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Portfolio Cover Letter

This course and the assignments that I completed provided me with a much fuller understanding of rhetorical strategies, improved my writing skills and writing process, and opened my mind to counter arguments and opposing ideas. I also explored new genres of writing, including podcasts, an image creating assignment, and reflective essays.

I was able to explore rhetorical strategies and their effectiveness in several of my assignments, from short blog posts to long research papers. One example is a blog post I wrote addressing an article in *The Onion* (see exhibit 1 below for a sample from this assignment). This piece, although relatively short, was great practice for quickly analyzing a piece of literature for its rhetorical strategies. In the case of that article, I knew that it was a hoax. However, that did not put any blinders on me when looking through it for rhetorically effective writing. In fact, I gained deeper understanding of how effective rhetoric that adds even the slightest hint of believability to a work makes it more engaging, and even more humorous in the case of *The Onion*. I also explored rhetorical strategies in the other major projects, including the podcast we created and the final research paper on a hoax of our choosing. I believe that I have a deeper understanding of the necessity of emotional appeal, author credibility, logical arguments, and understanding the audience, or ethos, pathos, and logos.

I also gained a much fuller understanding and appreciation for the writing process, and how to create solid outlines, drafts, and revisions. One of the projects that had the greatest impact

on my understanding of this process was the final research paper, revision, and revision analysis. In this project, I looked at the primary source, in my case “A Modest Proposal,” and learn how to research and synthesize secondary sources as well. I then created an outline and planned how I would integrate textual evidence from these sources into my paper. I noticed that my ability to pick out important information and understand and analyze it had greatly improved from the first major paper that I wrote earlier in the semester.

Another major arena that I explored was crafting and analyzing counter arguments. I had some past experience with this, but I gained a renewed sense of importance in discussing and analyzing counter arguments. The final research paper I wrote, as well as the revision of the first essay, provided me with opportunities to explore other peoples’ perspectives and how they received the works I was writing about. My perspective is that it was a piece of satire, but it was easy to interpret this work as a hoax. I spent quite a bit of time addressing how it could be interpreted as a hoax, which is contrary to what a deeper analysis of the paper presents (see exhibit 2). It became more and more clear to me why it is so important to evaluate counter arguments, partly to ensure that your own argument is solid.

The use of different genres also really improved my writing and analysis skills. One genre that I did not expect to explore, but had a profound impact on my improvement as a writer, was a podcast. This assignment forced me to think more creatively and analyze audience more fully. I had to learn how to be extremely effective in my analysis of rhetorical strategies because the time limit on the podcast was only 5-6 minutes. I felt that this assignment helped me to be precise and concise with my arguments because I could fit so little into that time. I also learned about how to decide on and appeal to a specific audience, as well as analyze the importance of the audience all in one assignment. I ultimately decided on catering to the Emory crowd,

specifically those who read the *Emory Wheel*. However, I even struggled to fit audience into my final podcast because my background setup and rhetorical analysis took up so much time.

Another genre that I was not used to was blog posts. These were really fun to write, but also ensured that my arguments were precise. The fact that the audience was not just the professor but my peers and anyone who decided to look at the Emory blogs or found them through a search engine allowed me to write in a different style that was often less formal and more open-ended than the essays I was used to writing.

I definitely learned about what defines a hoax, and the debate surrounding that idea. However, this exploration hoaxes more importantly opened up for discussion and practice in evidence analysis, rhetorical strategies, different genres and mediums, and how to craft and revise arguments and projects that appeal to specific audiences.

Exhibit 1:

Perhaps one of the most important contributions towards its believability is its logos or structure, including its title, quotations, etc. The article uses a structure familiar to even casual news article readers. It has a headline at the top, and begins with a location- in this case Budapest, Hungary- a structure the reader would see in news papers such the New York Times. Just earlier today I skimmed an article on wildfires in California from the that very newspaper, and it began with stating the location in the same way, (in that case, Fresno, California). Furthermore, *The Onion's* article uses quotations to add a sense of credibility to its claims. In fact, just the second sentence already implements this technique. It quotes a (fake) Syrian refugee, and even gives them a name. The article continues on and adds another, even longer quotation from the same "refugee." The reader is more likely to find the article even slightly more believable because there is someone with a name and nationality behind the quotations.

This story also invokes pathos. It attempts to invoke emotions in the reader through its use of quotations and stories from their "refugee" source. The source is full of excitement, which conveys the sense of gratitude that the title mentions. He says phrases like "hopefully... we'll be off to somewhere new!" (*The Onion*). The apparent excitement of the article's source adds to the credibility of the emotional credibility of the article.

