**Satire**

Options for your final piece:

* + **—600-1200 words—**
* An essay similar to Swift’s “A Modest Proposal”
* A transcript for a show like *Colbert Report* (you will have to research this format)
* An article for a satirical publication such as *The Onion*.
  + **—300-1200 words—**
* A children’s book with original text and illustrations similar to Seuss’ *The Butter Battle Book*
* An original political cartoon with an artist’s statement describing your satire
  + **—analysis—** Create a chart/graphic, use a chart/graphic you find online, write an essay response, take notes, use one of the tools discussed at the following site <http://www.educationnation.com/index.cfm?objectid=9085A0C6-4EB1-11E1-B607000C296BA163> or talk with Ms. Peil about another option.
* View a satirical show or film and analyze the satire. (Peil has *Gulliver’s Travels.*)
* Study and analyze 10 political cartoons.
* Read a satirical novel or a collection of shorter essays that you have not read before (Peil has copies of *Animal Farm* and *Catch-22*. Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* and *The Battle of the Books* are online as are many other classic satirical pieces.)

**SATIRE**: An attack on or criticism of any stupidity or vice in the form of scathing humor, or a critique of what the author sees as dangerous religious, political, moral, or social standards. Satire became an especially popular technique used during the Enlightenment, in which it was believed that an artist could correct folly by using art as a mirror to reflect society. When people viewed the satire and saw their faults magnified in a distorted reflection, they could see how ridiculous their behavior was and then correct that tendency in themselves. The tradition of satire continues today. Popular cartoons such as The Simpsons and televised comedies like The Daily Show make use of it in modern media. Conventionally, **formal satire** involves a direct, first-person-address, either to the audience or to a listener mentioned within the work. An example of formal satire is Alexander Pope's Moral Essays. **Indirect satire** conventionally employs the form of a fictional narrative--such as Byron's Don Juan or Swift's Gulliver's Travels. Ridicule, irony, exaggeration, and similar tools are almost always used in satire. **Horatian satire** tends to focus lightly on laughter and ridicule, but it maintains a playful tone. Generally, the tone is sympathetic and good humored, somewhat tolerant of imperfection and folly even while expressing amusement at it. The name comes from the Roman poet Horace (65 BCE-8 CE), who preferred to ridicule human folly in general rather than condemn specific persons. In contrast, **Juvenalian satire** also uses withering invective, insults, and a slashing attack. The name comes from the Roman poet Juvenal (60-140 CE), who frequently employed the device, but the label is applied to British writers such as Swift and Pope as well. Compare with [**medieval estates satire**](http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_M.html#medieval_estates_satire_anchor) and [**spoof**](http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_S.html#spoof_anchor).

Definition from: <http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_S.html>

# RUBRIC FOR SATIRE

10 = Exemplary –done by a capable writer and thinker

9 = Above average – much of the work shows capability and promise in this aspect

8 = Average – the work in this is minimally satisfactory

7 = Below average – the work in this aspect is lacking

6 = Poor – the work in this aspect is very poor

0 = Work in this aspect was not attempted

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_0-10 **CONTENT/USE OF DETAIL TO EXPLAIN PROBLEMS**

The extent to which the details of the work inform the reader of a real problem.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_0-10 **PERSUASION/ SATIRIC TECHNIQUES**

The extent to which the writer/artist employed imagination, hyperbole, understatement, irony, contrast, symbolism, or other techniques to persuade the reader of the dire aspects of the problem.

The extent to which the analysis addresses satiric techniques.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_0-10 **MECHANICS/PRESENTATION**

The extent to which the work is in keeping with the mechanics of standard written English. The extent to which the writer/artist/thinker has completed the task with neatness and accuracy.

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL multiplied by 3 = \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_/90**

OPTIONAL-Use the following pages for planning your satire.

# My 10 Favorite Satirical Writers, with Examples

By **Wayne McDonald**

In my personal (and anything but humble) opinion, reading and writing satire is one of the greatest pleasures known within the literary realm. This in no way implies that satire is easy to write because nothing could be further from the truth.

