Exploring Irony in “The Story of an Hour” by Kate Chopin

PURPOSE OF LESSON
This lesson uses “The Story of an Hour” by Kate Chopin to introduce students to the concept of irony. Students will be able to reach their own understanding of the purpose of irony in literature through an in-class guided reading and a discussion lead by the teacher. The Students will then participate in a partner activity to highlight specific examples of irony from the text; these examples will serve as a guide for a persuasive essay analyzing the end of the story.

OBJECTIVES:
TSWBAT identify and analyze examples of irony in “The Story of an Hour” and evaluate the effect these examples have on character and plot development by participating in a teacher directed classroom discussion and by working in pairs to complete the “Irony Record” graphic organizer.

TSWBAT define, compare, and contrast the three types of irony: verbal, situational, and dramatic.

TSWBAT demonstrate their ability to draw conclusions and offer supporting textual evidence by writing a persuasive essay that communicates their interpretation of Mrs. Mallard’s death in “The Story of an Hour.”

NJCCC STANDARDS
3.1.12 G. Comprehension Skills and Response to Text
   7. Interpret how literary devices affect reading emotions and understanding.
   8. Analyze and evaluate the appropriateness of diction and figurative language (e.g., irony, paradox).
   11. Analyze how an author’s use of words creates tone and mood, and how choice of words advances the theme or purpose of the work.

3.2.12 A. Writing as a Process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, postwriting)
   2. Use strategies such as graphic organizers and outlines to plan and write drafts

3.2.12 B. Writing as a Product (resulting in a formal product or publication)
   3. Draft a thesis statement and support/defend it through highly developed ideas and content, organization, and paragraph development.

DO NOW / ANTICIPATORY SET (5 Minutes)
Upon entering the classroom, students will respond to the following prompt in their journals:

“Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.”

This is the first line of the story we will be reading today in class. Using this information, make a prediction about the events that may follow.

ACTIVITIES

Guided Reading
1. Introduce “The Story of an Hour” by Kate Chopin and distribute copies to class.
2. Read story out loud, and stop to discuss content at key points. For discussion points and questions see attached copy of story with marginal notes (content of discussion).
3. When reading is finished, segue to Irony Lecture: What is the principal literary element is used in this story?

Intro to Irony
1. There are three types of Irony
   • Verbal Irony: The writer or speaker says one thing, but really means something completely different.
   • Situational Irony: What is expected to happen is the opposite of what actually occurs.
   • Dramatic Irony: The reader or audience knows something that the characters do not.
   • Examples?

Think, Pair, Share
1. Lead In: Which of these types are present in “TSAOH?”
2. Break students into groups of two or three, distribute Irony Record Graphic Organizer to each student.
3. Students will work together to fill out the table.
4. Groups will one of their three examples with the rest of the class
5. Discussion:
   - How is Irony used to forward the plot and character development in “TSOAH?”
   - What effect does irony have on you as the reader?
   - How would “TSOAH” change if there was no irony

CLOSURE
Hand out and explain Writing Assignment
   - Read quote out loud
   - Explain assignment
   - Ask for questions

ASSESSMENT
   Informal: Note classroom participation and engagement. Did students participate constructively in the group discussion and in their pairs?
   Formal: Students will be instructed to complete the Irony Record for homework if they did not do so in class, this will count as one homework grade. Rough drafts of the persuasive essay will be checked for a homework grade the following week, and final drafts will be collected on the due date and assessed for content, readability, format, and mechanics.

MATERIALS
   Journals
   Notebooks
   Copies of “The Story of an Hour”
   Irony Record Graphic Organizer
   Writing Assignment Handouts

METHODS EMPLOYED
   Journaling
   Guided Reading
   Think/Pair/Share Partner Work
   Group Discussion

HOMEWORK
   - Students will complete their Irony Records if they have not already done so.
   - Students will begin working on the rough drafts of their persuasive essays.
DAILY LESSON PLAN: Leading/Focus Questions for Discussion

Lizz Dunn

THE STORY OF AN HOUR
By Kate Chopin

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message. What do we know about Mrs. Mallard? Why are her family members concerned about her reaction to her husband’s death?

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her. Page: 3

Did Mrs. Mallard react in the way her sister expected? What does the author imply is unusual about her reaction?

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window. What does this description about the scene outside Mrs. Mallard’s window reveal? What words does the author use to describe the view? What is happening to the sky?

-There is a strange dichotomy between the dreariness and solitude of Mrs. Mallard’s room and the cheerful spring day outside. This is a drastic change in tone.

