A Modest Proposal- Swift

1. How does Swift want the reader to view his speaker? That is, how would Swift want his reader to describe the persona he adopts?
2. At what point in the essay did you recognize that Swift’s proposal was meant to be satiric? Do you think that a modern audience would get the joke faster than Swift’s contemporaries did?
3. Not Swift’s diction in the first seven paragraphs. How does this show quantification and dehumanization? Explain the purpose of Swift’s specific words choices?
4. At the beginning of the essay, Swift explains the anticipated results before revealing the actual proposal. Explain the rhetorical purpose of such a strategy.
5. In paragraph 9, why doesn’t Swift end the sentence after the word food? Explain the purpose and effect of the modifiers included there. Paragraph begins, “I have been assured…”
6. Identify the appeals to values such as thrift and patriotism. Explain the rhetorical strategy behind each example.
7. Consider the additional proposal that Swift in paragraph 17. Explain the rhetorical strategy at work in that paragraph. Paragraph begins, “A very worthy person….”
8. Which targets does Swift ironically identify in paragraphs 21 and 22? Paragraph begins, “For first, as I have already observed…” Note the rhetorical progression of paragraphs 21-26. By using such a method, what is Swift satirizing?
9. What are the assumptions behind each of Swift’s claims in paragraphs 21-26? Explain them.
10. Read paragraphs 29-31. Paragraph begins, “I can think no one objection that will….” What are the “expedients” that Swift discusses there? How does irony serve his rhetorical purpose in this section?
11. To what do the “vain, idle, visionary thoughts” (para. 31) refer? What is Swift’s tone here?
12. How does the final paragraph of the essay contribute to Swift’s rhetorical purpose?