Many people think that satire and comedy are synonymous. They are again off the mark because, although many satires make use of humor, not all comedies are satires. As a matter of trivial interest, in the Middle Ages a "comedy" was any story, book, play, etc that had a "happy ending (hence Dante's Divine Comedy, where he finally catches up with Beatrice)."

Dr. Swift himself, in his "Preface" to The Battle of the Books and Other Short Pieces, defines satire.

"Satire is a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own; which is the chief reason for that kind reception it meets with in the world, and that so very few are offended with it. But, if it should happen otherwise, the danger is not great; and I have learned from long experience never to apprehend mischief from those understandings I have been able to provoke: for anger and fury, though they add strength to the sinews of the body, yet are found to relax those of the mind, and to render all its efforts feeble and impotent.

"There is a brain that will endure but one scumming; let the owner gather it with discretion, and manage his little stock with husbandry; but, of all things, let him beware of bringing it under the lash of his betters, because that will make it all bubble up into impertinence, and he will find no new supply. Wit without knowledge being a sort of cream, which gathers in a night to the top, and by a skilful hand may be soon whipped into froth; but once scummed away, what appears underneath will be fit for nothing but to be thrown to the hogs."

After a few days of self-debate, I selected the following 10 titles as representative of the genre and of the authors' unique styles. They are not presented in any particular order or personal favoritism (except for Bierce), although they do provide a good example of my "it's my article and I can write it any way I please" philosophy of writing.

I know many will disagree with these choices and, in recognition of that impending criticism I have prepared the following brief defense: So what?

N. B. Unless noted otherwise, all links are to copies freely available at the Project Gutenberg web site. Please consider chipping in a few bucks or payment in kind to help them along.

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**The History of John Bull (1712)**

Available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/2643>

John Arbuthnot (1667 - 1735)

John Arbuthnot was a contemporary and friend of Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, and John Gay (among others). Given the nature of this small book and the cutting, savage satire it contains I've often wondered why it remains largely unknown.

The book is an allegorical treatment of the War of the Spanish Succession (1701 - 1714, fought between France, Bavaria, and Spain on one side and essentially the rest of Europe on the other). The war is presented as a lawsuit filed by Bull and his friends against Louis Baboon (Louis Bourbon; Louie XIV of France) over who will sell draperies and other linens to the heirs of the late Lord Strutt (Charles II, last Hapsburg King of Spain. Louie wanted a member of the House of Bourbon to succeed to the throne. Naturally, this idea was not very popular with the rest of Europe).

There are other numerous characters representing other nations or prominent persons of that era. Thankfully, Arbuthnot added extensive footnotes to his manuscript to assist readers of his time and these notes are reproduced in the HTML file at Project Gutenberg. If you want to review your English history prior to reading John Bull, the Wikipedia entry for the [War of the Spanish Succession](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_of_the_Spanish_Succession) is brief yet thorough treatment of the subject.

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**The Battle of the Books and other Short Pieces (1704)**

Available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/623>

Jonathan Swift (1667 - 1745)

Most people think that Jonathan Swift wrote Gulliver's Travels (in actuality, the title given by Swift to his masterpiece was Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World, in Four Parts, by Lemuel Gulliver, first a surgeon, and then a captain of several ships ) and then rested on his laurels. A quick look at the number of titles (and the size of the downloadable files) available at Project Gutenberg will prove that Swift was one of the most prolific writers of his time. He was also a member of the Anglican clergy, holding a Doctor of Divinity degree from Trinity College and a number of his works are theological in nature and subject.

The title that I selected is not well known but is, in my opinion, one of Jonathan Swift's greatest works. The title concerns a metaphorical battle between the works of the "Ancients (Classical authors) and the "Moderns" (Enlightenment-era and/or contemporaries) so remember the social and political contexts of that era.

