

What is irony?

Irony is probably best explained by an example. In an expression such as *Whoops, did my eye hurt your elbow?*, the speaker is being ironic, criticizing someone for hitting them in the eye by saying the opposite to what he or she really means. Irony is frequently used for literary effect. After an audience failed to cheer one of his plays, Oscar Wilde is supposed to have said, ironically, that ‘the play was a great success, but the audience was a disaster’.