Finally, the article uses ethos to continue building trust through a confident delivery. Other than the quotes from the source, who is perhaps a little bit too excited given his circumstances, the article is written in a relatively formal way. It contains a legitimate location, real locations that the refugees were travelling through, and expands on a legitimate problem that the world is facing about how to handle the refugees. In addition, the writer of the story never blatantly suggests that the article is false, and quotes a "real" person just as many journalists do.

Ultimately, the reader understands that the article is a hoax, especially towards the end, but regardless of the legitimacy of the article, the use of rhetorical strategies is very prevalent.

Exhibit 2:

There is, at least at a surface level, a strong case for the interpretation as a hoax that was intended to be taken seriously. Analysis of the literary elements and tactics used in “A Modest Proposal” should be examined after looking at the case for this piece being a hoax since many of the techniques are implemented in both writing styles. Swift uses strong appeals that give this essay a layer of “credibility.” This comes in the form of counterarguments and attempting to appeal emotionally by claiming that he only wants to help. These counterarguments are presented throughout the whole essay. One prime example of this tactic is when the narrator says, “let no man talk to me of these and the like expedients, till he hath at least some glimpse of hope that there will ever be some hearty and sincere attempt to put them in practice” (Swift 13). The narrator is making a bold statement: people must actually attempt to put these ideas into practice before judging the effectiveness of the claims. With statements like this in the essay, it is easy to think that Swift is actually trying to propose a real solution because he will not discredit his claims. Another potent tactic that Swift uses is a more emotional, or person-to-person appeal. The narrator claims that the ideas presented in this essay are sincerely intended to benefit the Irish. At the end of the essay, the narrator states, “I profess, in the sincerity of my heart, that I have not the least personal interest in endeavoring to promote this necessary work, having no other motive than the public good of my country....” (Swift 15). A narrator stating that the idea presented is for the good of others is a common theme in many hoaxes. This appeal can definitely capture the reader’s attention and make them take the essay more seriously. These tactics are strong and convincing, but an even closer reading of the paper reveals that the intent is more likely to create a satirical piece. ¶

Truth or Hoax: The Seventy-Two Million Dollar Question

People are always trying to make money in any way they can, so when they hear a story about a teen who made seventy-two million dollars by simply trading stocks, all while going to school, they are naturally interested. In addition, because the article was published in the highly credible and widely read *New York* magazine, the story grabbed the attention of countless people who hope that they can make their own millions. However, the whole story was made up. The eventual realization that the claims were false did not take away from the effectiveness of the hoax; it made it into a well-known magazine, and many people believed it. Despite the extremely unreasonable claims about the high school student's stock market fortune, the credibility of the author, the evidence presented in the text, and the article's appeal to the audience led to a very convincing article that many readers believed.

Author, subject, and audience are central to understanding the rhetorical strategies and writing style in this magazine article. This story is written about a high school senior named Mohammed Islam, who people claimed made a seventy-two million-dollar fortune off of the stock market by simply trading during when he had time during the school day. The article was written by Jessica Pressler, a writer for *New York* magazine. Mohammed and the others who claimed that he made this fortune were the ones who actually created and spread the hoax, although while reading the article it seems like the author may have embellished some details a little bit, such as the price of juice and caviar, which helped out the hoaxer's cause. The danger of an article like this is that *New York* magazine has a reputation as a credible news source, and their readers, the audience of this hoax, believed that this article was true. To a reader now it may seem completely unreasonable, but at the time many people thought otherwise.

The article would have been much less convincing if it was not published in a well known and trusted source such as *New York* magazine. *New York* is a very well known magazine that has been around for decades and presents stories about current events in politics, culture, and more. Many of their articles are written to be entertaining, but the articles are not completely made up. Because of the nature of the magazine, when an article about a high school senior named Mohammed making a fortune off of the stock market is published, people are eager to read the story. Furthermore, the article is published in a section titled “Reasons to Love New York,” which features stories of real people and their unsung actions that make New York great. When reading this type of article, the reader expects it to be true, and is often willing to disregard the fact that they might not have ever heard the story before, or that seventy-two million dollars seems ridiculously high. The claims may seem preposterous to a reader who looks at the article critically, but, for most readers, they were willing to suspend any disbelief because of the seeming credibility of the article they were reading. It is likely that Mohammed’s greatest asset in making his story believable was having it published by a credible third party news source. This would not have happened, however, without at least some evidence suggesting that his story is true.

