



A Modest Proposal

Satire



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Grade Level	12th Grade	Time Frame	340 Minutes
Subject	English/Language Arts	Duration	5-6 Class Periods
Course	British Literature, World Literature		

Essential Question

How does satire reflect the issues of society?

Summary

In this lesson, students begin by evaluating statements to decide if they are always, sometimes, or never true, building their critical thinking skills. They then explore Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, annotating and analyzing the text. Next, students identify an issue from their school, society, or sphere, preparing them to think deeply about real-world problems. They extend their learning by creating a presentation that proposes both a satirical and a realistic solution to one chosen issue. Finally, students present their work and evaluate their classmates' presentations by identifying and discussing the use of satire.

Snapshot

Engage

Students evaluate statements to determine if they are Always, Sometimes, or Never True.

Explore

Students annotate "A Modest Proposal" by Jonathan Swift using the CUSS and Discuss strategy.

Explain

Students determine an issue within three different areas of their lives: School, Society, and Sphere.

Extend

Students create a presentation over their chosen issue, including a satirical solution and a realistic solution.

Evaluate

Students present their proposals and identify the satire in their classmates' presentations.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 12)

12.3.R.4: Evaluate how literary devices impact theme, mood, and/or tone, using textual evidence:

- figurative language (i.e., simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, imagery, symbolism)
- sound devices (i.e., onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance)
- irony (i.e., verbal, situational, dramatic)

12.3.W.1: Compose narratives reflecting real or imagined experiences that:

- include engaging plots involving well-developed, complex characters resolving conflicts
- establish narrator(s) that enhance(s) the narrative
- are intentionally sequenced in a way to achieve a specific effect (e.g., create suspense, establish mood, reflect theme)
- provide clear descriptions, using precise language, sensory details, and dialogue
- include varied syntax to enhance readability
- emulate literary elements and/or literary devices from mentor texts

Attachments

- [3-2-1 ICAP—A Modest Proposal.docx](#)
- [3-2-1 ICAP—A Modest Proposal.pdf](#)
- [7 Satire Techniques with Tips—A Modest Proposal.docx](#)
- [7 Satire Techniques with Tips—A Modest Proposal.pdf](#)
- [A Mini Modest Proposal—A Modest Proposal.docx](#)
- [A Mini Modest Proposal—A Modest Proposal.pdf](#)
- [A Modest Proposal by Jonathan Swift—A Modest Proposal - Spanish.docx](#)
- [A Modest Proposal by Jonathan Swift—A Modest Proposal - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [A Modest Proposal by Jonathan Swift—A Modest Proposal.docx](#)
- [A Modest Proposal by Jonathan Swift—A Modest Proposal.pdf](#)
- [Choice Board—A Modest Proposal.docx](#)
- [Choice Board—A Modest Proposal.pdf](#)
- [Lesson Slides—A Modest Proposal.pptx](#)
- [Presentation Note Catcher—A Modest Proposal.docx](#)
- [Presentation Note Catcher—A Modest Proposal.pdf](#)
- [Presentation Rubric—A Modest Proposal.docx](#)
- [Presentation Rubric—A Modest Proposal.pdf](#)
- [Shrek Notes—A Modest Proposal.docx](#)
- [Shrek Notes—A Modest Proposal.pdf](#)

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- A Modest Proposal by Jonathan Swift (attached; one per student)
- A Mini Modest Proposal (attached; one per student)
- 7 Satire Techniques with Tips (attached; optional; one per student)
- 3-2-1 ICAP (attached; optional; one per student)
- Choice Board (attached; one per student)
- Presentation Note Catcher (attached; one per student)
- Presentation Rubric (attached; one per student)
- Student devices with internet access
- Shrek Notes (attached; optional; one per student)

10 minutes

Engage

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to facilitate this lesson. Begin by showing **slides 2-4** to introduce the title of the lesson, the essential question, and the learning objectives. Emphasize that the essential question will be addressed throughout the lesson.

Move to **slide 5**. Introduce students to the [Always, Sometimes, or Never True](#) strategy. Read each of the following statements individually and instruct students to choose whether the statement is always, sometimes, or never true.

- Comedy can be serious.
- Humor offends people.
- Sarcasm makes a point.
- Comments that are funny lead to political or societal change.
- Ironic statements make people think critically.

Invite students to discuss their choices. Have at least one student from each choice share their opinion and justify their reasoning for why they chose that the statement was always true, sometimes true, or never true.

Teacher's Note: Optional Tech Integration

Consider presenting the statements using [Mentimeter](#) and having students input their decision as to whether each statement is always, sometimes, or never true in order to collate responses and visually display class feedback.

60 minutes

Explore

Move to **slide 6**. Provide each student a copy of **A Modest Proposal by Jonathan Swift** handout (attached). Explain that students will be using a modified version of the [CUS and Discuss](#) strategy, which includes a summarizing component. As they read, ask students to circle new words, underline details that support the main ideas, star main ideas, and summarize each section.

When students are finished reading, ask volunteers to share with the class any words that they circled as unfamiliar. Discuss the meaning of these words with the entire class.

Next, pair students together. Invite partners to discuss their main ideas and their supporting details. Ask pairs to share some of the main ideas from the text with the class.

Once the class has shared main ideas, revisit the lesson's essential question on **slide 7**. Lead a class discussion asking students: "How does satire reflect the issues of society?"

