

Guided Reading of "A Modest Proposal"

Analyzing a Single-Panel Cartoon

1. View the single-panel cartoon found on the Narrative Magazine: Literary Puzzler: Famous Last Words website: http://www.narrativemagazine.com/image_gallery/83886
2. Looking at the cartoon, what portion of it draws your attention first? What is there about this portion of the cartoon that attracts you? What details in this portion of the cartoon do you find particularly amusing?
3. What do the deer seem to have already done prior to the moment that we see them? Although realistically impossible, in what ways are these preparations amusing to you? What other situations do they remind you of?
4. Besides the two bucks sitting in the off-road vehicle, what other areas of the cartoon are lighter and also draw your attention? What's going on in that section of the cartoon that adds to the humor of the caption?
5. What more common situation is the basis of this cartoon? What encounters have you had with deer while driving at night?

Viewing an Episode of a Satiric Television Program

1. Note the title of the program and the original broadcast date of the episode.
2. What are the news items that form the basis of the segment?
3. How does the newscaster make use of visual support (sound bites of other media broadcasts, photos, or slogans, for example)? How do you know that what the newscaster is saying in some way makes fun of what the video clip shows?
4. Besides making fun of the subject matter or the personalities involved in the news, what is the overall effect of the satiric message as compared to the original intent of the message as a news item or a profile of an individual person?

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Guided Reading of “A Modest Proposal” (continued)

Reading Swift’s “A Modest Proposal”

Prereading

- What does the title suggest to you? From the title, what do you expect this essay to be about?

Introduction and definition of the problem (ll. 1–51)

- What is the problem, and to what extent is it a problem? What information leads you to your conclusion?

Proposed solution (ll. 52–62)

- What is the proposed solution? In what ways does it appear serious? In what ways is it preposterous?

Implementation (ll. 62–102)

- Briefly, what would be involved in implementing the proposal?

Endorsements (ll. 103–140)

- 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?

Advantages (ll. 141–187)

- What are some of the principal advantages of the proposal?

Possible objections, concession, and refutation (ll. 188–209)

- 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?

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Guided Reading of “A Modest Proposal” (continued)

Closing (ll. 210–239)

- What means does Swift use to reiterate his apparent sincerity?

Postreading

- 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.
- How would you characterize Swift’s overall tone in the essay?
- What means does Swift use to develop his tone?
- Whom does Swift criticize in this piece?
- What changes does he hope to bring about?