

Course

title:introduction to  
english prose



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Course title: Introduction to English Prose Course code: ENG-203

ASSIGNMENT ON- SIGNIFICANCE OF A MODEST PROPOSAL Submitted To-

Submitted by- PROF. M. SHAHINOOR RAHMAN IFFATARA NARGIS Professor &

Chairman STUDENT ID-120120002 DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, JAGANNATH

UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH GREEN UNIVERSITY OF BANGLADESH

A Modest Proposal was a satirical essay written by Jonathan Swift depicting the horrific conditions of Ireland and the lives of the Irish people in 1729. The author portrays and attacks the cruel and unjust oppression of Ireland by its oppressor, the mighty English and ridicules the Irish people at the same time. However, Swift's opposition is indirectly presented. Jonathan Swift is able to do so by using the persona, irony, and wit in order to expose the remarkable corruption and degradation of the Irish people, and at the same time present them with practicable solutions to their unscrupulous and pathetic lives. The author uses a satire to accomplish his objective not only because he is able to conceal his true identity but also because it is the most effective way to awake the people of Ireland into seeing their own depravity.

A Modest Proposal is a scathing attack on the economic oppression of the Irish by the English. Swift creates a fictional persona because by hiding his true identity he is able to convince the readers of the significance of Ireland's problem and allow them to see truth and reality. The persona is a concerned Irishman who is very intelligent, sound, and serious. He appears to be a brute and a monster for proposing something evil and immoral very calmly as if it is normal to consume the flesh of another human being. What makes his proposal to be even more depraved is that he proposes to eat the babies. The persona declares, " and at exactly at one year old that I propose to provide for them, in a such a manner as, instead of being a charge upon

<https://assignbuster.com/course-titleintroduction-to-english-prose/>

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." The persona justifies his proposal with numerous reasons. Besides the prevention of voluntary abortions and infanticide, it will also prevent the loss of money for maintenance of children and the abuse of women and children. The number of Papists would be reduced and the children will not become beggars, thieves, or prostitutes. The proposal will aid in the increase in the status of the peasantry, promote love, and care from the mothers towards their children. However the persona alone is inadequate to make the narrator seem too plausible. The persona must utilize irony and wit in order for his essay to be more efficacious. "A Modest Proposal" is so effective and appealing because of the authors' copious uses of irony throughout his essay. The title itself is definitely ironic. It provides the reader with false expectations of decency and sensibility on the part of the writer. The butchery of innocent babies and the use of their skin for clothing is way beyond being "modest." It is brutal and insane. The proposal is intended to shock and throw the reader off balance. The narrator also ridicules the Irish. His proposal would be a great incentive for marriage, not because the Irish will marry for the expected reasons, of love and happiness. Instead they will marry for money. As the persona pronounces, "this would be a great inducement to marriage, which all wise nations have either encouraged by rewards or enforced by laws and penalties." Moreover, this proposal if put into effect would aid in establishing love and care in families, between spouses and towards the children. The mother would provide her babies with better nourishment. Since, plump, fat, and juicy babies are worth more than the lean and abused ones. The husbands will

become fond of their wives and refrain from abusing them, to avoid a possible miscarriage. Furthermore, normally the child is introduced to Christianity to celebrate his or her birth and introduction to Christianity. However, ironically Christenings will celebrate a baby's impending death. The baby must be murdered in order for the parents to profit. Thus, the primary motive of the Irish is money. The persona's ingenious display of irony serves a purpose for attacking, scorning, and exposing the vices of the Irish people. Jonathan Swift also describe several themes in a modest proposal such as, theme of suffering, Inertia, theme of society and class, theme of mortality and ethics, theme of power etc. The narrator's brilliant and clever use of wit is definitely noteworthy throughout " A Modest Proposal." In order to make cannibalism sound like the most practicable solution, the author wisely uses his wit. He is implying that cannibalism cannot possibly be more barbaric and unethical than what the Irish are already doing to themselves. Swift is reproaching the Irish for their indolence and pride. The people of Ireland are being reviled and scorned for their lack of action in order to mitigate the current circumstances. The narrator proclaims, " for we can neither employ them in handicraft or agriculture; we neither build houses, nor cultivate land." The responsibility of being oppressed is blamed on the Irish more than on the oppressors, the English. Incredibly, the narrator is able to enthrall the readers' attention through his accurate use of sarcasm and mockery. What makes the persona so credible is the precise and skillful use of diction and wit. The author characterizes the mothers as " breeders", " swine", and " cattle." The children are described as numbers, statistics, and debased to mathematical computations. The author does so shrewdly, because statistics are facts and the truth in peoples'

minds. The narrator writes, " the number of souls in Ireland being usually reckoned one million and a half." Then further goes on, " the question is how this number shall be reared, and provided for." People are living like animals and are dehumanized. The persona is also plausible because he appears to have everything planned and well researched. He even goes into specific details. The narrator's states, " 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 serve in a fricassee, or a ragout." The brilliance in the use of witticism and sarcasm by the persona play a critical role in awakening the Irish to the physical existence of their debauched environment. By convincing the people of Ireland to reform, Jonathan Swift proved his satire " A Modest Proposal" to be an effective means for accomplishing his intent. The people of Ireland went through a stage of awakening due to Swifts' scintillating portrayal of their corrupted, exploited, and dehumanized lives. The satire gave the Irish a better scope on the reality. They were able to see the severity of their crisis and that they were complicit on their oppression. Jonathan Swift fabricated a fictional character in order to persuade the readers to approach his essay and his proposal with endmost seriousness. However once Swift took off his mask, the readers finally realized that they were being derided and scolded. Once Swift took off his mask he stopped his criticism and presented the Irish with applicable solutions. All he wants the Irish people to do is tax their absentees, purchase only Irish goods, become more wise and thrifty with money, and be less haughty, futile, and indolent. Also, Swift asked the landlords to be more lenient on their people. Furthermore, Swift impelled and inspired the Irish into rebelling by presenting them with feasible solutions to

<https://assignbuster.com/course-titleintroduction-to-english-prose/>

cease the anguish of Ireland's people. A modest proposal for preventing the children of poor people in Ireland from being a burden to their parents or country, and for making them beneficial to the public. Swift makes his point negatively, stringing together an appalling set of morally untenable positions in order to cast blame and aspersions far and wide. The essay progresses through a series of surprises that first shocks the reader and then causes her to think critically not only about policies, but also about motivations and value.