The credibility of *New York* magazine is vital to making a story convincing, but evidence of Mohammed’s success is central to the article’s believability as well. Although the article does not provide exact numbers from Mohammed’s bank account or stock portfolios, there is evidence of his wealth and knowledge of the stock market throughout the article. For example, the writer explains how Mohammed made his money, and the struggle of how he got there in a very understandable yet arguably technical-sounding way: “he [Mohammed] became a scholar of modern finance, studying up on hedge-fund managers... Mo got into trading oil and gold, and

his bank account grew” (Pressler). For at least a casual reader, his methods for making his millions seem reasonable. Many people hear about the ever-changing value of gold and oil, and the huge fluctuations of the stock market, so trading these commodities wisely and making millions doesn’t seem completely impossible. Furthermore, Mohammed’s wealth and the wealth of his investing friends is portrayed by an order of 400-dollar juice and caviar during the interview with the *New York* writer (Pressler). This figure seems unreasonably high, and although likely at least a slight hyperbole, many readers feel that if Mohammed and his friend can spend that kind of money on snacks, the 72-million-dollar figure seems much more reasonable. The evidence of Mohammed’s wealth definitely adds credibility to the claims of his fortune, but the article also appeals to the readers at a more personal level.

Finally, the article appeals to the general audience on a more emotional level. One way that the article accomplishes this is through Mohammed admitting his failure. The author writes, “Mo started with penny stocks.... He loved the feeling of risk... but he swore it off after losing a chunk of the money he’d made tutoring.... It was a while before he was ready to try again” (Pressler). The writer continues with a direct quotation from Mohammed himself: “I had been paralyzed by my loss... [but] you learn more from your losses than from your gains” (Pressler). If the story stated that Mohammed merely picked up trading and somehow instantly made his millions, the story would have been hardly convincing. However, by incorporating his failure and disillusionment, the article appeals more to a large audience, because everyone has failed at some point. Furthermore, Mohammed is not portrayed as an arrogant snob, unlike someone such as Jordan Belfort from *The Wolf of Wall Street*, but rather as someone who is more timid about his fame and fortune. The writer includes quotations from the conversation such as when Mohammed’s friend states, Mohammed “is quiet today ... ‘Humble’... This is our third meeting

of the day....” (Pressler). A quotation like this adds human qualities to Mohammed, which makes him more relatable and lovable to the large audience that would read this article. These human qualities of Mohammed make his story far more relatable and believable.

Even though all of these appeals are strong, there is substantial evidence pointing to the fact that this article simply can't be true. One example is the lack of training that Mohammed received. The article simply states that a “cousin showed him how to trade” (Pressler). The cousin has no credentials as a professional trader, and no track record of success. Furthermore, Mohammed somehow, almost miraculously, made a fortune after completely failing the first time. That wasn't all though, he managed to do it during the school day. High level stock traders who spend their whole day trading often have a hard time making that kind of money, even with a large investment. To top it all off, Mohammed wasn't even 18 years old, and “he doesn't yet have a [driver's] license” (Pressler). The combination of all of these facts, as well as other more minor exaggerations throughout this article make it seem completely unreasonable to an educated and critically thinking reader.

Through the *New York* magazine writer, Mohammed and his friends successfully use credibility, evidence, and appeals to the audience in order to make a successful story. However, even the author did not know that the story of Mohammed's fortune from the stock market was a complete hoax. The story was written as completely true, and even *New York* magazine did not realize that the story was fake until long after it published the article. The fact that this hoax made it into such a well known magazine raises questions about fact checking and analysis of evidence. The fact checker for the article was clearly tricked, and the magazine should improve their fact checking methods. However, the responsibility to analyze the story's truthfulness is also shared by the readers. Although there were no horrible implications to people believing this

article, the audience of both magazines and other mediums must be careful about what they believe, and analyze the evidence for themselves. Reflecting on the article, there are some areas where the article's claims seem to be inflated, and many times the evidence is based off of emotional appeal more than empirical data. Most people probably read the article, thought that Mohammed's accomplishment was very impressive, and then continued on with their lives without analyzing the article any further. It is imperative that people carefully examine claims and the evidence that supports them, and choose what is actually true for themselves.

Works Cited

Pressler, Jessica. "12. Because a Stuyvesant Senior Made Millions Picking Stocks. His Hedge Fund Opens As Soon As He Turns 18." NYMag.com. New York. Web. 22 Sept. 2015.

Paper 1 Reflection - "Truth or Hoax: The Seventy-Two Million Dollar Question"

This paper had nice evidence and analysis, and a nice zoom out in the conclusion which provided a nice framework. However, some of the organization, wording, and broadness needed revision. Therefore, I focused my resources on re-organizing some of the points, such as how Mohammed fooled the magazine, narrowing the audience, and fixing up some of my sentences to make them more clear and accurate. I also included a paragraph that addressed "counter" arguments as to why the readers should clearly see that this piece is a hoax.

In terms of re-organization, one piece of information that needed to be presented earlier was how Mohammed fooled *New York* magazine, and who the audience and author were. I inserted a background/general information paragraph right after the introduction to provide context as to who the writer, hoaxer, and audience were (see page 1 of paper). Though some of this information was presented in later paragraphs, I did not feel like I should move them around very much, and a background paragraph worked well with my essay structure.