Teacher's Note: Scaffolding Reading

If students need support with reading satirical writing, consider reading the text aloud as students follow along, or have students take turns reading aloud. Alternatively, play an audio recording of the text via [YouTube](#). It may also be beneficial to pause and lead a class discussion reflecting on the text at every summary breaking point.

Embedded video

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=E6XWbksiT-o>

45 minutes

Explain

Teacher's Note: Preparing for the Activity

Print **A Mini Modest Proposal** handout, double-sided, for students prior to the lesson. During the activity, prompt students about which side of the handout they will be working on.

Move to **slide 8** and provide each student with a copy of **A Mini Modest Proposal** handout (attached). Explain that students are identifying an issue within their school, society, or sphere and identifying a satirical and a serious solution for that one issue. Prompt students to the front side (page 1) of the handout and ask students to brainstorm any issues they can think of at school, in their society—including their local or national community—and the global sphere.

Move to **slide 9**. After students have had enough time to create a list of issues, group students using a modified version of the [Inverted Pyramid](#) strategy to discuss the issues they identified. Have students pair with a partner to discuss their issues. After they've had time with their partner, have partners pair with another set of partners to share their ideas. Once the small groups have had enough time to share their ideas, have them group up with another small group to discuss. As students are corresponding with other partners and groups, encourage them to add to their list if they hear an idea from a classmate that they didn't think of before.

Teacher's Note: Optional Review

It is assumed that students have received prior instruction relating to types of satire prior to this lesson. However, if students require review, this would be a good stopping point to review the types of satire before moving on. Provide each student a copy of the **7 Satire Techniques with Tips** handout (attached). As students read, ask them to use the [Why-Lighting](#) strategy to highlight parts of the article that provide important details about each type of satire. As they highlight, ask students to write important details or information in the margins that relate to the parts they highlighted. Lead a class discussion on the types of satire found in various texts based on the details students highlighted in the article.

Move to **slide 10** and prompt students to flip their handout over to the backside (page 2). Instruct students to choose one of the issues they identified on the front side of their handout that stands out as most important to them and list it on their paper. Explain that they are going to write A Mini Modest Proposal for this issue. Explain that students will need to think of a satirical solution to the problem and an actual solution to the problem. On their handout, they should explain their solutions in detail, as this will be a planning document to guide their presentation.

75 minutes

Extend

Teacher's Note: Optional ICAP

Display **slide 11** with the [ICAP video](#). Explain to students that voice actors bring to life literature from not only today, but long ago. Introduce the [3-2-1](#) strategy and provide each student a copy of the **3-2-1 ICAP** handout (attached). Ask that as students view the video they write down three things they learned, two questions they still have, and one thing they found interesting. When the video is over, lead a class discussion on the details students wrote down on their handouts.

Embedded video

https://youtube.com/watch?v=Snxic_UmKyc

Move to **slide 12** and present the **Choice Board** (attached) for student's presentations. Explain to students that using the Mini Modest Proposal handout they completed, they will be creating a presentation to share with the class about their satirical solutions. They will have six options to present their ideas: Google Slides, PowerPoint, Canva, NotebookLM, Writing a Proposal, or Artist Choice. Explain to students that for each choice, the requirements include the following:

- An explanation of their identified issue
- A detailed description of their satirical solution
- A detailed description of an actual solution
- A creative element that includes photos and symbols

Display **slide 13** and provide each student a copy of the **Presentation Rubric** handout (attached). Review the grading criteria and explain how students can score *Exemplary* in each category.

Teacher's Note: NotebookLM Choice

Students who choose to use [NotebookLM](#) may need support. To use this option, they will need a device with internet access and a Google account. They will need to complete the information from their Mini Modest Proposal handout electronically in order to upload it into NotebookLM.

150 minutes

Evaluate

Teacher's Note: Assignments for Presentation Notes

To ensure participation throughout all presentations, consider an assignment strategy, such as the name randomizer in [Classroomscreen](#), so that students know which peers' presentations they will be taking notes on ahead of time.

Provide each student a copy of the **Presentation Note Catcher** handout (attached). Students will each have 3-5 minutes to present their issues and solutions. As students present, peers should complete at least 4 responses using the handout. Explain that during the presentations, they will need to identify where the issue is: in school, society, or the sphere. They also need to explain the satirical solution presented by their peers, select the type of satire it is, and explain the reasoning for their selection.

Teacher's Note: Optional Follow-Up Activity

Consider watching the movie *Shrek* after completing this lesson. As students watch, ask them to look for examples of satire. Use the optional **Shrek Notes** handout (attached) to guide this activity. As students watch, ask them to describe at least four scenes in which they noticed satire, the type of satire it was, and comments or criticisms about whether the use of the satirical device was effective or ineffective.

Resources

Davis, M. (2021, January 23). *A Modest Proposal* - full audiobook with rolling text - by Jonathan Swift [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hm543xbeaVY>

DreamWorks Animation. (2001). *Shrek* [Film]. DreamWorks Pictures.

K20 Center. (n.d.). 3-2-1. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/117>

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K20 Center. (2025, March 26). Behind the Mic: Exploring Voice Acting with Emily Norman [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/Snxic_UmKyc

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Swift, J. (n.d.). *Una humilde propuesta* [E. Suárez, Trans.]. AlbaLearning. <https://albalearning.com/audiolibros/swift/modesta-sp.html>