IDIOMS AND IRONY

Activity One – read the song lyrics concentrating on your pronunciation and intonation.

An old man turned ninety-eight
He won the lottery and died the next day
It's a black fly in your Chardonnay
It's a death row pardon two minutes too late
And isn't it ironic... don't you think

It's like rain on your wedding day
It's a free ride when you've already paid
It's the good advice that you just didn't take
Who would've thought... it figures

Mr. **Play It Safe** was afraid to fly
He packed his suitcase and kissed his kids goodbye
He waited his whole damn life to take that flight
And as the plane crashed down he thought
"Well isn't this nice..."
And isn't it ironic... don't you think

It's like rain on your wedding day
It's a free ride when you've already paid
It's the good advice that you just didn't take
Who would've thought... it figures

Well life has a funny way of sneaking up on you
When you think everything's okay and everything's going right
And life has a funny way of helping you out when
You think everything's gone wrong and everything blows up
In your face

A traffic jam when you're already late
A no-smoking sign on your cigarette break
It's like ten thousand spoons when all you need is a knife
It's meeting the man of my dreams
And then meeting his beautiful wife
And isn't it ironic...don't you think
A little too ironic...and, yeah, I really do think...

It's like rain on your wedding day
It's a free ride when you've already paid
It's the good advice that you just didn't take
Who would've thought**... it figures**

Life has a funny way of sneaking up on you
Life has a funny, funny way of helping you out
Helping you out.

EASY ACCESS ENGLISH – IDIOMS AND IRONY.

Activity Two – the underlined expressions are all idiomatic. Try to use each one of them in another sentence.

Activity Three – watch the song video and follow the lyrics.

Activity Four – Isn't it ironic.

Write your own ironic sentences – try to use some idiomatic expressions of your own.

1. How ironic, Just when I fell asleep the alarm clock went off!
2. …
3. …
4. …
5. …
6. …
7. …
8. …
9. …
10. …

Activity Five – read the text.

It isn't Ironic…

Alanis Morissette has taken more than her share of hits for the song "Ironic." Critics have argued that she doesn't really understand the meaning of the word, and that the examples of irony she gives are simply not ironic. To be perfectly honest, I'm more surprised that there are music critics who do know what "ironic" means than I am that there are 21 year-old pop singers who don't. But that's a whole other essay.

It's not an easy word to define. Not even language scholars agree on whether a certain situation is "ironic" or not. So in the interest of fairness, and erring generously in her favour, I took the time to examine the lyrics of Alanis's song, and discover for myself what was truly ironic and what wasn't. Results are tallied below:

1. "An old man turned ninety-eight/He won the lottery and died the next day."
While an amusing (if morbid) coincidence, there is nothing particularly ironic about the death. It is certainly an awe-inspiring sequence of events -- the gentleman celebrating his 98th birthday, winning the lottery, and dying all in a two-day period. What kind of shitty luck is that?

2. "It's a black fly in your Chardonnay."
The irony here is that there is nothing remotely ironic about this line. In perhaps her one sweet moment of unadulterated genius, Alanis has shown us the true meaning of irony by giving an example of it that isn't ironic at all! Get it? It's a deliberate contrast between apparent and intended meaning: the *textbook definition* of irony!

3. "It's a death row pardon two minutes too late."
This one's kind of a coin toss, and really depends on the context. **4. "It's like rain on your wedding day."**
Nope.

5. "It's a free ride when you've already paid."
Sorry, no. Alanis seems to think that "irony" means "bad timing".

6. "It's the good advice that you just didn't take."
This is very close! Ignoring good advice *is* ironic, but only if the listener suffers some kind of befitting karmic punishment as a result. Alanis gets half a point for the setup, but because she only sketchily implies the irony, we cannot grant her full credit.

7. "Mr. Play It Safe was afraid to fly/ He packed his suitcase and kissed his kids good-bye/ He waited his whole damn life to take that flight/And as the plane crashed down he

thought, Well, isn't this nice?" This quatrain is truly a feather in Alanis's cap, because it contains not one, but *two* legitimate instances of actual, honest to God irony. A) It is, indeed, ironic that someone who is afraid of flying would die in a plane crash during his first flight; it's an unexpected disruption in the normal course of events that gives us insight into human folly. And B) said someone is being, you guessed it, *ironic* when he says, "Well, isn't this nice?" since we must presume that he is being sarcastic.

8. "It's a traffic jam when you're already late." See No. 5. When Alanis finds a concept she likes, she runs with it.

9. "A no-smoking sign on your cigarette break." Oh, come on. You were doing so well with the plane guy.

10. "It's like ten thousands spoons when all you need is a knife."
If the speaker is rifling through a silverware drawer which is known to contain knives, then this is ironic. If she's in a spoon factory, it isn't.

11. "It's meeting the man of my dreams/ And then meeting his beautiful wife." The implied irony here is that Alanis has searched high and low for her soul mate finds him only to discover that, wouldn't you know it? he's married. Sheesh, all the good ones are taken, aren't they? But a moment's consideration will show that the situation is actually in no way ironic, since we would *expect* all the good ones to be taken. What would be ironic would be to meet some ugly, stupid, fat kid that Alanis spurned while a cast member of Nickelodeon's *You Can't Do That on Television*, and then meet *his* beautiful wife.

Final Tally

Attempts at describing irony: 11

Successful attempts: 2.5

Confusion of irony with "poor sense of timing": 6

Completely missing the term: 3

-- *Matt Sturges*

Activity Six – **Idiomatic** – underline all of the idiomatic words and expressions from the text and then try to use them in your own sentence.

Activity Seven – Definitions – This is the dictionary definition for irony – do you agree with the author of the article. Do you think Alanis is confused ?

i·ro·ny *n. pl.* **i·ro·nies**
1.
a. The use of words to express something different from and often opposite to their literal meaning.
b. An expression or utterance marked by a deliberate contrast between apparent and intended meaning.
c. A literary style employing such contrasts for humorous or rhetorical effect.
2.
a. Incongruity between what might be expected and what actually occurs.
b. An occurrence, result, or circumstance notable for such incongruity.

Activity Eight – Here is the definition for idiomatic expression –
Noun1.idiomatic expression - an expression whose meanings cannot be inferred from the meanings of the words that make it up.

Do you think that we were correct in our choice of expressions we thought were idiomatic?

Homework – find your ten favourite idioms and use them in ten sentences.
http://www.usingenglish.com/reference/idioms/