

Satire

Criticism Through Laughter

What Is Satire?

Satire is a kind of writing that ridicules human weakness, vice, or folly in order to bring about social reform.

- Satires can be works of fiction, nonfiction, drama, or poetry.



© Vince O'Farrell

What Are the Functions of Satire?

- To make readers feel critical of themselves, of their fellow human beings, or of their society
- To make readers laugh at human foolishness and weakness
- To make fun of vicious, selfish, mean-spirited people in the hope that we will see ourselves in such people and mend our ways
- To expose errors and absurdities that we no longer notice because custom and familiarity have blinded us to them

Devices of Satire

- Exaggeration
 - Overstating
 - Stereotyping groups of people and focusing on faults
 - Making things appear ridiculous and unattractive
- Hyperbole
 - Using wild exaggeration

Devices of Satire

- Irony
 - Saying one thing and meaning the opposite
- Sarcasm
 - Using cruel or cutting irony
- Understatement
 - Saying less than what is really meant or saying something with less force than is appropriate.

Targets of Satire

- Humanity in general
- A stereotyped group of people
- A particular person

I have been assured by a very knowing American^o of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled. . . .

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

from *A Modest Proposal* by Jonathan Swift

^oAmerican—To Swift's readers this label would suggest a barbaric person.

^odear—expensive

^odevoured—made poor by charging high rents

A Few Famous English Satires

- *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift
- *A Modest Proposal* by Jonathan Swift
- *The Rape of the Lock* by Alexander Pope

What Have You Learned?

1. Satire appears only in fictional writings.
 - a. true
 - b. false
2. Satires are usually NOT aimed at _____.
 - a. a particular person
 - b. an animal
 - c. society
3. The primary goal of a satire is to _____.
 - a. make people laugh
 - b. celebrate human achievements
 - c. bring about social reform

The End