

A Modest Proposal

For Preventing The Children of Poor People from Being A Burden to Their Parents or Country, and for Making Them Beneficial to the Public.

Jonathan Swift
Peter Kuper

2012

Essay by Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), Illustrations by Peter Kuper (1958-)

It is a melancholy object to those, who walk through this great town, or travel in the country, when they see the streets crowded with beggars. Having turned my thoughts upon this important subject, I fortunately fell upon this proposal, which is wholly new, and of no expense. I shall now therefore humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection.

I have been assured by a very knowing American, that a young healthy child well nursed is a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or broiled, and I make no doubt tht it will equally serve in a fricassee or ragout.

I grant this food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very proper for landlords, who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children.

Besides having a new dish introduced to the tables of all gentlemen of fortune, the money will circulate among ourselves, the goods being entirely of our own manufacture.

Many other advantages might be enumerated. For instance, the constant breeders gain by the sale of their children. This would be a great inducement to marriage. And it would increase the care and tenderness of mothers toward their children.

Men would become as fond of their wives during the pregnancy as they now are of their cows in calf, their sows when they are ready to farrow.

I desire those who dislike my overture to attempt to answer the impossibility of paying rent without money or trade.

I profess I have not the least interest in endeavoring to promote this necessary work. But, I have no other motive than the public good of my country, by providing for infants, relieving the poor, and giving some pleasure to the rich.



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