

# Sarcasm

## Definition of Sarcasm

Sarcasm is derived from the French word *sarcasme*, and also from the Greek word *sarkazein*, which means “tear flesh,” or “grind the teeth.” Somehow, in simple words it means to speak bitterly.

Generally, the literal meaning is different than what the [speaker](#) intends to say through sarcasm. Sarcasm is a literary and rhetorical device that is meant to mock, often with satirical or ironic remarks, with a purpose to amuse and hurt someone, or some section of society, simultaneously. For instance:

“I didn’t attend the funeral, but I sent a nice letter saying I approved of it.” (Mark Twain)

## Types of Sarcasm

Sarcasm often depends upon the [voice](#) tone. There are seven types:

**Self-Deprecating Sarcasm** – This category of sarcasm expresses an overstated sense of inferiority and worthlessness.

**Brooding Sarcasm** – In this criticism, the speaker utters something polite. However, the tone of his speech has a marked bitterness to it.

**Deadpan Sarcasm** – It is expressed without emotion or laughter, making it difficult for the listener to judge whether the speaker is joking or mocking.

**Polite Sarcasm** – A speaker is said to have delivered a polite sarcasm when his listeners only get to realize that his kind remark was a sarcastic one after they had given it some thought.

**Obnoxious Sarcasm** – This kind of sarcasm makes people feel like punching the speaker in the face. It is not very funny, and it gets under your skin.

**Manic Sarcasm** – This type of sarcasm is delivered in an unnatural happy mood, which makes the speaker look like he has gone crazy.

**Raging Sarcasm** – This kind of sarcasm relies mainly on [exaggeration](#) and violent threats.

## Examples of Sarcasm in Literature

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### Example #1: *Julius Caesar* (By William Shakespeare)

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“Friends, countrymen, lend me your ears.”

Mark Antony repeatedly uses the phrase “honorable man” in this speech several, though Brutus’ actions in murdering Caesar were definitely not honorable. His [repetition](#) of this phrase completely reverses the literal meaning of the phrase.

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### Example #2: *Hamlet, Act 1 Scene 2* (By William Shakespeare)

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“Thrift, thrift, Horatio! The funeral bak’d meats did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.”

The most disturbing issue to Hamlet in this play is his mother’s marriage to his uncle. While talking to Horatio in a sarcastic manner, Hamlet sums up the ridiculous affairs using this statement.

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### Example #3: *Mending Walls* (By Robert Frost)

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“Good fences make good neighbors.”

This line points out, in a sarcastic way, two neighbors who have made a wall between them. However, this wall falls apart every winter, therefore the neighbors meet and mend it, hence spending more time together in this way.

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### Example #4: *Road not taken* (By Robert Frost)

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“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,  
I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the  
difference.”

The poet is talking about two roads, one is not traveled often by people, and the other one is chosen by the majority of people. He had taken the less-traveled road. Frost uses a sarcastic remark, that he feels regret for having chosen this path or road which made a difference.

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#### **Example #5: *Canterbury Tales* (By Geoffrey Chaucer)**

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“A FRERE ther was, a wantown and a merye,  
A limitour, a ful solempne man,  
So muche of daliaunce and fair langage.

He hadde maad ful many a mariage  
Of yonge wommen, at his owne cost.  
Ful wel biloved and famulier was he  
With frankeleyns over-al in his contree,  
He wiste that a man was repentaunt.  
For many a man so hard is of his herte...”

Here, Chaucer describes the [character](#) of the friar in a sarcastic manner. He is a clergyman, who accepts bribes from wealthy people of the town. He uses money that he takes from confessions on merry-making and women; and doesn't care about the people.

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#### **Example #6: *Romeo and Juliet* (By William Shakespeare)**

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“Wherefore art thou, Romeo?”

This is the central [conflict](#) in this play, when Juliet sarcastically asks Romeo that why his name is Romeo, since they could never be together as their families were enemies.

### **Function of Sarcasm**

Sarcasm can be used for many purposes. However, in most of the cases, it is utilized as a mask or scathe. Others use it as a defensive mechanism. It is used when bitterness is hard to express in a pleasant way, or the objective is to say something without hurting somebody directly. The basic purpose of sarcasm in literary works is to bring a flavor in order to make the stories seem real to the readers.