I also added a paragraph right before the conclusion that addressed the "counter" argument that this piece should not be seen as a hoax at all. It presented several ways that the reader could see through the absurd claims. I originally thought about adding this paragraph before the paragraphs describing how this paper was rhetorically effective, but I decided that it was more effective at the end because the reader was built up to believe that the piece was easy to mistake for real article, but if they didn't critically examine the evidence for themselves then this paragraph would shatter that idea.

The last major set of edits I performed had to do with some transitional and syntactical flaws in the paper. One paragraph's introduction sentences read "Author credibility is vital to making a story convincing..." but I actually meant that the *New York* magazine's credibility is vital (see page 2 of paper). I also reworked the introduction to the conclusion paragraph a little bit. Rather than stating, "The *New York* magazine writer successfully used credibility, evidence, and appeals to the audience in order to make a successful story" I felt that I actually was arguing that Mohammed and his friends were the ones creating the story, so I changed it to: "Through the *New York* magazine writer, Mohammed and his friends successfully use credibility, evidence, and appeals to the audience in order to make a successful story" (see essay page 4). There were some other minor tense issues and a few typos that I worked on as well.

I began revising this paper several weeks ago, if I recall correctly as part of an assignment, and since I did not look at it a lot very recently until about a week ago, it was a little bit difficult to figure out where to start editing at first. However, this was helpful in some ways because I could look at it with "fresh" eyes and saw some of the issues, even typos, that I missed when I wrote and proofread it the first time. It also provided me with insights into counter arguments, and I was able to see both sides to the argument about its validity/believability more clearly. Even by just re-visiting this paper and re-reading the article, I feel like I strengthened my understanding of rhetorical strategies. The magazine and newspaper genre can be tricky to navigate, and since they are supposed to be credible, it takes a lot of deep analysis to actually see through the lies.

Hypothetical Podcast Revision

In my podcast, I really liked the flow of the segments, the rhetorical strategies that I was able to examine, and the background I was able to provide about "Jimmy's World". However, there are several areas that I feel could be strengthened, such as appealing to a more specific audience, warning the listener of rhetorical strategies to watch out for when reading articles themselves, adding more depth to my rhetorical analysis, and cleaning up some of the audio and volume levels.

I would have liked to incorporate the specific audience that I chose into the podcast presentation more, but it was difficult to do this given the time limit. The audience I chose was people who read newspapers, and specifically people within the Emory community who read publications like the *Emory Wheel*. Articles in publications like this do not go through nearly the same screening process as articles in major sources like the *Washington Post*, and so it is easy to not understand the intention of an article or not examine it enough to see that it is a hoax. I would probably add something towards the end along the lines of:

"As is evidenced by the fact that so many people bought into the story of "Jimmy's World," it is imperative that we, as readers of articles, thoroughly examine the sources we are reading and decide if the evidence is really good enough to believe the article. We must also be careful to not fall victim to the convincing rhetorical strategies that many writers like Cooke employ to gain our trust. These same strategies can be employed by writers of any article, even in the *Emory Wheel*. Hopefully after gaining insight into the tactics used in hoaxes like "Jimmy's World," you won't fall victim to articles like this."

If I was creating a longer podcast, I likely would have gone deeper into analysis of each rhetorical strategy. I only had a couple of sentences to examine each piece of evidence, such as the backstory and names, the credibility of the *Washington Post*, or Cooke's fake credentials. Though I felt like I was able to get through a lot of evidence in a short time and provide an explanation of why each of these pieces of evidence contributed to a rhetorical strategy, I often wasn't able to "hourglass" the evidence like we discussed in class. Many times, I would introduce the quotation well or summarize the importance well, but did not always accomplish both. For example, I said "the fact that they [Jimmy and his family] had a back story adds credibility to the claim," but did not introduce the importance or style of the backstory very well. I would work on sections like this if the podcast had a larger time limit.

Finally, there are a few technical things that I would like to touch up. The first thing is the transition between a couple of sentences where I had to re-record some of the audio, and it ended up being a bit choppy in the final product. This was around 1:21 in the podcast where I said, "The fact that a hoax like this..." I liked the music levels, and since they were all from the same recording I didn't have a problem with editing the volume levels. However, some of the segments are louder or softer than the others and the music. This was partly due to the fact that I recorded segments in a couple of different locations, and I had to speak loudly because there was background noise that the microphone picked up on. If I had more time to work on this, I might re-record some of the segments in a really quiet location, and would play around with adjusting audio levels in the sound editing software.

