Ironic - Alanis Morissette - Notes

- **Activity types**: vocabulary, rhyming words, gap fill.
- **Grammar**: Present Simple, Past Simple.
- **Level**: Intermediate, Upper-Intermediate.
- **Note**: The fourth single from 1995’s Jagged Little Pill, this was the subject of much linguistic debate. It comprises a series of vignettes describing unfortunate but decidedly non-ironic situations followed with the question "Isn't it ironic?". This is discussed on http://www.copyblogger.com/did-alanis-morissette-get-irony-right/. Irish comedian Ed Byrne jokes that "the only ironic thing about that song is it's called ironic and it's written by a woman who doesn't know what irony is. That's quite ironic.". He performs a sketch in which he goes through the song, working out how to change the various unfortunate incidents mentioned in the song, into ironies. You can see this on youtube.com or on www.tuneintoenglish.com.

1) Write the word IRONY on the board. Ask students if they know what it means, and explain it to them.

www.dictionary.com describes irony as an outcome of events contrary to what was, or might have been, expected, or the use of words to mean something very different from what they appear on the surface to mean. Jonathan Swift uses irony in "A Modest Proposal" when he suggests the eating of babies as a solution to overpopulation and starvation in Ireland.

Elicit examples from them.

2) Give each student a copy of the worksheet. Ask them to fold the page, so as they cannot see the lyrics. Working in pairs, they complete the first Vocabulary activity.

**Key**: (the number in brackets are the answers to the next activity)

1. fly     (1)
2. death row   (3)
3. to sneak upon   (6)
4. pardon   (4)
5. to blow up   (8)
6. to help out   (7)
7. “It figures!”   (5)
8. Chardonnay   (2)

3) Play the song. Ask students to number the words in the order they hear them (only count the first time, if more than one appears).

4) Ask students to work in pairs to write the opposites of the listed words. Play the song again, so they can check and correct.

**Key**:  

- life  
- free  
- goodbye  
- died  
- won  
- dreams  
- everything  
- late  

- wrong  
- rain  
- too late  
- beautiful wife  
- packed  
- man  
- black  
- old

5) Students unfold the page, and before listening again, complete the lyrics using context and their previous listening.

6) Correct, play the song, and sing together.

7) **Follow Up:**
Ask the students if they think these are really ironic situations (see notes). Can they make any ironic statements, rewrite any of the situations in the song to make them ironic?
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Match the words and phrases to their definitions

1. small winged insect
2. where a prisoner awaits execution
3. to approach somebody silently, from the back
4. forgiveness
5. to explode
6. to give assistance or support
7. what you say when something was expected or seems logical
8. a kind of white wine

to blow up
“It figures!”
Chardonnay
to help out
pardon
to sneak upon
fly
death row

Write the opposites of these words

dead
for money
hello
lived
lost (past simple of the verb to lose, e.g. a race)
nightmares
nothing
on time

right (correct)
sun
too soon
ugly husband
unpacked (past simple of the verb to unpack)
woman
white
young

__________________________________________________FOLD_______________________________________________

Listen again and fill in the gaps using the opposites above

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

Chorus:

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

Mr. Play It Safe was afraid to fly
He _______ his suitcase and kissed his kids
He waited his whole damn _______ 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?

Repeat Chorus

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

It's a traffic jam when you're already _______
It's 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 _______ of my _______
And then meeting his _______
And isn't it ironic... don't you think?
A little too ironic... and yeah I really do think...

Repeat Chorus

Life has a funny way of sneaking up on you
Life has a funny, funny way of helping you out, helping you out
Ironic - Alanis Morissette – Complete

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

Chorus:

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
And 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?

Repeat Chorus

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

It's a traffic jam when you're already late
It's 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...

Repeat Chorus

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