

2. What foolish, flawed, or wrong human action or aspect of society is being lampooned? (There are several societal issues.)

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3. What techniques does Wilde use to attack his target(s)? (Use the "Techniques of Satire" list for help.) What is the effect of each?

4. How might such an attack be received without the humor enveloping its presentation?

Techniques of Satire

Exaggeration/Hyperbole: making a small blemish bigger or a hidden vice or folly larger in order to make it visible is one of the best ways to point out its existence to the audience or to the target itself.

Distortion: twisting or emphasizing some aspect of a condition, individual, or event tends to highlight it. A type of distortion may include the juxtaposition of inappropriate or incongruous ideas or things.

Understatement: when the folly or evil is so great that further exaggeration is impossible, understatement shows its true extent.

Innuendo: a valuable tool for the satirist because it allows him to implicate a target by a completely indirect attack. This is especially useful when the target is dangerous, for it is often possible to deny the insinuation.

Diction: Use of silly or inherently funny words like “newt” and “nostril” can enhance satire.

Invective: a speech that criticizes someone or something fluently and at length. This technique may also be called a diatribe or rant. For example:

- “A knave, a rascal, an eater of broken meats; a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound, filthy worsted-stocking knave; a lily-livered, action-taking, whoreson, glass-gazing, superserviceable, finical rogue; one-trunk-inheriting slave; one that wouldst be a bawd in way of good service, and art nothing but the composition of a knave, beggar, coward, pander, and the son and heir to a mongrel [female dog]: one whom I will beat into clamorous whining if thou deni'st the least syllable of thy addition.” (William Shakespeare, *King Lear*)
- “I see. Well, of course, this is just the sort of blinkered philistine pig-ignorance I've come to expect from you non-creative garbage. You sit there on your loathsome spotty behinds squeezing blackheads, not caring a tinker's cuss for the struggling artist. You excrement, you whining hypocritical toadies with your colour TV sets and your Tony Jacklin golf clubs and your bleeding Masonic secret handshakes.” (John Cleese in Monty Python's “Architect Sketch”)

Pun/Malapropism: Any construction capable of conveying a double meaning is likely to be employed in satire, since multiple meanings form the basis of much of satire.

The list: something highly important or even sacred may be included in a long list of mundane and ordinary objects in order to highlight the fact that an individual, institution, or society has lost its sense of proportion.

Oxymoron used satirically makes for a pointed emphasis on some contradiction in the target's philosophy.

Parable and **allegory** have the same benefits as simile and metaphor, for they can conduct a prolonged discussion on two levels of meaning while at the same time inherently comparing and contrasting those levels without further comment. They also provide the author with some defense if the subject is dangerous, for the satirist can protest that he/she was writing only on the literal level. Famous examples of this technique are *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift and *Animal Farm* by George Orwell.

Sarcasm and **verbal irony** are often employed as tools of satire, as well.

Vices and Follies

Vice (n): any kind of anti-social behavior from moral depravity and corruption (ex. prostitution) to a habitual and trivial defect or shortcoming (ex. nose-picking). Because it covers everything from outright wickedness to petty foibles, almost all humans suffer from some kind of vice; thus, the satirist is never at a loss for material.

Folly (n): a lack of common sense, prudence, and foresight. (ex. The folly of man is that he doesn't understand that history repeats). "Folly" and "fool" come from the same French medieval root, *fol*. The good satirist knows that everyone, even the satirist himself, in time will do something really stupid.

The Seven Deadly Sins

1. Pride/arrogance/hubris
2. Avarice (greed)
3. Wrath (anger, violence, sullenness/sulking)
4. Sloth (laziness, indolence, slovenliness, sloppiness)
5. Lust
6. Envy
7. Gluttony (excessive love of material comforts, food, drink, etc.)

Lust (desire)
Anger (wrath)
Sloth (laziness)
Vanity (pride, arrogance)
Envy (jealousy)
Gluttony (excess)
Avarice(greed)
Seven Deadly Sins

Other Vices and Follies

Stupidity
Gullibility
Poor decision making
Short-sightedness
Narrow mindedness
Intolerance/prejudice
Pettiness
Careless use of language
Lack of self control
Indecisiveness
Shallow flirtatiousness
Vanity/conceit/egoism
Self-centeredness
Apathy
Cynicalness
Selfishness
Corruption
Vice
Wastefulness
Hypocrisy
Careless spending

Dishonesty
Irresponsibility
Excess of any kind
Willful ignorance
Timidity
Prudery
Crime
Boorishness
Rudeness
Gross conduct
Silliness
Immaturity
Stubbornness

In Politics and Government

Warmongering
Unnecessary taxation and spending
Nepotism/favoritism
Poor handling of crises and disasters

Misuse of power
Inappropriate or immoral conduct of leaders
Injustice
Human rights violations

In Institutions and Businesses

Inefficiency
Lack of effectiveness
Bad management
Poor workmanship
Mendacity (lying)
False advertising
Bad products
Inhumanity
Greed
Immorality
Exploitation of workers
Bad environmental impact