A Modest Hoax? The Importance of Literary Analysis

Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal," published in 1729, is arguably one of the most well read pieces of satire, with an audience ranging from high school students to English scholars in a variety of fields. In this essay, Swift proposes a solution to take care of the famine, economic crisis, and overpopulation occurring in Ireland at the time. However, once people begin reading this essay, they see that the propositions are absurd. Swift goes so far as proposing that people sell and eat their children. However, with a small amount of investigation into the issue, it is clear that this piece is a satirical work intended to kindle discussions about injustices towards Ireland. However, not everyone saw that this piece was meant to be satirical, which led to some people classifying it as a hoax, including the queen of England at the time. There are many different reasons that this essay became a hoax. Due to the tension between Ireland and England, Swift's personal attachment and dedication to these issues that Ireland was facing, and the convincing literary strategies that Swift uses in "A Modest Proposal," a clearly satirical piece was interpreted by many as real proposition, and was therefore transformed into a hoax.

The historical and political context that surrounded "A Modest Proposal's" publication influenced the reception of this essay, and these ideas are important to examine, even for a modern reader. There is no doubt that Ireland was being mistreated by Britain. This came in the form of political, economic, and religious oppression. To begin with, the Irish parliament was subjected to British authority against their will by the "Declaratory or Dependency Act" of 1720. This act came after Ireland's "attempts to argue for its rights as the supreme organ of decision of a distinct kingdom..." (Moneva 7). This act further restricted Irish input on decision making, and reaffirmed that the Irish parliament was subordinate to the British parliament. To add insult to injury, the British passed acts like the "Wool Acts," "Navigation Acts," and "Cattle Acts." These

acts put harsh regulations on the Irish economy, and essentially gave Britain complete control over their economy. The Navigation act even went so far as implying that Ireland was a colony rather than its own entity (Moneva 7). Furthermore, the "Wool Acts" and "Navigation Acts" completely destroyed Ireland's economy by placing harsh restrictions on livestock and wool exports. Britain also imposed harsh religious restrictions on Ireland, specifically oppression of the Catholics. During the early and mid 1600's, Ireland was prevented from practicing Catholicism. The Irish had a revolution in 1668 that attempted to restore a Catholic king to power and return pieces of land to their previous owners. However, this idea ultimately failed because Britain took total control of Ireland and the Catholics were completely stripped of power: "after the Revolution, the... English rule was restored in Ireland... Every act passed placed the Catholics in Ireland under all kinds of possible social and political disadvantage and discrimination" (Moneva 6). The Irish were subjected to complete British dominance over their economy, political decisions, and religious freedom. Without this historical context when examining "A Modest Proposal," readers cannot truly understand Swift's intentions in writing this essay, and it is easy to view this piece of writing as a hoax, rather than a satirical piece with a political agenda.

To correctly interpret "A Modest Proposal," the reader should also have an understanding of satire and irony, and know how to identify it in a literary work. Satire was not unique to Swift. There were many other notable satirists during the 18th century, such as Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, and John Locke. Because satirical works have many different agendas, and are written for different purposes by different authors, a strong definition of satire is required, because the term "satire" needs to be used efficiently in this paper. Many people view satire through a narrow lens, with a narrow definition like the Merriam-Webster dictionary's definition, which

defines it as "a way of using humor to show that someone or something is foolish, weak, bad, etc." Though this definition is helpful, satire is not really that easy to define. It's a balance of irony, humor, and sometimes even ridicule. Satire can take on different forms depending on the individual author. This paper will discuss Swift's individual writing style and techniques later, but it is still important to look at satire in a more general context first. A deeper and more accurate definition of satires relies on making the distinction between irony, satire, and ridicule. This quotation is helpful in summarizing these differences: "Satire can ridicule, often viciously, but the use of ridicule may not be co-extensive with provoking a sense of the ridiculous. That is, ridicule may either be intrinsic, or it may be a desired response to the satire" (Condren 389). A more thorough definition of satire and its intentions, like the one presented by Condren, is helpful in understanding that a piece of satire can have different intentions. A piece of satire is most often created so that people will laugh at a situation, and will therefore most likely find it to be ridiculous. When examining the intent of a piece like "A Modest Proposal," using a strong and thorough definition of satire is necessary. Perhaps the most accurate definition of satire, at least in the context of this paper, is something like a work, often a piece of writing, that pokes fun at a subject with the hope that people will see how ridiculous it is in order to push a political or personal agenda.

In this piece, Swift seems to be "provoking a sense of ridiculousness," rather than explicitly ridiculing the events. The story is written in a "serious" manner where the narrator wants people to sincerely consider the ideas; this idea will be explored further later on. However, as the essay unfolds, the reader is presented with ideas that, when examined, create a tone of ridiculousness. This comes in the form of "insane" logic. The narrator makes the argument that the proposal to eat infants is reasonable because it will prevent abortions and help out both the

upper and poor classes. Not only would the children provide food, but “the poorer tenants will have something valuable of their own, which... [may] help to pay their landlord’s rent....” (Swift 10). To this narrator, it is somehow horrible to have abortions, but eating and selling children for food is morally acceptable, and is furthermore very beneficial. The tone created by arguments like this give the reader the idea that these claims and the historical context surrounding them are ridiculous, rather than explicitly stating that current events are ridiculous. There are many other strong pieces of textual evidence that demonstrate that this paper is humorous, which will be examined more thoroughly later. The key to creating a satirical work like "A Modest Proposal" is this humor and irony in the writing.

