“The Censors”
by Luisa Valenzuela

Background Notes, Vocabulary, Literary Terms
Luisa Valenzuela

1938 –

Born in Buenos Aires – the capital of Argentina

Like many other Latin American writers, she focuses on political issues

Having lived through this repressive regime, she is a strong defender of human rights

Her story “The Censors” shows one aspect of the repression she has experienced
Argentina’s “Dirty War”

- The Dirty War lasted from 1976 – 1983
- It was a seven-year campaign by the Argentine government against suspected dissidents and subversives
- Many people – both opponents of the government and innocent people simply “disappeared” in the middle of the night
- These people were taken to secret government detention centers where they were tortured and eventually killed
Where is Argentina?
What caused the war?

- After the death of President Juan Peron in 1974, his wife assumed power. She was not, however, a very powerful leader and soon the government was overtaken by a coup.
- This military junta maintained their strong grip on the nation by cracking down on anybody they thought was against them or challenging their authority.
- Casualty counts from this war range from 10,000 to 30,000 people.
The Missing . . .
The Irony

- Although this strong group in power acted out against anyone in their country who opposed them, it was an outside foe who eventually brought the regime to an end.
- It was clear to the world that the government was behind these tens of thousands of kidnappings.
- The junta was facing increasing opposition to their human rights record as well as corruption.
The military regime tried to take over the Falkland Islands – which England administers and Argentina claims.

They lost, and England claimed many Argentine POWs and ended their coup.

The end of this Dirty War restored basic liberties and retracted its ban on political parties.

Raul Alfonsin’s civilian government took control of the country in December 1983.
Where are the Falkland Islands?
Setting

Time and place of the action

- Time can include not only the historical period – past, present, future – but also a specific year, season, time of day
- Place may involve not only the geographical place – a region, country, state, or town – but also the social, economic, or cultural environment
Ironic

The general term for literary techniques that portray differences between appearance and reality, or expectation and result.

- **Verbal Irony** – words are used to suggest the opposite of what is meant
  - “That’s a great outfit!” (snicker)

- **Dramatic Irony** – contradiction between what a character thinks and what the reader or audience knows is true
  - Man thinks everyone forgot his birthday, while behind the door his friends are waiting with a surprise birthday party.

- **Situational Irony** – an event occurs that directly contradicts the expectations of the characters, the reader, or the audience
  - The last scene of a movie shows the main character alive and well after the previous scene had everyone believing that he was dead.
Vocabulary

- ulterior (643)
- staidness (643)