**LEQ 1:**

**Practice Analyzing Irony**

**Short Story:**

**“Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow” by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.**

**Summary:**

*The story is set in the year 2158 A.D. In this future society, a drug called anti-gerasone is used to prevent people from aging and dying. As a result, the world is overpopulated with humans. Our main characters, Lou and Emerald Schwartz, live in a crowded two bedroom apartment with many of their relatives. Since Gramps is the eldest in this family, he gets a bedroom all to himself, while the rest of the family is cramped in the other bedroom and living areas.*

*In the opening scene, Lou and Em are sitting on their balcony discussing Gramps. They are angry at him because he continues to take the anti-aging drug and is 172 years old. In addition, he keeps changing his will every time someone in the family angers him. Lou and Em indulge in the thought of diluting his drug, so he can die. However, they quickly dismiss the idea.*

**Excerpt:**

Emerald shook her head wearily and covered her eyes. “I dunno, I dunno, I dunno. All I know is, something’s just got to be done.” She sighed. “Sometimes I wish they’d left a couple of diseases kicking around somewhere, so I could get one and go to bed for a little while. Too many people! She cried, and her words cackled and gabbled and died in a thousand asphalt-paved, skyscraper-walled courtyards.

Lou laid his hand on her shoulder tenderly. “Aw, hon, I hate to see you down in the dumps like this.”

“If we just had a car, like the folks used to in the old days,” said Em, “we could go for a drive, and get away from people for a little while. Gee – if *those* weren’t the days!”

“Yeah,” said Lou, “before they’d used up all the metal.”

“We’d hop in. and Pop’d drive up to a filling station and say, ‘Fillerup!’”

“That *was* the nuts, wasn’t it – before they’d used up all the gasoline.”

“And we’d go for a carefree ride in the country.”

“Yeah – all seems like a fairyland now, doesn’t it, Em? Hard to believe there really used to be all that space between the cities.”

“And when we got hungry,” said Em, “we’d find ourselves a restaurant, and walk in, big as you please, and say, ‘I’ll have a steak and French-fries, I believe,’ or ‘How are the pork chops today?’” She licked her lips, and her eyes glistened.

“Yeah man!” growled Lou. “How’d you like a hamburger with the works, Em?”

“Mmmmmmmm.”

“If anybody’d offered us processed seaweed in those days, we would have spit right in his eye, huh, Em?”

“Or processed sawdust,” said Em.

Doggedly, Lou tried to find the cheery side of the situation.

“Well, anyway, they’ve got the stuff so it tastes a lot less like seaweed and sawdust than it did at first; and they say it’s actually better for us than what we used to eat.”

“I felt fine!” said Em fiercely.

Lou shrugged. “Well, you’ve got to realize, the world wouldn’t be able to support twelve billion people if it wasn’t for processed seaweed and sawdust. I mean, it’s a wonderful thing, really. I guess. That’s what they say.” (Tone Q here)

“They say the first thing that pops into their heads,” said Em. She closed her eyes. “Golly – remember shopping, Lou? Remember how the stores used to fight to get our folks to buy something? You didn’t have to wait for somebody to die to get a bed or chairs or a stove or anything like that. Just went in – bing! – and bought whatever you wanted. Gee whiz, that was nice, before they used up all the raw materials. I was just a little kid then, but I can remember so plain.”

Depressed, Lou walked listlessly to the balcony’s edge and looked up at the clean, cold, bright stars against the black velvet of infinity. “Remember when we used to be bugs on science fiction, Em? Flight seventeen, leaving for Mars, launching ramp twelve. ‘Board! All non-technical personnel kindly remain in bunkers. Ten seconds . . . nine . . .eight . . . seven . . . six . . . five . . . four . . . three . . . two . . . *one! Main Stage! Barrrrroooom!”*

“Why worry about what was going on on earth?” said Em, looking up at the stars with him. “In another few years, we’d all be shooting through space to start life all over again on a new planet.”

Lou sighed. “Only it turns out you need something about twice the size of the Empire State Building to get one lousy colonist to Mars. And for another couple of trillion bucks he could take his wife and dog. *That’s* the way to lick overpopulation – *emigrate!”*

“Lou -- ?”

“Hmmm?”

“When’s the Five-Hundred-Mile Speedway Race?

“Uh – Memorial Day, May thirtieth.”

She bit her lip. “Was that awful of me to ask?”

“Not very, I guess. Everybody in the apartment’s looked it up to make sure.”

“I don’t want to be awful,” said Em, “but you’ve just got to talk over these things now and then, and get them out of your system.”

“Sure you do. Feel better?”

“Yes – and I’m not going to lose my temper anymore, and I’m going to be just as nice to him as I know how.”

“That’s my Em.”

They squared shoulders, smiled bravely, and went back inside.

**Continued Summary:**

*The next part opens with Gramps Schwartz bullying the family as he is watching the television. Lou upsets him and Gramps changes his will scratching out Lou’s name and replacing it with Lou’s father, Willy, who is now the new favorite. Later that night, Lou catches his cousin, Morty, replacing Gramp’s anti-gerasone with tap water. Instead of warning Gramps, who would make life miserable for everyone in the apartment, Lou decides to refill the bottle with anti-gerasone. As he is doing this, the bottle slips from Lou’s hand and smashes on the bathroom floor. Gramps walks in, sees the mess, tells him to clean it, and retreats to his private bedroom. Lou and Em are fearful of the repercussions from Gramps. The next morning, the Schwartzes find that Gramps room is empty and there is a note left on the dresser. It is another revised will. In it, Gramps states that all his property will not be divided, but held in common equally among all generations. A struggle breaks out, and two hours later, the cops come to stop the fight. The Schwartzes are hauled away in patrol wagons and ambulances.*

**Continued Excerpt:**

Em and Lou were in adjacent four-by-eight cells, and were stretched out peacefully on their cots.

“Em – “ called Lou through the partition, “you got a washbasin all your own, too?”

“Sure. Washbasin, bed, light – the works. Ha! And we thought Gramp’s room was something. How long’s this been going on?” She held out her hand. “For the first time in forty years, hon, I haven’t got the shakes.”

“Cross your fingers,” said Lou, “the lawyer’s going to try to get us a year.”

“Gee,” said Em dreamily, “I wonder what kind of wires you’d have to pull to get solitary?”

“All right, pipe down,” said the turnkey, “or I’ll toss the whole kit and caboodle of you right out. And first one who lets on to anybody outside how good jail is ain’t never getting back in!”

The prisoners fell silent.

**Conclusion Summary:**

*Back at the apartment, Gramps returns home after spending time in a tavern. He hired a cleaning lady to straighten up and the best lawyer in town to convict his descendants. After moving the daybed in front of the television screen, he begins writing down the address for a new product being advertised on the television screen: super-anti-gerasone! Guaranteed to make you look, feel, and act younger. Gramps smiles. He is excited about the future.*