A Closer Look at Irony

The poems “Richard Cory” by E.A. Robinson and “Ironic” by Alanis Morisette both use irony to create a deeper perspective of the complexity of human beings and of life in general. First, a strong example of the irony that Alanis Morisette uses in her song “Ironic” is the line “It’s meeting the man of my dreams and then meeting his beautiful wife.” Much to the chagrin of the speaker, this particular line states the unfortunate ironic experience of expecting and believing that a wonderful man is who was meant for them. However the truth is quite the opposite. This use of irony very strongly reveals the theme of this song to readers because it uses an emotional example that readers can connect to; consequently pulling them deeper into the song. Morisette also writes many other ironic quotes including, when a plane crashed down “[a man] thought well isn’t this nice.” Morisette uses quite a tragic example of verbal irony which can be easily justified by the definition of verbal irony. The man’s thoughts when he was plummeting to his certain death were obviously contrary to how he felt during the dire circumstances. Furthermore, this example captivates the audience and opens to them a portal into their own lives, every person has at one point used verbal irony to make light of a situation, proving that this can be a more gracious kind of irony to the human mind. A third example of irony in the song “Ironic” is “It’s a no smoking sign on your cigarette break.” This specific example of situational irony is a window into everyday life. It’s a kind of irony all human beings have encountered. It’s also a more annoying side of irony where somebody is waiting, itching to do something but unexpectedly the situation becomes impossible. Examples like this one give the poem a sense of familiarity to the reader even though they may never have seen it before. The final example of irony comes from the poem “Richard Cory.” The situational irony in this poem is that all the through the first three stanzas the poem explains hoe seemingly perfect Richard Cory’s life is, but when the last line is read, reality says otherwise. The reader expects Richard’s life to be great because he has wealth, he is beautiful and everyone admires him, but the irony lies in what we do not recognize. Too soon does the reader seem to judge about this character and the Bam! The last line “And, Richard Cory, one calm summer night went home and put a bullet through his head” hits them like a freight train. The irony can be traced back right to the age old saying “Don’t judge a book by its cover.” And ultimately that’s what irony is all about. It’s a tool that can be used to show and remind that sometimes the unexpected is inevitable. In conclusion the two authors utilize irony to further capture the reader’s imagination and reveal to them a different perspective of the poem and of the world around them.