

Satire is rather hard to navigate because it is layered and most of what is REALLY BEING SAID is implied. If the reader is unable to make the correct inferences, the satirical elements are often overlooked and misunderstood. What first needs to be understood is that satire operates on a spectrum. This spectrum is comprised of the following parties: The Author, The Persona, The Persona's Purpose, and The Author's Purpose. It's important to note that the author and persona may not always be the same person; also note: the persona's purpose may not always be the same as the author's.

The Author: The actual human being, including his/her real character traits, creating the satirical work
(e.g. For the piece "A Modest Proposal" this would be Jonathan Swift the actual man who cares about the unjust, extreme poverty and mistreatment of those around him at the hands of the wealthy and powerful.)

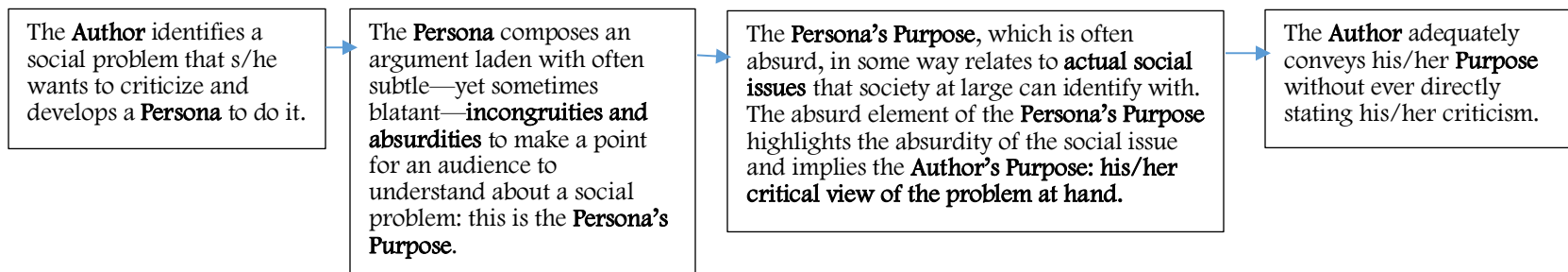
The Persona: The created role/character adopted by the author (who may or may not actually be the author—**confusing: I KNOW!**), that produces absurd or incongruous statements about a topic with social ties
(e.g. For the piece "A Modest Proposal" this would be the disinterested, pensive, and remarkably logical speaker who views that the only Suitable—and moral—solution to the mistreatment of impoverished women and children would be to make them more tangibly profitable for those who exercise power.)

The Persona's Purpose(s): What the Persona LITERALLY wants his/her audience to understand and/or do after experiencing the piece
(e.g. For the piece "A Modest Proposal" this would include the following: Poverty is a problem; it's the poor's fault because they are not adequately able to contribute to society; thusly, the only way to remediate the issue is by having women turn themselves into profitable breeders who would be able to put their children to good use by making them salable commodities for the rich who would be more than willing consume the products the children could produce, particularly their flesh.)

The Author's Purpose: What the Author wants his/her audience to understand and/or do after experiencing the satirical work. This is basically where the reader is able to infer and identify the social issue(s) the author is exploring in conjunction with his/her criticism.
(e.g. For the piece "A Modest Proposal" this would include the following: Poverty is a problem; it's the ruling class's relentless pursuit of power that is preventing the poor (particularly the women and children) from being productive members of society; the lives of people are valuable no matter their socio-economic state; the poor (particularly the aforementioned) have been dehumanized so much, and are in such extreme need, that extensive and extreme measures seem to be the only way out of the situation, even though there are morally logical solutions to the problem; individuals need to recognize that the issues with how the poor are being dealt with relate more to political failures than to the failures of these people; therefore, domestic (and trade) policies should be changed.)

Knowing the spectrum, allows you to create a Satirical Flow chart that will hopefully help you in understanding what the author is trying to accomplish in producing a satirical piece

Here is essentially how satire works: The author develops and adopts a persona who conveys an absurd message which implies the author's direct criticism of a social issue.



Directions: Create a chart that looks like the one below. On it, fill in the information—based on “The Speech of Polly Baker”—that corresponds with each column. You must have three examples in each column. Feel free to use your homework to help you fill out the chart, and also feel free to look at my example—though it is based on “A Modest Proposal”—in order to assist you in making judgments about the text (“TSPB”).

Title and Author (Name of the work and the individual who actually Wrote the Piece)	Persona and his/her Character Traits (with supporting, properly cited text)	Absurdities, Incongruities, and their Rhetorical Strategies (with supporting, properly cited text)	Persona’s Purpose(s) found within the piece	Author’s Implied, Satirical Purpose(s): the social issue(s) and accompanying criticism
e.g. “A Modest Proposal” Jonathan Swift	e.g. The speaker is well-researched and informed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I am assured by our merchants, that a boy or a girl before twelve years old is no salable commodity” (Swift 406). • “I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food” (Swift 406). • “A very worthy person, a true lover of his country, and whose virtues I highly esteem, was lately pleased in discoursing on the matter” (Swift 408). 	e.g. The speaker compares women and children to agricultural commodities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “[knowing that children would yield a profit] would increase the care and tenderness of mothers toward their children [...] Men would become as fond of their wives during the time of their pregnancy as they are now of their mares in foal” (Swift 408). 	The speaker is suggesting that the value of a human life is only tied to its tangible profitability.	Swift implies that women and children are dehumanized and considered valueless under the oppression of those who only value power and profits

Writing About Satire: Using the above chart, and following template, construct topic sentences for each of your examples. You should notice that this allows you to navigate the entire satirical spectrum. (You will have 3 topic sentences.)

In (Title) (author) constructs (Speaker—if identifiable) (Rhetorical Strategy based on absurdity/incongruity found in the text), suggesting (persona’s purpose), in order to expose (author’s purpose: the actual social criticism).

(e.g., In “A Modest Proposal,” Jonathan Swift constructs a thoughtful, well-informed speaker who compares women and children to agricultural commodities, suggesting that the value of human life is only tied to its tangible profitability, in order to expose that poor women and children are dehumanized and considered worthless in the eyes of those who may yield power over them—even their husbands.)