**What Is Satire? (with Examples)**

Satire is the use of humour, sarcasm, [irony](http://www.grammar-monster.com/glossary/irony.htm), or [exaggeration](http://www.grammar-monster.com/glossary/hyperbole.htm) to expose the flaws or vices of individuals, institutions, or groups (including their ideas, claims, and proposals).   
  
Satire is most commonly used in the context of topical issues, particularly in the political arena.

**Examples of Satire**

Here are some examples of satire:

* If voting changed anything, they would make it illegal.

(This uses sarcasm to undermine democracy.)

* Ninety percent of the politicians give the other ten percent a bad reputation.

(This uses exaggeration to highlight the vices of politicians.)

* When I was a boy, I was told that anybody could become President. Now I'm beginning to believe it.

(This uses humour to allude that the current President has no talent.)

## Examples of Satire in Everyday Life

Most political cartoons which we witness every day in newspapers and magazines are examples of satire. These cartoons criticize some recent actions of political figures in a comical way.

Some shows on television are satire examples like *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report*, and *The Larry Sanders Show*. These shows [claim](http://literarydevices.net/claim/) to target what they think are stupid political and social viewpoints.

Let us see a sample of Stephen Colbert’s social satire:

“If this is going to be a Christian nation that doesn’t help the poor, either we have to pretend that Jesus was just as selfish as we are, or we’ve got to acknowledge that He commanded us to love the poor and serve the needy without condition and then admit that we just don’t want to do it.”

## Satire Examples in Literature

### Example #1

There are numerous examples of satire in Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*. He uses satire as a tool to share his ideas and opinion on slavery, human nature and many other issues that afflicted American society at that time.

Below are a few citations from the novel that demonstrate satire:

* “What’s the use you learning to do right, when it’s troublesome to do right and isn’t no trouble to do wrong, and the wages is just the same?” (Chap 16)
* “There warn’t anybody at the church, except maybe a hog or two, for there warn’t any lock on the door, and hogs likes a puncheon floor in summer-time because it’s cool. If you notice, most folks don’t go to church only when they’ve got to; but a hog is different.” (Chap 18)
* “The pitifulest thing out is a mob; that’s what an army is–a mob; they don’t fight with courage that’s born in them, but with courage that’s borrowed from their mass, and from their officers. But a mob without any man at the head of it is beneath pitifulness.” (chap 22)

### Example #2

Alexander Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock* is an example of poetic satire in which he has satirized the upper middle class of eighteenth century England. It exposes the vanity of young fashionable ladies and gentlemen and the frivolity of their actions. For example, Pope says about Belinda after losing her lock of hair:

“Whether the nymph shall break Diana’s law,  
Or some frail china jar receive a flaw,  
Or stain her honor, or her new brocade”

The line mocks at the values of the fashionable class of that age. The trivial things were thought of as equal to significant things. For Belinda, the loss of her virtue becomes equal to a China jar being cracked.

### Example #3

Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver Travels* is one of the finest satirical works in English Literature. Swift relentlessly satirizes politics, religion, and Western Culture. Criticizing party politics in England, Swift writes,

“that for above seventy Moons past there have been two struggling Parties in this Empire, under the Names of Tramecksan and Slamecksan from the high and low Heels on their shoes, by which they distinguish themselves.”

During Swift’s times, two rival political parties, the Whigs and the Tories, dominated the English political scene. Similarly, “The Kingdom of Lilliput” is dominated by two parties distinguished by the size of the heels of their boots. By the trivial disputes between the two Lilliputian parties”, Swift satirizes the minor disputes of the two English parties of his period.