

Reflection essay on a modest proposal

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Assignment #1: Surprise Ending in The Modest Proposal Syreeta Bruster
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Modest Proposal by Jonathan Swift is a satirical story with lots of sarcasm. This proposal was written to shock or force the government into a reaction. As the government read his proposal it should bring about a response. This proposal suggests a “ barbaric solution” that amounts purely to cannibalism. Mr. Swift’s idea is to help end poverty and decrease the amount of women beggars by eating babies of the poor.

He devised a plan where he would take 20, 000 babies and decide how many would be sold, how many would be breeders thus creating a balance between rich and poor. Mr. Swift’s plan would give the poor a means of income and the wealthy would get a fine and delicate meal. He stated that feeding on Irish babies was a treat and the English should be honored to feast on the babies. Swift based his proposal on facts and figures of many years of analyzing the situation. He does seem well educated and well versed on his proposal. He noted several benefits and advantages to his proposal.

Some of those benefits included women being more loving towards their children. Another benefit would be more marriages happening with men catering to their wives while they were pregnant. Swift also quoted a friend that was a modern day swindler. The friend was supposedly from Formosa and told a story where 18, 000 young boys were sacrificed to the Gods’ and Priests’. The Gods’ dined on the hearts and the Priests’ dine on their bodies. Swift suggested his proposal was a good solution because the landowners had already “ eaten” the poor people alive, so to speak.

The unfair and unjust treatment of the poor people suggested this proposal could be a way out for them. Swift had calculated the cost to feed these babies and with the proposal these surplus of children would not be a burden on anyone, not their parents or the landowners or the government. As a matter of face the landowners could take the babies as payment if the rent was not paid. Swift wanted to evoke such a response that the government would see just how awful they have treated the Irish in this country.

They should respond by coming up with a more logical and reasonable plan to care for the beggars and poor people of the land. Although his “ barbaric” proposal was written while he suffered a disease that made his mind alter from stable to unstable; it was concluded by most that he was not crazy when this proposal was written. It is not certain whether he accomplished what he intended to with his proposal; however with the intensity and factual way he presented his proposal I can understand why people would want to follow his train of thought.

It was quite easy for Swift to manipulate the facts to fit such a “ Modest Proposal”. Before people really realized what he was actually meaning to do with these babies it could have sounded like a solid plan. In my opinion we need more persuasive people, like Swift, with such passion to give a sort of wake up call to humanity without actually “ eating” our babies. We need to construct a more compassionate and solid plan with regards to how we treat people whether poor or rich that is far from Swift’s proposal.

Being eaten alive is not necessarily an actual act but more of a sarcastic statement of how one can be treated. I don’t believe anyone ever really took into account the proposal in actual “ humane” terms. I do feel that it made

not only the government react but also his peers and other constituents.

References Johnson, James William (1958), " Tertullian and A Modest Proposal", *Modern Language and Notes* (The Johns Hopkins University Press) 73 (8): 561–563 Swift, Jonathan. " A Modest Proposal. " *Victorian Web*. < <http://www.victorianweb.org/> >. Web. Viewed November 3, 2012.