



**TRINITY COLLEGE FOR WOMEN  
NAMAKKAL**

**Department of English  
BRITISH LITERATURE**

**23UEN03- EVEN Semester**

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# She Stoops to Conquer

- ❖ "She Stoops to Conquer" by Oliver Goldsmith is a comedy of manners published in 1771 and first performed in London in 1773.
- ❖ It is a delightful five-act play that explores the role of social class, one's place in society both socially and economically, in 18th century England and is still being performed today.
- ❖ The play has been adapted into a film several times, including in 1914 and 1923. Initially the play was titled Mistakes of a Night and the events within the play take place in one long night. In 1778, John O'Keeffe wrote a loose sequel, Tony Lumpkin in Town.

# Introduction

- ❖ The play is notable for being the origin of the common English phrase, "Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies." (appearing as 'fibs' in the play)
- ❖ When the play was first produced, it was discussed as an example of the revival of laughing comedy over the sentimental comedy seen as dominant on the English stage since the success of *The Conscious Lovers*, written by Sir Richard Steele in 1722.
- ❖ Some theatre historians believe the essay was written by Goldsmith as a puff piece for *She Stoops to Conquer* as an exemplar of the "laughing comedy".
- ❖ The play might also be seen as a comedy of manners.

# Significance of the title

- ❖ The title refers to Kate's ruse of pretending to be a barmaid to reach her goal. It originates in the poetry of Dryden, which Goldsmith may have seen misquoted by Lord Chesterfield. In Chesterfield's version, the lines in question read: "The prostrate lover, when he lowest lies, But stoops to conquer, and but kneels to rise."
- ❖ Goldsmith's friend and contemporary Samuel Johnson greatly admired the play. James Boswell quoted him as saying, "I know of no comedy for many years that has so much exhilarated an audience that it has answered so much the great end of comedy – making an audience merry".

# Characters

Charles Marlow – The central male character, who has set out to court the young attractive Kate Hardcastle. A well-educated man, "bred a scholar", Marlow is brash and rude to Mr. Hardcastle, owner of "Liberty Hall" (a reference to another site in London), whom Marlow believes to be an innkeeper. Marlow is sophisticated and has travelled the world. Around working-class women Marlow is a lecherous rogue, but around those of an upper-class card he is a nervous, bumbling fool.

George Hastings – Friend of Charles Marlow and the admirer of Miss Constance Neville. Hastings is an educated man who cares deeply about Constance, with the intention of fleeing to France with her.

Tony Lumpkin – Son of Mrs Hardcastle and stepson to Mr Hardcastle, Tony is a mischievous, uneducated playboy.

# Characters

- ❖ Mr. Hardcastle – The father of Kate Hardcastle but he is mistaken by Marlow and Hastings as an innkeeper.
- ❖ Mrs. Hardcastle – Wife to Mr. Hardcastle and mother to Tony, Mrs. Hardcastle is a corrupt and eccentric character.
- ❖ Miss Kate Hardcastle – Daughter to Mr. Hardcastle, and the play's stooping-to-conquer heroine.
- ❖ Miss Constance Neville – Niece of Mrs. Hardcastle, she is the woman whom Hastings intends to court.
  - ❖ Sir Charles Marlow – An aristocratic gentleman and father of Charles Marlow; he follows his son, a few hours behind.

# Themes & Morals

- ❖ The play focuses upon the conflict between class expectations, emotional honesty, and whether feelings of true love should outweigh financial concerns or the desire for wealth.
- ❖ The message and moral lesson in Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* revolve around the importance of honesty and the folly of social pretensions.
- ❖ An improbable series of deceptions and misunderstandings about characters' identities propels the plot of *She Stoops to Conquer*, and at the center of these deceptions is the protagonist Marlow's mistaken belief that the Hardcastle family—an elite family he hopes to impress—are lowly innkeepers



# Famous Lines

- ❖ She Stoops to Conquer: Major Quotes. "Let school-masters puzzle their brain, With grammar, and nonsense, and learning; Good liquor, I stoutly maintain, Gives genius a better discerning." "So I find this fellow's civilities begin to grow troublesome."
- ❖ "All is not gold that glitters, "Pleasure seems sweet, but proves a glass of bitters. "When Ignorance enters, Folly is at hand: "Learning is better far than house and land."



# General Points

- ❖ Farce, a comic dramatic piece that uses highly improbable situations, stereotyped characters, extravagant exaggeration, and violent horseplay. The term also refers to the class or form of drama made up of such compositions.
- ❖ It was in 15th-century France that the term farce was first used to describe the elements of clowning, acrobatics, caricature, and indecency found together within a single form of entertainment. Such pieces were initially bits of impromptu buffoonery inserted by actors into the texts of religious plays—hence the use of the Old French word farce, “stuffing.”

**THANK YOU**

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