

The surprise ending essay



**ASSIGN
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In Jonathan Swift's essay *A Modest Proposal*, the author uses satire in the essay and the title itself, to make a point about the English government allowing the citizens of Ireland to starve to death. The proposal that he makes is by no means "modest," hence the sarcastic edge surrounding the title. The essay was written in 1729 and during that time, the entire country of Ireland was under English rule, unlike today where only Northern Ireland remains under English rule.

During this time, the Irish people were without work, without food, and without proper housing as English landlords were charging outlandish prices for rent, too much for most Irish to afford at the time. As a result, the populace was homeless and starving, and the English government was doing absolutely nothing to help them. For those who read *A Modest Proposal* for the very first time, many will be horrified by Swift's solution to the hunger problem in Ireland. Swift suggests that Irish babies, who can be fed properly by their mother's milk until age one, be killed and eaten by humans for food.

That way, after the age of one, they will no longer be a burden to their parents, and the parents will be able to sell them for money. Swift makes the point that it would be better to kill and eat these children at age one as opposed to letting them grow up to starve to death, or be figuratively devoured by their landlords. Swift provides statistics to support his assertions while giving additional statistical evidence about how many children should be sold, how much they should cost, and how much they should weigh.

Swift is quite effective in his use of shock value to make his point to the English government. One can only imagine the looks on the faces of the English when they read Swift's proposal. And the satire may have even gone over the heads of the less educated ones or the less intelligent ones who read it, whether it be English citizens or members of the government. Those who took it seriously must have thought Swift to be a monster, even though their ignoring the plight of the Irish was in reality no less monstrous.