





Unit and Lesson Context

- This Lesson 2: Satire & “A Modest Proposal” from English II, *The Importance of Being Earnest* Unit.
- Lesson 2 is an introduction to satire for students before they begin reading a longer satirical play. They may have some exposure to satire from English I, but they will need to explore this style of writing in greater depth.
- The focus of this lesson is the essay “A Modest Proposal” by Jonathan Swift.



Unit Plan Daily Details

Lesson 2: Satire & “A Modest Proposal”	
What	
Standards: <i>What knowledge and/or skills are students are working towards?</i>	Daily Objectives: <i>What will students do today?</i>
<p>2.7(C) analyze the function of dramatic conventions such as asides, soliloquies, dramatic irony, and satire</p> <p>2.9(B)(ii) develop drafts into a focused, structured, and coherent piece of writing in timed and open-ended situations by developing an engaging idea reflecting depth of thought with specific details, examples, and commentary</p> <p>2.8(F): Analyze author’s diction and syntax</p>	<p>SWBAT understand the literary technique of satire and identify the technique in Swift’s <i>A Modest Proposal</i></p> <p>SWBAT draft a satirical proposal to resolve a present-day social issue</p>
Key Points: <i>What will students know today?</i>	
What Key Points	
<p>Task</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehension: the ability to understand • Draft: to make a version of writing that will need more work in order to be finished 	<p>Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inference: a guess or conclusion a reader makes based on what is in the text. An inference is not something that the author tells the reader directly but something that the reader must conclude on their own. An inference must be based on text evidence, or what the text says. • Satire: a humorous criticism that makes fun of people or institutions so that they change behavior
How Key Points	
<p>Create an inference:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Find text evidence that leads you to make a connection to yourself, another text, or information from the world around you. 2. Explain your background knowledge that relates to the evidence. 3. Share an idea that combines the text with your background knowledge. <p>Write an argument paragraph:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Start with a thesis statement that directly answers the prompt with an arguable claim 2. Contextualize text or observational evidence that supports your claim 3. Make connections between your evidence and the claim 4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 until you have fully developed your argument 5. Conclude by presenting a reasonable, specific call to action or describing how the issue is significant 	
<p>OUTPUT: “A Modest Proposal” informal writing</p>	
How	
<p style="text-align: center;">Materials:</p> <p> U3 L2: Satire & A Modest Proposal</p> <p> Satire (optional) – slides snipped below</p> <p> Gallup Data</p>	
<p>Guiding Question: How is satire used to create social change?</p>	

DO FIRST (10)

- **Distribute**  **U2 L3A: Satire & A Modest Proposal** without context and ask students to read it **silently (Q1)**. Give students 5-7 minutes to read the article before engaging them in the following **discussion** questions:
 - Do you agree with the article? Why or why not? What's wrong with it?

PRE (15)


- Based on student responses, ask them to spot the literary technique that is used in the article. If students don't identify satire (and it is likely that they will describe it before naming it), **provide them with the term**.
- **Engage** students in a **discussion** with their table partner to generate a definition based on their understanding of what it (satire) is (**Q2**).
- Students share their understanding of satire and compare it to the dictionary definition.
- **Review** objectives, agenda, and establish lesson purpose: *To understand the text of **The Importance of Being Earnest**, it will be essential for you to understand satire as a means to bring about social change. Today, we'll have a chance to view excerpts from one of the most famous satirical essays of all time, "A Modest Proposal." We'll examine what its author, Jonathan Swift, was attempting to convey in his message, and you'll get a chance to draft your own "modest proposal" to bring about social change for an issue you care about.*
- [optional] **Display** the  **Satire** to provide more context for student assumptions.  **Teacher note:** *this PPT is pretty basic. Feel free to save to your computer and modify it as you see fit.*
- Students Turn & Talk (**Q3**) about more examples of satire.

