

Pre-Rhetoric Literature Assignment for Co-Op 13

This week we will be reading *Gulliver's Travels*. Because there are multiple abridged versions floating around, and some students may read the unabridged version, we will have a different type of assignment this week. We discussed SATIRE last semester and again today in class. Below is a recap of what we've learned about satire. Please read through this sheet and keep these things in mind when reading *Gulliver's Travels*. I look forward to hearing your satirical story at our next class.

Satire Definition

Satire is a technique employed by writers to expose and criticize foolishness and corruption of an individual or a society by using humor, irony, exaggeration or ridicule. It intends to improve humanity by criticizing its follies and foibles. A writer in a satire uses fictional characters, which stand for real people, to expose and condemn their corruption.

A writer may point a satire toward a person, a country or even the entire world. Usually, a satire is a comical piece of writing which makes fun of an individual or a society to expose its stupidity and shortcomings. In addition, he hopes that those he criticizes will improve their characters by overcoming their weaknesses.

Examples of Satire in Everyday Life

Most political cartoons which we witness every day in newspapers and magazines are examples of satire. These cartoons criticize some recent actions of political figures in a comical way.

Some shows on television are satire examples like The Daily Show, The Colbert Report, and The Larry Sanders Show. These shows claim to target what they think are stupid political and social viewpoints.

Let us see a sample of Stephen Colbert's social satire:

"If this is going to be a Christian nation that doesn't help the poor, either we have to pretend that Jesus was just as selfish as we are, or we've got to acknowledge that He commanded us to love the poor and serve the needy without condition and then admit that we just don't want to do it."

Satire Examples in Literature

Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver Travels* is one of the finest satirical works in English Literature. Swift relentlessly satirizes politics, religion, and Western Culture. Criticizing party politics in England, Swift writes, *"that for above seventy Moons past there have been two struggling Parties in this Empire, under the Names of Tramecksan and Slamecksan from the high and low Heels on their shoes, by which they distinguish themselves."*

During Swift's times, two rival political parties, the Whigs and the Tories, dominated the English political scene. Similarly, "The Kingdom of Lilliput" is dominated by two parties distinguished by the size of the heels of their boots. By the trivial disputes between the two Lilliputian parties", Swift satirizes the minor disputes of the two English parties of his period.

Function of Satire

The role of satire is to ridicule or criticize those vices in the society, which the writer considers a threat to civilization. The writer considers it his obligation to expose these vices for the betterment of humanity. Therefore, the function of satire is not to make others laugh at persons or ideas they make fun of. It intends to warn the public and to change their opinions about the prevailing corruption/conditions in society.

Assignment:

Write a SHORT story or news article satirizing an issue of your choice. This story should be no more than 1 page typed using 12-point Helvetica. As you try to think of which topic to satirize, think of an issue you feel strongly about, then consider how you could poke fun at it through exaggeration in a short story. Sometimes it is easiest to poke fun at an issue that is personal to you — like homeschooling, or living in the country or being part of a large family or a military family, or even something topical like fake news and the media. When you've finished your short story or news article, ask your parent to read it to ensure it makes sense.

[Here is a link to a comical use of satire related to homeschooling.](#)