read and analyze the stories in this collection.

Irony The difference between what we expect or what seems suitable and what actually happens. There are three main types of irony.

- **Verbal irony** occurs when someone says something but *means* the opposite. “Nice day,” you say as you slog through flood water up to your waist.
- **Situational irony** refers to an event that is *contrary to*, or the opposite of, what we expected. The firehouse burns. The winner of the wrestling match is the weakest team member.
- **Dramatic irony** takes place when we know what is going to happen to a character but the character does not know. Margo opens the door to a garage we know is filled with snakes. We know, but the robbers do not know, that the hotel they plan to rob is host to a police convention.



Ambiguity A quality that allows something to be interpreted in several different or conflicting ways. For example, if you and a friend have completely different ideas about an ambiguous character or the ambiguous ending of a story, you both might be “right.” There is no single way to interpret an ambiguous story. That is part of its fun.



For Further Information ...

- Be sure to read the essay on **irony and ambiguity** in *Elements of Literature*, pages 334–335.