

Name _____

Date _____

Period _____

Of Mice (and Irony) and Men

Irony is a literary device in which words are used to express a contradiction between appearance and reality. In literature, there are 3 types of irony:

- ❖ **Verbal irony** is when a speaker or writer says one thing but actually *means* the opposite.
- ❖ **Situational irony** is the reverse of what we expect- when the outcome of a situation is inconsistent with what would logically or normally occur.
- ❖ **Dramatic irony** is when the audience or the reader is aware of something that a character does not know.



Let's start with an easy one... Identify the irony in the following excerpt:

"I'm George Milton. This here's Lennie Small."

"Glad ta meet ya," Carlson said again. "He ain't very small." He chuckled softly at his joke.

"Ain't small at all," he repeated.

What is ironic here?	
What kind of irony is it?	
Make a characterization inference about Carlson, based on his observation about this irony.	

Sometimes irony has unexpected results, even for the characters in a story. Take this scene, for example...

One day a bunch of guys was standin' around up on the Sacramento River. I was feelin' pretty smart. I turns to Lennie and says, 'Jump in.' An' he jumps. Couldn't swim a stroke. He damn near drowned before we could get him. An' he was so damn nice to me for pullin' him out. Clean forgot I told him to jump in. Well, I ain't done nothing like that no more."

What is ironic here?	
What kind of irony is it?	
How did the irony of this situation impact George and his relationship with Lennie?	

When someone in a story uses irony intentionally, it's reveals a lot about their character. Irony can even be used help convey an important them in a story...

Candy came in, but he was still embarrassed, "You got a nice cozy little place in here," he said to Crooks. "Must be nice to have a room all to yourself this way."

"Sure," said Crooks. "And a manure pile under the window. Sure, it's swell."

What is ironic here?	
What kind of irony is it?	
Make a characterization inference about Crooks, based on his reaction to Candy's observation about his room.	
What message about discrimination do you think Steinbeck is trying to convey through this exchange?	

And sometimes the BEST kind of irony isn't revealed until the very end...

Lennie turned his head.

"No, Lennie. Look down there acrost the river, like you can almost see the place."

Lennie obeyed him. George looked down at the gun.

There were crashing footsteps in the brush now. George turned and looked toward them.

"Go on, George. When we gonna do it?"

"Gonna do it soon."

"Me an' you."

"You.... an' me. Ever'body gonna be nice to you. Ain't gonna be no more trouble. Nobody gonna hurt nobody nor steal from 'em."

Lennie said, "I thought you was mad at me, George."

"No," said George. "No Lennie. I ain't mad. I never been mad, an I ain't now. That's the thing I want you to know."

The voices came close now. George raised the gun and listened to the voices.

Lennie begged, "Le's do it now. Le's get that place now."

"Sure, right now. I gotta. We gotta."

What is ironic here?	
What kind of irony is it?	
Considering the irony of this situation, what do George and Lennie say that makes it so suspenseful?	
In the end, George's description of their "little place" changes subtly. Read it carefully... what does it sound like now? Explain.	