

# Surprise ending

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A Modest Proposal: Surprise Ending A Modest Proposal: Surprise Ending. Jonathan Swift deliberately misleads the reader at the start of his satire, A Modest Proposal, by using a tone which seems straightforward and moral. He expresses remorse at the widespread presence of impoverished children on Dublin's streets. The reader falls for his trick and looks forward to hearing his proposed "cheap and easy method of making these children sound and useful members of the common-wealth" (Swift, 1729, para. 2). Swift continues his deception by using practical economic jargon, calculations and statistical data in his discussion. The reader anticipates that Swift will come up with a realistic solution by which these poor children can "contribute to the feeding, and partly to the cloathing of many thousand" (para. 4). The reader's suspicion is aroused when Swift begins to talk about children being "saleable commodities" (Swift, 1729, p. 7) and calculates a cost-effective selling price. At this point, the reader realizes that there is a catch in the argument and that Swift's suggestion will be out of the ordinary. Then comes the "surprise ending": Swift suggests that 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" (Swift, 1729, p. 9). He continues to devise plans for the sale of children and various ways to convert their flesh into delicacies. The reader is now aware that Swift's suggestion is pure irony.

By giving the reader a jolt with his "surprise ending," Swift greatly strengthens the validity of his real suggestion to improve the social and economic condition of Ireland under British rule in the eighteenth century: the taxation of absentee landlords, the promotion of locally manufactured goods, banning foreign luxury goods, practicing thrift and temperance and <https://assignbuster.com/surprise-ending/>

encouraging nationalism, brotherhood and virtue. He urges “ landlords to have at least one degree of mercy towards their tenants” and shop-keepers to adopt “ a spirit of honesty, industry, and skill” (Swift, 1729, para. 29). This is Swift’s real proposal. Swift skilfully uses his “ surprise ending” to stimulate interest, rouse the reader’s conscience and make the reader more receptive to his concrete suggestions to rectify the ills of the suffering Irish population.

References.

Swift, Jonathan. 1729. “ 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 publick.” The Victorian Web. Accessed from <http://www.victorianweb.org/previctorian/swift/modest.html>.