

“A Modest Proposal” Argument

While on a literal level the tone of Jonathan Swift’s essay “A Modest Proposal” is formal, the tone is, however, deeply ironic. Swift employs a formal tone to describe the socioeconomic problems plaguing Ireland: “The number of souls in Ireland... is two hundred thousand couples... from which I subtract... I again subtract... There only remain an hundred and twenty thousand children of poor parents born annually” (Swift 432). These precise, methodical terms are the characteristics of logical arguments found in academic journals published by universities, which demand to be taken seriously. However, the “modest” solution set forth by Swift is anything but reasonable; he recommends that the cannibalistic consumption of children will solve Ireland’s problems: “A young health child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food” (Swift 432). His ironic solution is so vulgarly outrageous that his audience must realize that he implies the inverse of what he proposes.

Claim

Evidence

Warrant