Now that a clear definition of satire has been created, a deeper understanding of Swift’s personal connections to the political issues in Ireland at the time is very useful in understanding why this piece is written as a satire. Swift was very personally attached to the issues that Ireland was facing, mainly due to the portion of his life he spent in Ireland, and his political involvement with England and Ireland. This attachment contributes to the reader's understanding of the agenda that Swift may be attempting to advance. He was a very passionate writer who wanted this essay to make a bold statement: "Swift's increasing knowledge of Ireland resulted in a series of passionate and daring tracts which account for his later reputation as a patriotic writer" (Fox 24). Much of this passion came from Swift's inside knowledge of the situation involving Ireland. Swift worked for a long period of time in the British government. With this advanced knowledge and perspective on the events, it was easy for Swift to become even more upset and fired up about the injustices.

After understanding Swift’s passion for the injustices that the Irish were facing, it is also useful to examine Swift's writing style, which sheds light on the purpose of "A Modest Proposal"

and how it can be interpreted as a hoax by the more "serious" readers of this essay. The specific diction and literary strategies that were used in "A Modest Proposal" will be discussed in the next paragraphs, but it is important to have a more holistic understanding of Swift's purpose and overall technique when writing pieces like "A Modest Proposal." Swift was no doubt a political writer. He felt personally convicted about topics and needed to make a statement about them. Swift was "political." The evidence of Swift's activities as a benevolent projector is to be found both in the details of his English political career and... in his writings on Ireland. His profound self-consciousness over his projecting role has left its mark...." (Treadwell 447). The purpose of the article cited here is to examine Swift's style, specifically how he was a "projector." As this article argues, Swift had an agenda, and he wanted to promote it through his writing. The difficulties that Ireland faced called for someone like Swift, who could use satire to make people laugh at the situation and British rule. It was impossible for Ireland to beat Britain with military or economic force, and the use of humor and ultimately ridicule was one of the most powerful weapons that could be used. Swift understood this, and therefore turned himself into a projector. Understanding this side of Swift provides a new depth to his writing, and allows for more careful reading of his works like "A Modest Proposal," and those who understand his agenda can understand that this essay was meant to be satirical, not a hoax.

Context is very helpful in understanding Swift's intentions in "A Modest Proposal," but it can only really predict intentions. The essay itself decides the direction of Swift's arguments, and provides evidence for or against the piece being a hoax. Swift carefully crafted each sentence, which begs us to closely analyze this essay to understand its meaning, and there is strong evidence pointing to the fact that this piece should be interpreted as a satire not a hoax.

There is, at least at a surface level, a strong case for the interpretation as a hoax that was intended to be taken seriously. Analysis of the literary elements and tactics used in “A Modest Proposal” should be examined after looking at the case for this piece being a hoax since many of the techniques are implemented in both writing styles. Swift uses strong appeals that give this essay a layer of “credibility.” This comes in the form of counterarguments and attempting to appeal emotionally by claiming that he only wants to help. These counterarguments are presented throughout the whole essay. One prime example of this tactic is when the narrator says, “let no man talk to me of these and the like expedients, till he hath at least some glimpse of hope that there will ever be some hearty and sincere attempt to put them in practice” (Swift 13). The narrator is making a bold statement: people must actually attempt to put these ideas into practice before judging the effectiveness of the claims. With statements like this in the essay, it is easy to think that Swift is actually trying to propose a real solution because he will not discredit his claims. Another potent tactic that Swift uses is a more emotional, or person-to-person appeal. The narrator claims that the ideas presented in this essay are sincerely intended to benefit the Irish. At the end of the essay, the narrator states, “I profess, in the sincerity of my heart, that I have not the least personal interest in endeavoring to promote this necessary work, having no other motive than the public good of my country....” (Swift 15). A narrator stating that the idea presented is for the good of others is a common theme in many hoaxes. This appeal can definitely capture the reader’s attention and make them take the essay more seriously. These tactics are strong and convincing, but an even closer reading of the paper reveals that the intent is more likely to create a satirical piece.

As was mentioned previously, there is strong textual evidence that this piece is meant to be interpreted as a satire. The attitude of narrator that Swift employs betrays this fact. Besides the

paper being completely absurd, the ironic narrator also provides a tone of ridicule and absurdity. This narrator can somehow criticize people who do things like have abortions, but what the narrator is proposing is somehow not morally unacceptable like what they are doing: "There is likewise another great advantage in my scheme, that it will prevent those voluntary abortions, and that horrid practice of women murdering their bastard children..." (Swift 4). There is no way that a reader can take this narrator's claims or ideas seriously when looking at the narrator's attitude towards the issues and the strong overtones of irony and absurdity. However, if the reader does not carefully examine this essay, it can be easy to overlook the irony, and it can seem like the narrator may actually think that the absurd ideas he is presenting are legitimate.