DURING (30)



Transition to the excerpts from Swift's *A Modest Proposal* (**Q4**)

- Students complete **Q4A** independently.
- **Provide context and engage** in a contiguous read of the article for students, pausing throughout the text to ensure that students are comprehending the text (particularly when Swift begins his proposal around line 56) by having them write **bullet point summaries** of the key points from the paragraph.
 - After the first read, collect student impressions of Swift's proposal through discussion questions (**Q4B**). Push students for evidence to support their responses.
 - What is the problem and what is the extent of the problem?*
 - What solution does Swift propose? How does his proposal fit the elements of satire?*
 - In what ways does the solution appear to be serious?*
 - In what ways does the solution appear to be preposterous?*
 - Who would be most impacted by Swift's proposal?*

POST (35)

- **Q5.** Engage students in an ideation of what their own "modest proposal" could be – take 5 minutes to brainstorm contemporary issues that students could use to develop a satirical proposal. Potential ideas include homelessness, dropout rates, poverty, drug crisis, racism, etc. Display the  **Gallup Data** on societal issues to generate ideas.
- Students should decide upon their problem and develop a creative yet outrageous suggestion for resolving the issue using . The proposal should be something that would actually work but that everyone knows could not really be implemented (like Swift's proposal). Academically monitor for CFS.

Other Notes

 **IMPORTANT NOTE:** On tomorrow's lesson plan, you will be showing an episode of  [Keeping Up Appearances](#). [Please ensure that this link is working! Free material often disappears from access, so you don't want to be caught unaware.](#)

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Student Facing Materials

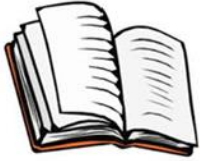
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U3 L2: Satire & A Modest Proposal



SWBAT understand the literary technique of satire and identify the technique in Swift's *A Modest Proposal*.

SWBAT draft a satirical proposal to resolve a present-day social issue.



1. Do First

Directions:

Read the following article **SILENTLY & INDEPENDENTLY**.

Industrial Revolution Provides Millions Of Out- Of-Work Children With Jobs

[NEWS](#) • [Year In Review 2009](#) • [Business](#) • [ISSUE 45•51](#) • Dec 14, 2009



Until a factory opened nearby, this young man, 10, had gone nearly nine years without gainful employment.

After centuries of chronic unemployment, millions of small children across the United Kingdom saw their lives drastically improve when the Industrial Revolution at long last provided them with steady factory work regardless of age, size, or experience.

"Before the turn of the 19th century, frail boys and girls had no choice but to sit at home all day, playing with their younger siblings, just watching as another empty, unproductive week passed them by," noted British scholar William Donnelley said. "Once the Industrial

Revolution began, however, any child able to fit inside a narrow mining shaft, or reach deep within a malfunctioning textile press, could venture out into the world and find himself a job."

Added Donnelley, "It was a time of unprecedented opportunity for the nation's 5- to 9-year- olds."

According to records, the introduction of machine-based manufacturing provided a desperately needed solution to England's toddler-unemployment epidemic. Out-of-work children, many of whom had struggled since birth to earn any kind of wage at all, were now afforded the chance to work seven days a week, up to 19 hours a day, in such competitive industries as iron-smelting and steel-tempering.

Not only was finding employment easier than ever for countless preadolescents, but the generous overtime available to them allowed boys and girls to catch up on years of experience they had lost while learning how to walk, nurse, or, in some unfortunate cases, attend several months of school.

"As a child of the time, it must have felt wonderful to be able to go to bed at night, confident in the knowledge that a job as a coal-boy, furnace operator, or even bore-grinder machinist awaited you the next morning," historian Russell Black said. "The sense of satisfaction and well-being all those orphans must have experienced week in and week out—it's hard to imagine."

"After all, there's nothing like a full-time job to help someone get back on his feet," Black continued. "Especially if he's lost one of them in a horrifying threshing accident."

PRE



Do you agree with this article? Why or why not?



2. Partner Work

Directions:

Work together as a table group to develop a definition for "satire." Write it in the space provided below.



