

Literary Analysis

IRONY

Auden frequently used irony to express ideas about the human condition. This chart shows two types of irony Auden uses in these poems.

Irony	Example
Situational irony shows a contrast between what readers expect and what actually happens.	In “Musée des Beaux Arts,” Auden describes a miraculous birth. You would expect that anyone would be interested in this miracle, but Auden goes on to describe children who are not interested in this event.
Verbal irony occurs when a speaker or writer says one thing and means another.	Auden titles his poem “The Unknown Citizen,” yet describes many ways in which the citizen was well-known and thoroughly documented.

Directions: In the chart, write examples of situational irony in “Musée des Beaux Arts” and verbal irony in “The Unknown Citizen.” Then give your interpretation of Auden’s use of irony in each poem. Tell how the poem would be different if it contained no irony.

	“Musée des Beaux Arts”	“The Unknown Citizen”
	Situational Irony	Verbal Irony
Examples		
Interpretation		
How the Poem Would Be Different Without Irony		