As is evidenced in each aspect surrounding "A Modest Proposal," it is easy to confuse this piece of literature for a hoax. This essay is an example that makes the case that a careful reading and analysis of literature is absolutely necessary for understanding its intentions. Some works are very clear in their purpose. For example, many modern programs like the *Daily Show* or *Last Week Tonight* make it abundantly clear that their purpose is to ridicule current events and politics in a humorous way. Swift was not so clear when he published "A Modest Proposal." In fact, he originally published the essay anonymously, which does not provide as much context for the reader to look at, so it is even harder to accurately interpret the intent of the essay. There were some strong literary techniques that made it easy for the population to misinterpret it, especially in a time of fighting and crisis. It is easy to form strong opinions about books, essays, or TV programs after just a quick, and often mindless reading or viewing of them. Without deeper analysis and critical thinking, people will believe hoaxes, and misinterpret satire. Therefore, it is imperative that people closely examine the context, writing style, and diction in a work before making assumptions about its purpose.

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Revision Report for "A Modest Hoax? The Importance of Literary Analysis"

In this essay, I felt that my overall structure was well set up. In the majority of the paper, I had a strong outline and plan for my argument, and the paragraphs flowed pretty logically. However, towards the middle of my paper, these elements were a little bit weaker. The majority of the problems came when I was trying to transition between paragraphs about the history of satire and what satire actually means, especially in relation to pieces like "A Modest Proposal," and specific references to Swift's personal story and the text of "A Modest Proposal" itself. This also indirectly led to a fairly late introduction of specific textual evidence. I also wanted to work on my arguments to make them more elegant and make the paragraphs less choppy or "formal" sounding to the reader. This task proved to be the most difficult for me, and it took a long time for me to reword many of the introductory or transitions sentences in my paragraphs. This also, somewhat surprisingly to me, helped me restructure some of my arguments or make sure that they were solid.

In the middle portion of my paper, I rearranged my paragraph about the definition of satire, and then realized that I could incorporate some textual evidence about how "A Modest Proposal" fit my claim based on the definition I incorporated, which was "Swift seems to be 'provoking a sense of ridiculousness'...." (essay page 3). In the paragraph defining satire, I was able to strengthen the claim that a strong definition of satire requires distinguishing between irony, ridicule, and strictly satire. After restructuring that paragraph, I added a paragraph immediately following it that contained the evidence backing up my definition of satire (see figure 1). This paragraph also provided a nice preview and connection to the later part of the essay, and allowed me to incorporate textual evidence much earlier which I feel allows the paper to focus on the essay even more.

The paragraph following the definition paragraph, which attempted to set up several of the following paragraphs, became less and less useful to the paper as I continued to edit it. I ultimately decided to remove this paragraph all together and clean up the transition into my paragraph about Swift's connection with the politics of the time (see figure 2). This seemed to make the transition much more clear and removed a marginally written paragraph.

The other major area I focused on revising was making my introduction and transition statements, especially relating to why a piece of knowledge is important, more clear and elegant. As I mentioned previously, this task proved more difficult than I expected, but helped me to work out my structure and arguments more. One good example of this type of edit was the beginning of the second paragraph. I previously began it with "In order to understand how 'A Modest Proposal' was received, it is important to understand the political and historical context surrounding the publishing of this essay" (essay page 1). I changed it to "The historical and political context that surrounded 'A Modest Proposal's' publication influenced the reception of this essay, and these ideas are important to examine, even for a modern reader." I feel that the change made a much more potent claim and provided a more natural transition rather than a forced "this is why this is important..." kind of statement. I made similar edits in several other paragraphs to smooth out my paper as well.

As I continued to edit this paper, I realized more and more how much of a process editing a large paper like this one is. I got a sense of that during the first paper revision, but the length of this essay and amount of background information in this paper really allowed me to gain more insight into the writing process. As I worked through many suggested edits, I also realized that many of my arguments were not as clear as I thought they were when I originally wrote this

essay. It was very helpful for me to re-write sections of this paper after hearing what other people, especially my peer review groups, thought the purpose of each paragraph was. After revision suggestions from both the teacher and students, I feel that my arguments are more convincing and straightforward, and are easier to read and follow.