3. Turn & Talk:

What other examples of satire can you think of?

DURING



Jonathan Swift
(1667-1745)

Jonathan Swift was an Anglo-Irish satirist (someone who writes satires), author, essayist, political pamphleteer, poet, and Anglican cleric. Swift is remembered for his deadpan, ironic writing style, particularly in *A Modest Proposal*.

The beginning of the 18th century in Ireland was a time of rampant poverty, hunger and overpopulation mostly in poor Catholic communities. The obvious class difference in society led Swift to write the following text. As a satirical solution, ***A Modest Proposal For preventing the children of poor people in Ireland, from being a burden on their parents or country, and for making them beneficial to the public*** (commonly known simply as *A Modest Proposal*) builds the case for re-purposing the only asset in abundance amongst the poor.

4. ***A Modest Proposal***

Directions:

Read the selections from *A Modest Proposal* and answer the questions below.

A. Pre-reading Question: From the title, what do you think the essay will be about?

A MODEST PROPOSAL

For preventing the children of poor people in Ireland, from being a burden on their parents or country, and for making them beneficial to the public.

By

Dr. Jonathan Swift 1729

25 ...at one year old that I propose to provide for them in such a manner, as, instead of being a charge upon their parents, or the parish, or wanting food and raiment for the rest of their lives, they shall, on the contrary, contribute to the feeding, and partly to the clothing of many thousands.

40 The question therefore is, how this number shall be reared, and provided for? which, as I have already said, under the present situation of affairs¹⁰, is utterly impossible by all the methods hitherto proposed. For we can neither employ them in handicraft¹¹ or agriculture; we neither build houses, (I mean in the country) nor cultivate land: they can very seldom pick up a livelihood by stealing till they arrive at six years old; except where they are of towardly parts¹², although I confessthey learn the rudiments¹³ much earlier; during which time they can however be properly looked upon only as probationers¹⁴

¹⁰ **present situation of affairs:** conditions.

¹¹ **employ them in handicraft:** manufacturing of handmade household goods produced by weaving, sewing, or building furniture.

¹² **they are of towardly parts:** showing exceptional promise; exceptionally talented.

¹³ **rudiments:** fundamentals.

¹⁴ **probationers:** novices.

Pause and summarize this section.

56 I shall now therefore humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection. I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious nourishing and

wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricasie¹⁷, or a ragoust¹⁸.

70 A child will make two dishes at an entertainment for friends, and when the family dines alone, the fore or hind quarter will make a reasonable dish, and seasoned with a little pepper or salt, will be very good boiled on the fourth day, especially in winter.

I have reckoned upon a medium, that a child just born will weigh 12 pounds, and in a solar year, if tolerably nursed, increases to 28 pounds. I grant this food will be somewhat dear¹⁹, and therefore very proper for landlords, who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children.

¹⁷ **fricasie:** africasse;fried or stewed meat served in a thick white sauce.

¹⁸ **ragoust:** a ragout (ragu); a highly seasoned dish of pieces of meat stewed with vegetables.

¹⁹ **dear:** expensive.

Pause and summarize this section.

219 ...consider two points. First, As things now stand, how they will be able to find food and raiment for a hundred thousand useless mouths and backs. And secondly, There being a round million of creatures in humane figure throughout this kingdom, whose whole subsistence put into a common stock, would leave them in debt two million of pounds sterling, adding those who are beggars by profession, to the bulk of farmers, cottagers and laborers, with their wives and children, who are beggars in effect; I desire those politicians who dislike my overture, and may perhaps be so bold to attempt an answer, that they will first ask the parents of these mortals, whether they would not at this day think it a great happiness to have been sold for food at a year old, in the manner I prescribe, and thereby have avoided such a perpetual scene of misfortunes, as they have since gone through, by the oppression of landlords, the impossibility of paying rent

without money or trade, the want of common sustenance, with neither house nor clothes to cover them from the inclemencies³⁷ of the weather, and the most inevitable prospect of entailing the like, or greater miseries, upon their breed for ever.