The blue sky is beginning to show through the clouds, perhaps a symbol for a change Mrs. Mallard may go through herself.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air. Why did Mrs. Mallard lock herself in her room? -Here is becomes clear that Mrs. Mallard wanted to be alone to think.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will--as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been.

When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: "free, free, free!" The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial.
She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome. **How does Mrs. Mallard feel about her husband’s death? Why?**

There would be no one to live for during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him--sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

"Free! Body and soul free!" she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. "Louise, open the door! I beg, open the door--you will make yourself ill. What are you doing Louise? For heaven's sake open the door." **What is Josephine worried that her sister will do? What does the reader know that Josephine does not?**

"Go away. I am not making myself ill." No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long. **What is this line referring to? What questions does this raise about Mrs. Mallard’s “heart trouble?” Is it possible that her “affliction” could have been caused by other factors?**

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister's importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister's waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Some one was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine's piercing cry; at Richards' quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

But Richards was too late.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease--of joy that kills. **What caused Mrs. Mallard’s death?**

**CONCLUSION: How is the ending surprising? What makes this story so interesting to read?**
# Irony Record

**Title of Story:**

**Author of Story:**

**Group Members:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example of Irony</th>
<th>How is this example Ironic?</th>
<th>What effect does this example have on the story?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type of Irony:</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Type of Irony:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type of Irony:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
“When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease-- of joy that kills.”

Writing Assignment:

Submit a fully developed essay of between 500-700 words in response to the following question:

Early in the story we learn that Mrs. Mallard is “afflicted with heart trouble,” though her unexpected reaction to her husband’s death may suggest an alternative reason for her poor health. What was the cause of Mrs. Mallard’s Death? Explain your point of view.

Assignment Criteria:

Follow the standard format for a persuasive essay discussed in class. Use your journal entry, our in class discussion and the Irony Record as a guide when forming your thesis. Because this assignment is based on your own evaluation of the text there are no right or wrong answers as long as your claims are supported logically by specific evidence from the text.

You may find it useful to consider the following questions:

- What do the characters in the story believe caused Mrs. Mallard’s Death?
- What lead them to this conclusion?
- What do you, as the reader, know that the other characters do not?
- What does Chopin mean by “the joy that kills?” How would Mrs. Mallard’s family interpret this quote differently than Mrs. Mallard, herself, would?

Assessment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>4 - Above Standards</th>
<th>3 - Meets Standards</th>
<th>2 - Approaching Standards</th>
<th>1 - Below Standards</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position Statement</td>
<td>The thesis statement provides a clear, strong statement of the author's position on the topic.</td>
<td>The thesis statement provides a clear statement of the author's position on the topic.</td>
<td>A thesis statement is present, but does not make the the author's position clear.</td>
<td>There is no thesis statement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for Position</td>
<td>Includes 3 or more pieces of evidence from the text that support the thesis statement. The writer anticipates the reader's concerns, biases or arguments and has provided at least 1 counter-argument.</td>
<td>Includes 3 or more pieces of evidence from the text that support the thesis statement.</td>
<td>Includes 2 pieces of evidence.</td>
<td>Includes 1 or fewer pieces of evidence.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence and Examples</td>
<td>Arguments and support are provided in a logical order that makes it easy and interesting to follow the author's train of thought.</td>
<td>Arguments and support are provided in a logical order that makes it easier for the reader to follow the author's train of thought.</td>
<td>Arguments and support are provided in a logical order that makes it easy and interesting to follow the author's train of thought.</td>
<td>Arguments and support are not provided in a logical order, distracting the reader and making the essay not easy to follow.</td>
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<td>All of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position.</td>
<td>Most of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position.</td>
<td>At least one of the pieces of evidence and examples is relevant and has an explanation that shows how that piece of evidence supports the author's position.</td>
<td>Evidence and examples are NOT relevant AND/OR are not explained.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sequencing</td>
<td>Arguments and support are provided in a logical order that makes it easy and interesting to follow the author's train of thought.</td>
<td>Arguments and support are provided in a fairly logical order that makes it reasonably easy to follow the author's train of thought.</td>
<td>A few of the support details or arguments are not in an expected or logical order, distracting the reader and making the essay seem a little confusing.</td>
<td>Many of the support details or arguments are not in an expected or logical order, distracting the reader and making the essay seem very confusing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>All sentences are well-constructed with varied structure. Writer makes very few errors in spelling or grammar.</td>
<td>Most sentences are well-constructed and there is some varied sentence structure in the essay. Some errors in spelling and grammar.</td>
<td>Most sentences are well-constructed, but there is no variation in structure. Several grammar and spelling errors are made.</td>
<td>Most sentences are not well-constructed or varied. There are many errors in grammar and spelling.</td>
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