

A modest proposal by jonathan swift and the proposed solution poverty in ireland

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A Modest Proposal Essay

Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" begins with Swift's ironic persona preparing the reader for his outrageous solution to the problem of poverty in Ireland. Swift's dark satirical solution is to eat the Irish babies, which would bring in profit and decrease the surplus population of Ireland. Swift's ironic persona uses appeals to ethos, logos, and pathos to prepare the reader for his ridiculous proposal.

In the opening paragraph of his proposal, Swift begins by referring to the children as burdens to their mothers who "instead of being able to work for their honest livelihood, are forced to employ all their time in strolling to beg sustenance." Swift's satiric voice uses the word "strolling" as if begging was a nice and enjoyable task. The children then grow up to be burdens to their country by becoming "thieves for want of work, or leave their dear native country to fight for the Pretender in Spain, or sell themselves to the Barbados." Swift describes the repeating cycle of poverty in Ireland; the parents are burdens to the country and their children will grow up with no other choice but to also become burdens to the country. The opening paragraph's description of the poor in Ireland is an appeal to pathos. It gives a sympathetic approach to the poor and it makes the reader feel sympathy for the parents and the children of the poor.

Another appeal to pathos is made in paragraph five when Swift's ironic persona brings up the voluntary abortions performed to avoid the expenses of supporting a child. The speaker says that preventing the "horrid practice

of women murdering” their “ poor innocent babes” is another great advantage to his scheme. This satirizes the fact that the babies are dying for nothing. It prepares the reader for his proposal because with the proposal of selling the babies to be eaten, the death of the babies will be useful and profitable. But without knowing the actual proposal, it is an appeal to pathos because Swift is saying that his proposal will prevent abortions.

In the second and third paragraph, Swift’s ironic persona gives the intentions of his proposal. He satirically understates the atrocious situation of poverty and says it is just a “ grievance” and that whoever could come up with a simple solution to the problem would deserve “ his statue set up for a preserver of a nation” as if they would care about a statue. He gives his intentions saying that his proposal will “ provide for the children of professed beggars” and the children “ who are born of parents in effect as little able to support them.” Swift makes an appeal to ethos and gives credibility to his proposal by saying that with his proposal, he is able to provide for all the children whose parents are not able to support them,

In paragraphs four and six, Swift’s ironic persona unsympathetically dehumanizes women and children by comparing them to livestock. Similar to how animals are priced, he calculates the cost of raising a child to a year of age and says that they must not be worth “ above the value of two shilling.” He refers to women as “ breeders” as if their only purpose in life is to produce children to be turned into food. Swift also assesses the population of the “ breeders” and children born in Ireland as if the people were livestock. By dehumanizing humans and referring to them as animals, Swift makes an

appeal to logos and is able to make a logical calculation on the worth and population of the Irish without regards to morality.

Jonathan Swift's ironic persona in "A Modest Proposal" uses appeals to ethos, logos, and pathos to prepare the reader for his ridiculous proposal of eating babies as a solution to the poverty in Ireland. He makes appeals to pathos when he gives the description of the poverty in Ireland and when he brings up voluntary abortions. He makes an appeal to ethos when he gives the intentions of his proposal, and an appeal to logos is made when he makes calculations on the worth and population of the Irish.