³⁷ damp or cold weather (for which England is often known).

Pause and summarize this section.

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B. Post-Reading Questions

i. What is the problem and what is the extent of the problem? Provide text evidence to support your conclusion.

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ii. What solution does Swift propose?

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iii. In what ways does the solution appear to be serious? Provide text evidence.

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iv. In what ways does the solution appear to be preposterous? Provide text evidence.

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v. Who would be most impacted by Swift's proposal?

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POST



5. Exit Ticket: Your Modest Proposal

Directions:

For this assignment you will think of a contemporary issue and write a satirical “proposal” to resolve that issue. I have provided some Gallup survey data to help jog your thinking about current social issues in the United States.

Your proposal should be at least 3 written paragraphs. It should be ridiculous enough to make it clear to your reader that the proposal is not serious, but it shouldn't be so ridiculous as to have no connection to the issue. Remember, Swift used a “logical” argument to show why eating babies would be the perfect solution to Ireland's problems and he was able to offer six reasons why his proposal should be put into practice.

Use the following guidelines to make sure your proposal contains the necessary information:

Introduction (20 pts)	Introduces the problem and gives background to prove that this is an issue your reader should be concerned with.
Solutions-oriented (20 pts)	Proposal provides a creative yet outrageous suggestion for solving the issue. Your proposal should be something that would actually work, but that everyone knows could not really be implemented (like eating babies).
Explanation/ Justification (20 pts)	Presents a logical argument to support the proposal and explain its benefits.
Composition (20 pts)	Your proposal should be free from grammar and spelling errors.
Satire (20 pts)	Remember, this is a satire, so use your notes to identify relevant techniques you can use in your proposal such as irony, exaggeration, inversion, incongruity, parody etc.

Satire

1

What is Satire?

- Satire is a form of writing that uses humor, ridicule, irony, and exaggeration for the didactic (instructive/moralizing) purpose of exposing and discouraging vice, folly, and morally reprehensible behavior.
- In other words, satire has a desired outcome—the rejection of a certain behavior.

2

Who or what is being ridiculed in the satirical headline from *The Onion* below?

“CHANEL DEVELOPS DURABLE, LOW-COST PERFUME FOR THIRD WORLD”



3

Satire:

- Has a sense of moral outrage or indignation behind it
- Depends on a shared set of community standards
- Often requires a sophisticated reader to recognize that it is satirical

How do the following headlines from *The Onion* rely on shared cultural knowledge, values and behaviors to create humor?

“Man Who Watched Most Of World Cup Match Knows Exactly How To Fix U.S. Team?”

“Congress Splits Into Male And Female Senators To Discuss Newest Reproductive Bill”

“Report: Growing Number Of Americans Forced To Make Ends Meet By Collaborating On Song With Pitbull”

Some Terms You Should Know

- **Invective:** abusive, nonironical language aimed at a particular target
- **Caricature:** exaggerating one particular feature of the target for comic effect
- **Burlesque:** discrepancy between words and situation, inappropriate behavior or speech for the situation
- **Mock Heroic:** use of elevated language to describe a trivial or foolish situation or person
- **Mock Heroic:** use of elevated language to describe a trivial or foolish situation or person
- **Irony:** incongruity between action or proposal and words used to describe it—become satirical when the real meaning contradicts the surface meaning
- **Lampoon:** harsh and personal attack on target's character or appearance
- **Parody:** imitation of a style taken to the extreme in order to ridicule it
- **Reductio ad absurdum:** speaker agrees enthusiastically with attitudes or assumptions he wishes to satirize, pushing them to a logically ridiculous extreme thus exposing their foolishness

Techniques Used in Satire

- Target is clearly set up
- Exaggeration and distortion used to emphasize characteristics under attack and provide humor
- Distance is established between the target and the audience
- Satiric irony is used to create a discrepancy between what the characters say and do and what the audience understands by their actions and words