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# Background Reading

## Comedy of Manners

ENGLISH(CC); SEM-II;PAPER-C3T; COMEDY OF MANNERS (BACKGROUND READING)



# Overview

- A comedy of Manners is a play concerned with satirising the society's manners. A manner is the method in which everyday duties are performed, conditions of society, or way of speaking. It implies a polite and well-bred behaviour.
- The Comedy of manners, also called anti-sentimental comedy, is a form of comedy that satirizes the manners and affections of contemporary society and questions social standards. Social class stereotypes are often represented through stock characters (a stereotypical fictional person or type of person in a literary work).
- A Comedy of Manners often sacrifices the plot, which usually centres on some scandal, to witty dialogues and sharp social commentary.



- Satirizes the manners and affections of a social class
- Often represented by stereotypical stock characters
- Restoration Comedy is the highpoint of Comedy of Manners
- It deals with the relations and intrigues of men and women living in sophisticated upper class society
- It is light, deft and vivacious in tone
- Unlike satire, Comedy of Manners tends to reward its cleverly unscrupulous characters rather than punish their immorality.
- The plot of the comedy is often concerned with scandal
- A middle-class reaction against the courtly Restoration comedy resulted in the sentimental comedy of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century .



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- The Comedy of Manners was first developed in the New Comedy of the ancient Greek playwright Menander.
- Imitated by Roman playwrights Plautus and Terence
- In the latter part of the century, Oliver Goldsmith(*She Stoops to Conquer*) and his contemporary Richard Brinsley Sheridan(*The Rivals* and *School for Scandal*) received the wit and gaiety of the Comedy of Manners, while avoiding the indecency of Restoration Comedy.
- The Comedy of Manners lapsed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, but was revived by many skillfull dramatists like Oscar Wilde and G.B.Shaw



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# Major Practitioners and texts

- William Congreve: *The Way of the World*
- Oscar Wilde: *The Importance of Being Earnest*
- William Wycherley: *The Country Wife*
- A.W.Pinero
- George Bernard Shaw
- Neil Simon
- Alan Ayckbourn



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# Thank you

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