

Beyond the Bin

Distinguish rhetorical techniques and evaluate what they make readers notice.

11.RI.2.C “Recognize and analyze the author’s purpose and impact of ambiguity, contradiction, paradox, oxymoron, irony, sarcasm, overstatement, and understatement in informational texts.”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Mark the examples named in Questions 1-4. Note literal meaning, intended meaning and likely effect. Explain any overlap between techniques.

A Cup Program Under Review

- ① In this fictional town report, a reusable-cup program promised a “light load” for volunteers without saying whether that meant low weight or little work. Two statements in its Monday update could not both be true: “No cups were lost during Saturday’s event” and “Eighteen cups were lost during Saturday’s event.” The report supplied no correction. Residents deserved clear terms and reconciled records before judging the program. Yet the basic idea had a useful puzzle: “To use fewer cups, we must use each cup more.” Repeated use of each object could reduce the number of separate cups needed.
- ② The report described the unanswered requests for a pickup schedule as a “deafening silence.” Silence makes no sound, but the absence of a reply had become impossible to ignore. Meanwhile, organizers shipped the new reusable cups in individual throwaway wrappers, undermining the launch’s stated aim of avoiding single-use packaging. A volunteer stared at the discarded wrappers and said, “Wonderful, exactly the waste-free welcome we wanted.” The apparent praise was a pointed complaint. Readers could recognize the gap between the program’s aim and its actions without concluding that every reusable-cup program must fail.

- ③ A campaign slogan claimed that one reusable cup would “erase every waste problem on Earth.” That promise exceeded what any single cup could do. At the other extreme, an organizer called a missed pickup that left hundreds of dirty cups outside the hall “a slight inconvenience.” The phrase minimized the cleanup burden. The report urged residents to demand a workable collection plan, corrected counts and evidence of actual reuse. Its vivid language made those problems memorable, but neither a slogan nor a sarcastic comment could establish the program’s total environmental impact.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

- ① Explain the ambiguity in “light load” and the contradiction in the two loss counts. How do both serve the report’s purpose?

- ② Explain the paradox about using cups and the oxymoron “deafening silence.” How does each serve the report’s purpose?

- ③ Distinguish the wrappers’ situational irony from the volunteer’s sarcasm. What does each invite readers to question?

4 Compare the Earth-wide promise with “a slight inconvenience.” How do their opposite distortions of scale support the report’s purpose?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a 70-90-word public-information paragraph about a different fictional environmental problem. Include a clear oxymoron or paradox and a sarcastic or ironic example. End by explaining how both choices support your purpose; do not invent real-world statistics.

Your public-information paragraph

Use 70-90 words, make the two techniques clear in context, and finish by explaining their purpose.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Mark the examples named in Questions 1-4. Note literal meaning, intended meaning and likely effect. Explain any overlap between techniques. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Explain the ambiguity in “light load” and the contradiction in the two loss counts. How do both serve the report’s purpose?	Light load permits weight or workload interpretations. Zero and eighteen lost cups contradict each other about the same event. Highlighting both unclear wording and incompatible records supports the demand for clarity and accountability.
2	Explain the paradox about using cups and the oxymoron “deafening silence.” How does each serve the report’s purpose?	Fewer objects can provide more repeated uses: the apparent contradiction explains reuse. Deafening and silence combine opposing meanings, making the missing reply conspicuous. The phrases support reuse while demanding a workable schedule.
3	Distinguish the wrappers’ situational irony from the volunteer’s sarcasm. What does each invite readers to question?	A launch opposing single-use packaging produces throwaway wrappers, contrary to its aim. The volunteer’s apparent praise means criticism: sarcastic verbal irony. Both question the organizers’ consistency, without proving that all reuse programs fail.
4	Compare the Earth-wide promise with “a slight inconvenience.” How do their opposite distortions of scale support the report’s purpose?	The promise overstates one cup’s power; slight inconvenience understates the described cleanup burden. Exposing exaggeration and minimization encourages realistic expectations and accountability rather than accepting either claim at face value.

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At our fictional school, unopened lunches keep reaching the trash. Students asked for a discussion of meal portions, but the request met a deafening silence: nobody answered. “Excellent, another untouched lunch for the bin,” one student remarked as a sealed sandwich fell. The school should invite students to explain what they leave and why before changing portions. The oxymoron makes the missing response conspicuous, while the sarcastic praise criticizes waste; both encourage listening before making a new plan.

TEACHER ASSESSMENT NOTES

All people, events and counts are fictional. Ambiguity permits multiple readings; contradiction makes incompatible claims. A paradox can reveal a truth through apparent contradiction; an oxymoron compresses opposing ideas into words. Sarcasm can use verbal irony, so those labels may overlap with explanation. Accept defensible alternatives tied to literal/intended meaning and purpose. Do not classify ordinary differences as contradictions merely because they contrast. Definitions checked against Merriam-Webster, entries paradox and oxymoron ([merriam-webster.com/dictionary/](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/)).