

Grade 8: Unit 5

Animal Farm: Connected Text Seminars

Seminar 1: Connected Text

Teacher Context

Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal," written in 1729, challenged British policies toward Ireland — particularly Ireland's impoverished community. By suggesting that the Irish sell their children as food, Swift is mocking Great Britain's policies toward the Irish in general — and the poor in particular — which were perceived as heartless. Swift's piece was also a commentary on the growing prominence of rational thinking over traditional human compassion.

This text is used to introduce the unit because the style of writing that Swift uses is similar to the style used by Orwell in *Animal Farm*. Just like Swift satirizes British policies toward Ireland, Orwell satirizes communism in Russia and the Western idealization of it.

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars articulate Swift's satirical argument. They analyze how Swift uses irony and exaggeration to construct this satirical argument.

Seminar 1: "A Modest Proposal" by Jonathan Swift (Nonfiction)

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Show an exemplary Exit Ticket from the previous Seminar to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes it exemplary. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they will apply to their revisions.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from the previous Seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Tell scholars that today, they will be reading a satirical essay from 1729: “A Modest Proposal.” Build excitement by telling scholars that this text will introduce them to a form of literature used to critique the society. Through his satirical essay, Swift was able to criticize British policies toward Ireland in a humorous way. Similarly, George Orwell used satire in *Animal Farm* to criticize communism in Russia and Western tolerance of it.

Read and Discuss — 45 minutes

Display “A Modest Proposal.”

Preview the Text (2 minutes):

- Have scholars read the title and scan the passage to frame their thinking.
- Call on scholars to share what they noticed about the text and what they will think about as they are reading.

Read (15 minutes):

- Say: *As you are reading, think, “What is this essay mostly about?”*
 - Read the essay aloud while scholars follow along on their digital copies.

Discuss (3 minutes):

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: What is this essay mostly about? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.

Read (20 minutes):

- Say: *As you are rereading, think, “Why did Swift write this text?”*
- Read the essay aloud as scholars follow along on their digital copies. While reading aloud, pause to ask the questions below:
 - Stop after Line 17, “... those who demand our charity in the streets.”
 - Partner Talk: What is the problem being discussed?
 - Stop after Line 54, “... times that value.”
 - Partner Talk: Why are children problematic?
 - Stop after Line 136, “... importance.”
 - Partner Talk: What is Swift proposing?
 - Stop after Line 201, “... them into practice.”
 - Partner Talk: According to Swift, what are the primary advantages of his proposal?
 - Stop after Line 230, “... and my wife past child-bearing.”
- Discuss: Why did Swift write “A Modest Proposal”?

Main Idea Jot (2 minutes):

- Scholars jot a main idea in a comment next to the title of the text.
- While scholars are working, circulate to determine which scholars have a bull's-eye main idea jot and which do not.

Discuss (3 minutes):

- Scholars discuss the following question as a whole class: Why did Swift include the final paragraph? (Lines 226–230)

Give scholars 2 minutes to revise their main idea jots based on the discussion.

Write 1 — 10 minutes**Write an essay of no more than 200 words:**

- How does the “modest proposal” solve the problem set forth in Lines 1–17? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from “A Modest Proposal.”

Wrap-Up — 5 minutes

- Show an exemplar essay to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes the claim clear and compelling. Set your expectations for what scholars must do differently when approaching the next text.

Close Reading — 20 minutes**Close Reading (10 minutes):**

- **Read “A Modest Proposal”:** Lines 1–31, Lines 55–92, and Lines 180–230.

Discuss (10 minutes):

- Scholars discuss the following questions in pairs. Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
 - What do Lines 18–20 indicate about the narrator?
 - How does the narrator describe women and children in Lines 20–26?
 - Why is it ironic that the narrator hopes he “will not be liable to the least objection” when offering his proposal in Lines 57–73?
 - Who is Swift criticizing in Lines 74–92?
 - What is Swift identifying in Lines 184–198? Why is it ironic that he classifies these as “expedients”? (Lines 185)
 - What is the tone of this essay? How does this tone contribute to Swift’s purpose?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes**Write an essay of no more than 200 words:**

- Why did Jonathan Swift write “A Modest Proposal”? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from “A Modest Proposal.”

Homework

- Read *Animal Farm*, Chapter I (pages 3–14), “La Marseillaise and the French Revolution,” by Les Révolutionnaires and “Russian Revolution of 1917” from Britannica.com.