

A Modest Proposal and Other Satirical Works (Dover Thrift Editions)

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The originality, concentrated power and "fierce indignation" of his satirical writing have earned Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) a reputation as the greatest prose satirist in English language.

Gulliver's Travels is, of course, his world-renowned masterpiece in the genre; however, Swift wrote other, shorter works that also offer excellent evidence of his inspired lampoonery. Perhaps the most famous of these is "A Modest Proposal," in which he straight-facedly suggests that Ireland could solve its hunger problems by using its children for food. Also included in this collection are "The Battle of the Books," "A Meditation upon a Broomstick," "A Discourse Concerning the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit," and "An Argument Against Abolishing Christianity in England." This inexpensive edition will certainly be welcomed by teachers and students of English literature, but its appeal extends to any reader who delights in watching a master satirist wield words as weapons.

If you read this in high school (as many of us did), it may have shocked you--not bad for a tract written in 1729. It wouldn't be fair to those of you who haven't come across A Modest Proposal to reveal the particulars of the piece; suffice it to say that Saturday Night Live has nothing on Jonathan Swift! Swift's discussion of what Great Britain should do for his native impoverished Ireland is a model of political satire, absolutely consistent in tone and even now still sparkling in its clarity. The balance between, on the one hand, the utter seriousness of the matter in question and, on the other, the outrageousness of the remedy suggested is exquisite. A Modest Proposal is short and comes bound in this edition with several of Swift's other writings. This volume is an excellent introduction to the author of Gulliver's Travels (itself a masterpiece) and to one of the world's premier satirical minds. What are you waiting for? --Michael Gerber

Other Books

The Moon and Sixpence. Shedding harsh light on an artist's ego, Maugham reveals the lengths to which one man will go to focus on his art. Written in 1919, the tale remains controversial even today.

❓ ❓ ❓ ❓ ❓ . O-486-28738-6 A VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN, Mary Wollstonecraft. 224pp. O-486-29036-0 PLAYS PROMETHEUS BOUND , Aeschylus . 64pp. O-486-28762-9 THE ORESTEIA TRILOGY: Agamemnon, The Libation-Bearers and The Furies, Aeschylus . 160pp."