Cheatography

English Lit/Lang Anthology [A Modest Proposal] Cheat Sheet by churger via cheatography.com/185877/cs/38876/

Cover

A MODEST PROPOSAL For preventing the CHILDREN O F POOR PEOPLE From being a Surfler to Their Parents or Country,

AND For making them Beneficial to the PUBLICK.

By Dr. SwIFT.

Dublin, Printed by S. Harding : London, Re-printed ; and fold by J. Roberts in Warwick-lane, and the Pamphlet-Shops. M. D. C. C. X X I X.

About this satirical essay

- First published as a pamphlet in 1729 by Jonathan Swift

 Full title: "A modest proposal for preventing the children of poor people from being a burden to their parents or country and for making them beneficial to the public"

GRAMPS

Genre: Satirical essay

Register: Formal

Audience: Intelligentsia (educated, political classes familiar with the political essay genre).

Mode: Writing for a publication

Purpose: To amuse (outrageous) and to raise awareness of serious famine and poverty in Ireland.

Subject: Swift's literal argument is that the poor Irish should sell their children as food to solve their poverty. His **satirical** argument is that the wealthy landowners 'devoured' the Irish with their cruelty.

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Discourse & Structure

Discourse: (1)written or spoken communicate or debate. (2) speak or write authoritatively about a topic.

Written in first person

Swift uses a **humble mode of address*, referring to his idea as a "modest proposal", and repeating the adverb "humbly" ("I do therefore humbly offer").

However, he portrays a **deep-seated conceit** by his taste for **elaborate grammatical constructions** and by his **lack of empathy.**

The essay has the structure of a rational argument with each paragraph adding a further step in the logical progression. The author seeks to win our trust by first establishing the severity of the problem before revealing the true nature of the proposal (see the first two paragraphs in particular).

Grammar & Syntax

Syntax: the arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences in a language.

Complex sentences, often with two or more subordinate clauses.

Use of **subordinate clauses** to disguise the *outrageousness of the main* **declarative clauses**. ("I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London")

Conjunction: A word used to conenct clauses or sentences or to coordinate words in the same clause (e.g. "and", "but", "if")

Subordinate clause: a clause, typically introduced by a conjunction, that forms part of (and is dependent on) a main clause. (E.g. "when it rang" in "she answered the phone when it rang")

Pragmatics

Pragmatics: the brand of linguistics dealing with language in use and the contexts in which it is used, including such matters as deixis, the taking of turns in conversation, text organisation, presupposition, and implicature.

As it is a satirical essay, Swift must rely on his readers recognising that he does not mean what he says.

However, the satire is all the more effective for being delivered with **unfaltering conviction**.

Being published anonymously would have enhanced the effect (but it wasn't).

The extract of this anthology text that OCR gave us has missed the section where the author dismisses more realistic options that Swift implies ought to be on the agenda. I'm not sure if this'll help in your exam but no marks would be lost by mentioning it.

Attitudes & Values

People continue to speculate over whether satire ever changes anything: the desperate situation in Ireland didn't change as a result of Swift's essay.

It could be judged purely on exercise of its humour- "A Modest Proposal" continues to be one **regarded as one of the most remarkable satires in English Literature.**

But it also remains potent as a challenge to the arrogance and lack of empathy among politicians, academics and others with vested interestes.

It poses the necessary question, *if this isn't the answer, then what is?*

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