

“Modest Proposal” – Swift

Purpose: to satirize the English policy in Ireland that is not helping the poor people who are starving

Proposal to solve problem: Sell Irish babies (1-year-olds) to landlords to be used as food.

Narrator: first person; pretends to be an economic planner helping the Irish but also benefiting the English

Advantages of proposal:

- fewer papists (Catholics)
- poor people can make money (fewer poor people/fewer beggars)
- help Irish economy
- won't have to take care of extra kids
- taverns get a new fancy dish
- encourage marriage
- stop domestic violence

Proof that the narrator will not personally gain from proposal: His kids are too old to sell and his wife is too old to have more children

Tone in the essay: mean, harsh, cruel (in reality Swift cares about the Irish)

Babies:

Problem (real):

Burden on parents

Parents can't work

Not of use to the country

Solution (satirical):

sell children to landlords

contribute to feeding and clothing of
thousands

Children Ages 1 to 12

Problem:

Cannot go to work

Burden on parents

Can't steal until 6

Costly to take care of

Solution:

20,000 left to breed

1/4 male

The Elderly, Maimed, or Ill

Problem:

Burden

Solution:

leave to die