This anthology also contains the true story of a prank by Swift (writing as Isaac Bickerstaff) against a contemporary astrologer/almanac writer/etc named Partridge. Swift gives this reason for "Bickerstaff's" actions:

"Written to prevent the people of England from being farther imposed on by vulgar almanack-makers."

Bickerstaff writes a parody of the almanacs (what we would call a tabloid) produced in his era with one twist: he "predicts" that Partridge will die on a certain day. On the day before the day in question, Bickerstaff writes that Partridge died during the night. When Partridge awakens, he finds that no one will believe that he is actually alive because they read in Bickerstaff's newspaper that Partridge had died. There is much more to the story, of course, and every bit of it pure genius.

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**Candide**

Available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/19942>

Voltaire (nee François-Marie Arouet; 1694 - 1778)

This book is probably the second most widely-read, after Gulliver's Travels, satire in European literature. As reader once commented "Voltaire goes after everyone."

The story concerns the adventures of Candide (Voltaire's average citizen) and Dr. Pangloss, who represents the Enlightenment and its "this is the best of all possible worlds" optimism. Unfortunately for both men, their voyages take them to destinations that seem to represent the "worst" possible worlds.

Their arrival in Lisbon coincides with an earthquake, which the Church interprets as a sign of God's displeasure. The Inquisition is promptly summoned to rout heretics and unbelievers to be burned at the stake in order to keep God from sending another earthquake. During this roundup and "Dr. Pangloss and his pupil, Candide, were arrested as well, one for speaking and the other listening with an air of approval..."

The concluding sentence of this book comes after Candide and his friends have ended their travels. At the conclusion of yet another defense of the "best possible world" philosophy by Pangloss, Candide speaks the line whose meaning has been debated for 200 years: "That is true enough... but we must go and work in the garden."

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**Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offences**

Available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/3172>

**Eve's Diary**

Available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/8525>

Mark Twain (nee Samuel Clemens, 1835 - 1910)

It is now time to pay homage to the Master of American Satirical literature. There has been but one Mark Twain and I seriously doubt that God will send us another until we clean up our act (not to mention our carpets, carports, the environment, and anything not yet legislated as deserving of being cleaned up.

As you can easily imagine, selecting a literary tract to represent Twain's genius borders on the impossible. Instead I have chosen two short pieces that are unfamiliar to many readers but should give the reader an idea of the workings of a powerful literary mind.

Rather than attempt to summarize these twp works, I will quote representative sections from each. From Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offences:

"Cooper's art has some defects. In one place in Deerslayer, and in the restricted space of two-thirds of a page, Cooper has scored 114 offences against literary art out of a possible 115. It breaks the record.

"There are nineteen rules governing literary art in the domain of romantic fiction--some say twenty-two. In Deerslayer Cooper violated eighteen of them.

And for Eve's Diary:

I followed the other Experiment around, yesterday afternoon, at a distance, to see what it might be for, if I could. But I was not able to make out. I think it is a man. I had never seen a man, but it looked like one, and I feel sure that that is what it is. I realize that I feel more curiosity about it than about any of the other reptiles. If it is a reptile, and I suppose it is; for it has frowzy hair and blue eyes, and looks like a reptile. It has no hips; it tapers like a carrot; when it stands, it spreads itself apart like a derrick; so I think it is a reptile, though it may be architecture.

I was afraid of it at first, and started to run every time it turned around, for I thought it was going to chase me; but by and by I found it was only trying to get away, so after that I was not timid any more, but tracked it along, several hours, about twenty yards behind, which made it nervous and unhappy. At last it was a good deal worried, and climbed a tree. I waited a good while, then gave it up and went home.

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**The Land beyond the Blow**, in

The Collected Works of Ambrose Bierce, Vol. I,

Available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/13541>

**The Devil's Dictionary**

Available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/972>

Ambrose Bierce (1842 - 1914?)