Figure 1:

~~fun at a subject with the hope that people will see how ridiculous it is in order to push a political or personal agenda.~~

~~In this piece, Swift seems to be “provoking a sense of ridiculousness,” rather than explicitly ridiculing the events. The story is written in a “serious” manner where the narrator~~

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~~wants people to sincerely consider the ideas; this idea will be explored further later on. However, as the essay unfolds, the reader is presented with ideas that, when examined, create a tone of ridiculousness. This comes in the form of “insane” logic. The narrator makes the argument that the proposal to eat infants is reasonable because it will prevent abortions, and help out both the upper and poor classes. Not only would the children provide food, but “the poorer tenants will have something valuable of their own, which... [may] help to pay their landlord’s rent...” (Swift 10). To this narrator, it is somehow horrible to have abortions, but eating and selling children for food is morally acceptable, and is furthermore very beneficial. The tone created by arguments like this give the reader the idea that these claims and the historical context surrounding them are ridiculous, rather than explicitly stating that current events are ridiculous. There are many other strong pieces of textual evidence that demonstrate that this paper is humorous, which will be examined more thoroughly later. The key to creating a satirical work like “A Modest Proposal” is this humor and irony in the writing.~~

~~Now that a clear definition of satire has been created, a deeper understanding of Swift’s~~

The paragraph in red was added after the paragraph about satirical definition was edited (paragraph above ending in green).

Figure 2:

like a work, often a piece of writing, that pokes fun at a subject with the hope that people will see how ridiculous it is in order to push a political or personal agenda.

In order to accomplish the task of creating a satirical work with the purpose mentioned above, the writer must walk a fine line between creating a piece of literature with a serious tone and crafting a humorous work that people will not interpret as a legitimate proposition. Due to

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this difficult task, it is easy for people to turn a satirical work into a hoax. Therefore, a strong analysis of "A Modest Proposal" must look at Swift's personal connections to the political issues that Ireland was facing mentioned above and Swift's personal writing style, as well as explore what literary elements allow for the misinterpretation of this essay as a hoax.

Swift was very personally attached to the issues that Ireland was facing, mainly due to the portion of his life he spent in Ireland, and his political involvement with England and Ireland.

Now that a clear definition of satire has been created, a deeper understanding of Swift's personal connections to the political issues in Ireland at the time is very useful in understanding why this piece is written as a satire. Swift was very personally attached to the issues that Ireland was facing, mainly due to the portion of his life he spent in Ireland, and his political involvement with England and Ireland. This attachment contributes to the reader's understanding of the agenda that Swift may be attempting to advance. He was a very passionate writer who wanted this essay to make a bold statement: "Swift's increasing knowledge of Ireland resulted in a series of passionate and daring tracts which account for his later reputation as a patriotic writer" (Fox

The transition into the next paragraph that the old paragraph presented has been added in red in the second

Strongest Blog Posts

1. Blog post about Fiji mermaids.
(<https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/humbug/2015/09/03/159/>)

I chose this as a strong post because it has nice uses of evidence, and good surrounding analysis of the evidence. One example is the section:

“The writer then argues that creatures such as sea lions and sea dogs exist (109). After mentioning these creatures which people believe are factual, the author argues that the reader can easily “infer” that mermaids might exist since humans are animals just like dogs or lions.”

I feel that this section sets up the argument right before it that people cannot doubt mermaid existence without doubting everything else they believe in, and then the quotations above incorporates a paraphrase nicely and makes another logical argument about inferring that mermaids exist. It also had a nice introduction about successful hoaxes.

2. “Refugees Grateful For Chance To See Europe While Being Bounced From Country To Country:” The Rhetorical Triangle at Work

This blog post has to be one of my favorite ones that I wrote. I chose this one because each paragraph about the rhetorical strategies at work is very nicely executed and they flow logically. The introduction paragraph was also very nicely written, and made the intent of the post very clear. The short conclusion wrapped up the piece nicely, and connected the article’s believability and legitimacy.

3. Harry Potter’s Reading Room

Although this assignment was not writing based, I chose this because of the unique perspective it provided into the other side of hoaxes- the creation of them. It was cool to see how to use photo editing software, make up a story about the image, and also to see my peers’ photos as well.

4. Secondary Source Description

I chose this blog because of the insight that it provided me with about finding secondary sources, and allowed me to write out the process, which I think will help me in the future. I did a nice job of explaining how I needed to narrow my results, find new search terms, and what skills I learned from the process. I also really enjoyed how I found new ideas form just searching for sources that I later incorporated into my paper.

Weakest Blog Post

Literature versus Hoaxes: Making the false believable

I think this blog post, one of the first ones I wrote, was one of the weaker ones because of how repetitive it is at times. There are several sentences that make the same point: hoaxes are defined by whether or not the writer wants the readers to believe the story or not. It would be interesting to add some quotations or sources about what a hoax is, like a dictionary definition and a more “developed” or “full” definition, and then comment on how they tie in with the idea of whether the author intends for people to believe it or not. I could decide if I agree or want to modify these definitions.