

### “A Modest Proposal” Close Reading Questions (Jonathan Swift)

Standard: ELACC11-12RL1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain

Directions: Discuss each question, finding specific evidence from the text that supports your response. Write thoughtful notes on your responses and the evidence (please cite all examples by paragraph #).

1. How does Swift portray himself throughout the essay? In what places does he reveal an egotistical persona? (tone, attitude)
2. How does Swift dehumanize the people in this essay? What is his purpose in doing so?
3. How does Swift make himself appear to be an expert? (ethical appeal)
4. Why does Swift focus on the benefits of his plan before giving us the details of it? (organization)
5. What point is Swift trying to make about landlords in paragraph #12? (diction)
6. What can you infer about the social and political conditions in Ireland from the essay?
7. How does Swift ironically criticize Catholicism in paragraph #21?
8. Paragraphs #21-28 detail the advantages of Swift’s proposal. What criticisms of society are implied in these paragraphs?
9. Does Swift hold out any hope that Ireland will be able to save itself without resorting to his “modest” proposal? Hint: reread paragraphs #29-30. What does Swift really want the Irish to do?
10. Reread the final paragraph. What is ironic about Swift’s comment about his own family?

### “A Journal of the Plague Year” Close Reading Questions (Daniel Defoe)

Standard: ELACC11-12RL1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain

Directions: Discuss each question, finding specific evidence from the text that supports your response. Write thoughtful notes on your responses and the evidence (please cite all examples by paragraph #).

1. After reading paragraph #1, what emotions would you have experienced in this situation? Which specific phrases led you to these emotions?
2. What point of view does Defoe use? What is the effect of this point of view?
3. In paragraph #5, Defoe protects the identity of the merchant. Why? (Research suicide during Restoration from the perspective of Roman Catholic and Anglican churches)
4. Paragraph #7 gives a vivid description of the physical effects of the plague. What sources is Defoe likely to have used?
5. Why might the victims of the plague try to jump in the water? (cause and effect)
6. In Paragraph # 11, what moral dilemma does this story of the man at the inn pose? Should he lie? (analyzing dilemmas)

7. In paragraph #14, what reasons does the narrator give in this passage for approaching the burial pits? (finding details)
8. Also in paragraph #14, what does the sexton mean when he states, “twill be a sermon to you?” what lesson might the plague burial grounds teach? (making inferences)
9. In paragraph #19, Defoe introduces a first-hand account. What effect does this have on the reader?
10. Why does Defoe include the poor fellow in his anecdotes about the plague? What is the effect of the piper’s comment about the dead-cart at the end of the passage? How would you describe the story of the piper? (details)
11. According to paragraph #25, what caused the number of deaths to decrease? What does the passage tell you about religious beliefs or medical knowledge at this time? (drawing conclusions)
12. In some ways, Defoe takes the role of a mantle of a reporter when he writes his retrospective journal about the plague. What aspects of a contemporary news story does Defoe’s account of the plague possess? How is Defoe’s account different from reporters today? (journal)