

# SATIRE CREATION PROJECT

Now that you have studied satire in many forms, it's your turn to create a bit of satire of your own, ***due on March 28<sup>th</sup>***.

Here are your choices of medium:

1. A letter or essay in the style of Swift's *A Modest Proposal*. (*minimum 2 pages*)
2. A short play, similar to the sample provided in this packet. (*minimum 2 pages*)
3. A cartoon.

Note: *if you don't draw, please don't choose option 3. The cartoon should be as polished as any serious written piece you might submit.*

Once you have created your piece, **write one page explaining the techniques you used to create the satire.**

So, how do you do it? Here's what I'd do.

Decide on your topic. It should be one of local, national or world significance.

Presidential Election?

Dress Codes?

Global Warming?

Once you have picked your topic, decide how best to satirize the issue.

**Consider your audience** (There are 3)

- Those whom the author (or artist) believes to already be in agreement with their viewpoint. (aka those on your side)
- Those whom the author (or artist) would like to ridicule for their opposing viewpoint. (aka those whom you will stealthily ridicule)
- Those whom the author (or artist) believes may be persuaded through exposure to the satirical work. (aka the "swing" audience)

So, in keeping with the three audiences above, there are **three intents for the author:**

- To show yourself intelligent and accomplished to those on your side.
- To make those whom you disagree with look foolish.
- To persuade to your point of view, those who are intelligent enough to understand irony and recognize the ridiculous (thereby "swinging" them to your side).

This is accomplished using some or all of the following techniques:

**tone:** attitude of the writer toward his/her subject

**wit:** humor in order to criticize, verbal cleverness

**sarcasm:** use of language to hurt or ridicule; not subtle

**burlesque:** work that ridicules people, or actions by mimicry and exaggeration

**parody:** humorous imitation of serious works

**double entendre:** similar to pun, a phrase that can be understood in either of two ways.

**zeugma:** one word modifies or governs two or more words with different senses.

"He was deep in thought and debt."

"Doth sometimes counsel take and sometime tea." -Pope

**irony:**

**verbal irony:** meaning is different, often opposite, from what it says, a contrast between what is stated and what is meant

**situational irony:** what actually happens is the opposite of what is expected or appropriate

**dramatic irony:** reader knows something important that a character does not know

**Socratic irony:** named after Socrates. Presenting a willingness to learn, for the sake of exposing an opponent's errors.

**Cosmic irony:** when a deity, or fate, is represented as though deliberately manipulating events so as to lead the protagonist to false hopes, only to frustrate and mock them.

**understatement** - describing a flooded area as "slightly soggy"

**inflation/deflation** - "Wretches hang that jury men may dine." -Pope

**antithesis** - juxtaposition in one line of opposing ideas

**exaggeration/hyperbole** - "It was 250% in the subway" to describe a location

**Consider Personalities**, either for the speaker of your letter or essay, or for the characters in your play or cartoon. Here are some common approaches.

**Pessimists:** people with a gloomy outlook of the world, who always expect the worst to happen.

**Misanthropes:** those who despise and distrust the human race.

**Cynics:** people who do not trust the sincerity and/or motives of others.

**Optimists:** counters the pessimist, those who view the world with hope and expect the best outcomes.

**Philanthropists:** opposed to misanthropes, people who work to better the world and love the human race.

**Pollyanna:** those who trust "the sun will come out tomorrow" regardless of how many misfortunes they must endure.

Pay attention to the formatting in this little play I wrote. Much of the humor (at least to my mind!) comes from a painstaking attention to detail.

The Debate on Global Warming  
A PLAY IN ONE ACT  
*By Sam Worden*

**PLACE:** Grayslake, IL

**SET:** A kitchen.

A table.

Two small dog dishes.

A gas stove.

A stainless steel fridge.

A stainless steel dishwasher.

**CAST**

*Sam*.....a thirty-six year old human being with thirty years of experience interacting with and observing wiener dogs, as well as studying all the major literature on wiener dogs and their behavior.

*Ollie*.....a wiener dog.

**ACT ONE**

*Lights up slowly. OLLIE is lapping water from his dish. Beside him is a small puddle of urine. Enter SAM.*

Sam. Bad dog. NO! You do not pee in the kitchen. That's a NO! NO!