I'll admit that I'm prejudiced in Bierce's favor and have been so since I saw a short (20 minutes) television production (I believe the program was sponsored by General Electric) of his short story "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" (Not funny at all but probably one of the greatest short stories of all time).

The first story named above, The Land beyond the Blow, is pure Swiftian and is a satire of politics and society in the "Gilded Age" (a term first used by Mark Twain in a book of the same name). The narrator of the story tells of his adventures in such places as Mogon-Zwair (where work is considered a luxury and the citizens pay employers) and Tamtonia (where holding political office is the greatest good and its leader is "...usually an idiot from birth, the Tamtonians having a great veneration for such, believing them to be divinely inspired..."

Rather than attempt to summarize The Devil's Dictionary I will defer to another of my heroes, H.L. Mencken:

"...it remains astonishing that his wit is so little remembered. In The Devil's Dictionary are some of the most devastating epigrams ever written. 'Ah that we could fall into women's arms without falling into their hands': it is hard to find a match for that in Oscar [Wilde] himself. I recall another: 'Opportunity, a favorable moment for grasping a disappointment.' ... husband: one who, having dined, is charged with the care of the plate." \*

If you haven't read Bierce, you are missing one of the sharpest wits in American literary history.

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**Animal Farm**

Available at <http://orwell.ru/library/novels/Animal_Farm/english/>

George Orwell (1903 - 1950)

For years anyone in the Soviet Union caught with a copy of Animal Farm in their possession could expect, at best, a stretch in prison or banishment to Siberia. In the irony of all ironies, the link listed above is to a server in Moscow.

Animal Farm tells the story of what happened after the animals of Manor Farm, under the leadership of Old Major (Lenin), overthrow Mr. Jones (Tsar Nicholas II) the owner and institute a vaguely disguised communist ("Animalism") society. Following the death of Old Major, Napoleon the pig (Stalin) and his pig-allies take control after forcing Snowball the boar (Leon Trotsky) into exile by unleashing his loyal pack of dogs (the secret police) after Snowball proposes that a windmill be built so that the animals might have more leisure.

As with Stalinist Russia, the animal revolution decays into dictatorship, as exemplified by the classic moment when the animals see that a sign written on the side of the barn (Kremlin) has been changed from "All animals are equal" to All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."

When reading this book, remember that Orwell himself was a Marxist-Leninist who abandoned communism as practiced by Stalin during WW II.

**For the Student of Satire and the Die Hard Satirist**

**Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic**

Available at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/4352>

Henri Bergson (1859 - 1941)

**An Essay on Comedy and the uses of the Comic Spirit**

Available at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/1219>

George Meredith (1828 - 1909)

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\*H.L. Mencken: A Mencken Chrestomathy, New York: Vintage Books (originally published 1946, Alfred A. Knopf ; reprinted 1982) p. 495

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The writing portion of your final piece should be typed, double spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 pt. Times or Times New Roman font with this sheet and all other drafts included in the same document. **Draft 1 DUE: TBD**

Resource #1: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Resource #2: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Use at least two resources to discover the following:

1. When did the problem begin?
2. What is the nature of the problem?
3. Who does the problem affect?
4. What has been done about the problem to date?
5. What are some of the proposed solutions by people who would like this problem solved?

Next, consider your own “solution.” Like that proposed by Swift, your solution should be preposterous enough to demonstrate its absurdity and point out the serious nature of the problem. Remember that Swift did not believe his “solution” to be the real answer to Ireland’s poverty. Do not choose a solution that you would like to see implemented (For example, if you think the answer to ending the war is to use nuclear weapons, do not use this concept as your “solution”).

Explain your “solution’’ briefly here. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Now consider how best to organize your ideas and satirical techniques. Create rough outline or concept map (web) to organize the details of your chosen problem and solution. Write your outline/map here or complete the template provided below.

# \*\*Final draft should start on the first page of this document. All drafts and prewriting should be included here. (This means you will have to copy and paste each draft and clearly label it, so your revisions are apparent.)