

Guided Reading of “A Modest Proposal”¹

Note these details...		How do you know? Cite specific evidence from the text.
Prereading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does the title suggest to you? From the title, what do you expect this essay to be about? 	Possible answers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That the proposal is sincere, maybe easy to implement A plan to solve a problem
Introduction and definition of the problem (ll. 1–51)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the problem, and to what extent is it a problem? What information leads you to your conclusion? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population is too large and there is not enough food; big problem, people have no jobs and can’t support families “I think it is agreed by all parties, that this prodigious number of children in the arms, or on the backs, or at the heels of their mothers, and frequently of their fathers, is in the present deplorable state of the kingdom, a very great additional grievance...”
Proposed solution (ll. 52–62)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the proposed solution? In what ways does it appear serious? In what ways is it preposterous? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sell children to rich people for consumption; he presents many of the societal issues that having too many children in society poses (begging in the streets, malnourishment, abortion, etc.); the introduction of the different ways to prepare children in dishes, using children to create clothes, etc.
Implementation (ll. 62–102)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefly, what would be involved in implementing the proposal? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Of the 120,000 children alive, keep 20,000 children alive to breed (1:4 male to female ratio) and sell the others to be consumed.
Endorsements (ll. 103–140)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who are the persons who appear to endorse the proposal? In what ways do their endorsements help or hurt the proposal? How do you know? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A man who loves his country Helps due to the logic behind his reasoning and experiences

¹Adapted from http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/30827_guided.pdf

Advantages (Il. 141–187)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are some of the principal advantages of the proposal? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population control, decrease number of Papists, no more poverty or famine, increase business, mothers will take better care of themselves during pregnancy
Possible objections, concession, and refutation (Il. 188–209)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the possible objections to the proposal? In what ways does Swift concede some of the objections? In what ways does Swift refute some of the objections? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ethical considerations, decreased population The meat will not be easily exportable There is no other way, but he is willing to hear other suggestions, should someone present them.
Closing (Il. 210–239)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What means does Swift use to reiterate his apparent sincerity? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He ensures the reader that he is taking an "objective" stance on the matter (i.e. he has nothing to gain from his proposed solution, so he has no conflict of interest in proposing it.) "I profess, in the sincerity of my heart, that I have not the least personal interest in endeavouring to promote this necessary work, having no other motive than the publick good of my country, by advancing our trade, providing for infants, relieving the poor, and giving some pleasure to the rich. I have no children, by which I can propose to get a single penny; the youngest being nine years old, and my wife past

		child-bearing.”
Post-reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now that you’ve finished your initial reading of the essay, in what ways were your initial expectations confirmed? • In what ways were they contradicted? • Describe how the various sections of Swift’s essay work together. • Whom does Swift criticize in this piece? • What changes does he hope to bring about? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The problem posed is a serious one • The proposal is NOT sincere, and impossible to implement • Each section flows into the next, creating cohesion and logic in regards to the argument • The government, the elite • Political and social change