Ollie. But I like peeing in the kitchen. It's too much work to go outside. And it's raining today.

Sam. I'm sorry it's seems like extra work, but you really need to do it, or you're going to ruin the floor.

Ollie. Who are you to tell Sam I'm going to ruin the floor? It looks OK to Sam.

Sam. I've lived in a lot of places and worked with a lot of floors. I've also read a lot of research about the effects of dog pee on floors: once it sinks into the

grout, you basically can't get it out. We'd have to replace the floor, and we can't afford it.

Ollie. I don't believe you. All of that research you "claim" to have read was probably paid for by the floor cleaning lobbyists. For that matter, you're probably in *Nature's Miracle's* pocket right now. How much are they paying you to oppress Sam?

Sam. I'm not making this up. Everyone agrees that dog pee wrecks floors. This isn't a debate.

Ollie. Look—floors get dirty and then they get clean again. It's natural, cyclical. My pee puddle is so small, and this room is so big. I don't see how my little puddle can make any difference.

Sam. It adds up.

Ollie. Ok. Maybe that's true. Let's say for argument's sake that it is. Like I said before, though, if you guys are going to clean the floor anyways, and there are going to be naturally clean days and naturally dirty days, why should we worry about what I do?

Sam. There's dirt, and then there's pee. I can sweep up a little dirt pretty easily. I don't think I can get all the pee out, even if I clean it up immediately.

Ollie. Well, let's assume that's true. The floor is going to die. Whether or not I have anything to do with it, I won't address. But, if the floor IS going to die, again, I ask you: why should I worry whether I hasten its demise in some minor way?

Sam. If the floor dies, and we can't replace it, we might have to move. There might not be space for you in the new place. We might have to euthanize you out of necessity.

Ollie. Hmmm... Agree to disagree.  
*He walks off stage.*

Sam. That dog!  
*He walks off stage in the opposite direction.*

*Lights fade slowly, with one spot illuminating the puddle of urine, which remains untouched.*

Analysis of the elements of satire found in *Global Warming*.

The purpose of *The Debate on Global Warming* is to poke fun at the narrow-mindedness of arguments against climate change. I chose to write my satire in the form of a play because it would allow readers to distance themselves from the debate and watch it play out without feeling directly attacked, or at least not at first. The only reference to global warming is in the title, which forces readers to make the connection themselves. Ideally, this approach gets audience members from all sides of the fence, particularly those straddling the fence to consider the absurdity of the argument before getting their backs up. It's easier for people to laugh at a stupid wiener dog than it is to admit their own ideas are stupid.

The two primary characters represent to a certain extent the philanthropist and the Pollyanna. The character of Sam most closely represents a philanthropist, in that he argues in favor of self-control to the benefit of all. If Ollie continues in his destructive behavior, they may both be out of a home. Ollie is a kind of Pollyanna, who believes that everything will be fine, no matter what. Generally we like characters with this kind of boundless optimism, but when coupled with willful ignorance, this quality can be quite dangerous.

I have always been a fan of deadpan humor; perhaps it's the New England in me. I have attempted to keep the tone as dry and clinical as possible throughout the piece. The format of the play lends itself to this approach. I Googled correct formatting for a play manuscript and did my best to get every detail correct, from

stage directions to font. At no point do I comment on the action as the author. I allow my characters to speak for themselves.

For the most part the arguments portrayed are adapted directly from common arguments for and against climate change, particularly the arguments made against. I focused on the basic reasoning of climate change deniers, which generally moves from “it’s not happening!” to “it might be happening, but it’s not our fault!” to “hey, everyone likes going to the beach, right? Maybe it’s for the best!”

Taking these arguments and forcing them into the burlesque of a conversation between a man and his dog ridicules the notion of average people arguing with just about all of the world’s climate scientists; most of us are about as well equipped for that argument as Ollie was for his argument with me, and most who make the attempt are just as blithely unconcerned with their lack of credentials as my obstinate wiener dog. I tried to make this a little more obvious in my character descriptions, in which Ollie is described as “a wiener dog,” and the character of Sam is described with all of his credentials.