

# RESTORATION DRAMA

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## **The Way of the World**

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### **The most important information about William :**

He is a playwright who wrote the way of the world

He belong to the Restoration period

Jonathan swift was known in the period before Restoration , he lived in the eighteenth century this means that William Congreve was born at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the Restoration period and he was the best friend of Jonathan swift who is a writer also . He study law only to travel to London .He started writing drama when he was young .

William Congreve was born in England in 1670 and died in London in 1729. He was 59 years old .

His father was a commander , his first play was The Old Bachelor .

He was educated at two colleges , kilkenny and trinity . there are many plays you have to memorize , Love for Love ,The Mourning Bride ,The Double Dealer , and The Way of the World was the last play , it was not successful but it was acted on the stage in March 1700 . He suffered from gout and bad sight . His first play was acted when he was twenty \_ three years old . Congreve studied law because he wanted to travel to London . At the age of thirty he became an elder statesman.

**What does it mean by Restoration ?** It means that there was a king who is Charles II because of political problems , he dismissed to France then he returned to rule the country again . he ruled England at that time .

The most of the plays or dramas that written at the period of Restoration were not accepted by people , because the puritans closed the theatres at that time .

Mary is the sister of James and William is her husband . They had reigned for twelve years .

the most important characteristic of the Restoration is that people at that time were against Puritanism and they started a civil war between people and Puritanism .

## **Why Congreve was a patron of the theatre ?**

Because he was so influenced by French people .

The main theme that drama talked about or any play at that time must talked about real people and real situation .

**If the teacher ask you to define the drama you should tell her that is a reflection and the mirror of our life , so it mirrors the real people and especially the king and his courtiers . It talked about the people who belong to the court and its activities .**

This means that the king and the courtiers accept what happened on the theatre although it reflects real people . It talks about them and it talks about bad actions or what happened in the court . They satirize them but they accept and they were so satisfied with what happen .

## **Who controlled the throne after Charles II ?**

His brother James and controlled the throne after Charles II .He ruled England for five years and he was deposed after the bloodless revolution .

The play that written in the restoration period is not satisfactory .

## **Influences on Restoration comedy :**

You have to read it at home ,it will help you when you write your essay .

## **The character list**

Mirabell : he is a young man and he has a love relation with Millamant .

Millamant : she is a niece of Lady Wishfort's

Long \_dead husband. This means that lady wishfort is a widow . Mirabell and Millamant are both main characters and they love each other .

Lady wishfort has a daughter , her name is Mrs.Fainall . Millamant is the first cousin of Mrs.Fainall .

**Fainall:** is a friend with Mirabell . they hate each other. Fainall does not love Mrs. Fainall and married her for her money .

**Mrs.Fainall :** is the wife of Fainall and daughter of Lady Wishfort . She has married another one before Fainall and she was a widow . Then she had a sexual and love relation with Mirabell before she married Fainall .

You have to know that Mirabell in order to cover his crime , he asks Mr. Fainall to marry Mrs.Fainall in order to have money and to become a rich man Mrs.Fainall was Mirabell's mistress in the past .

**Mrs.Marwood:** she is Fainall's mistress . Marwood has a relationship with Mr. Fainall only for money . all the ladies in the play loves Mirabell even Lady Wishfort .

**Young Witwoud :** he is a dandy . He belongs to the country , he like the city life .He woo Millamant because he is dandy , he does not love her in fact .

**Petulant :** he is very rude . He is a friend with Witwoud .

**Lady Wishfort** : a vain woman , she is old and try take care of her beauty . She is the trustee of Millamant , and she has a desire of Mirabell , but she starts heating him because he refused her and she wants to take revenge on Mirabell .

**Sir wilfull Witwoud** : the elder brother of Young Witwoud and a nephew of Lady Wishfort . He is like his brother who came to London to complete their education .

Lady Wishfort has a desire inside her that she wants Sir Wilfull to marry Millamant.

**Waitwell** :Mirabell's valet

**Foible**: is a servant for Lady Wishfort . At the beginning of the play we know that Foible and Fainall are married to each other

Waitwell masquerade to be as Sir Rowland .

## Play summary

Mirabell is not very rich , in the past he had an affair with Mrs. Fainall.

Mirabell chose the suitable person for Mrs. Fainall to marry him ,he is nearly from the same class .

Fainall has a desire to covet the fortune of Mrs. Fainall . he get money to give it to Mrs. Marwood because he loves her .

After Mirabell finish the relationship between Mrs.Fainall , he start a love relationship with Millamant .

### **There are financial complications :**

Millamant has a fortune , it is about 12 thousand and she is not allowed to use her money unless Lady Wishfort give her a permission to use her money . This is the financial complication .

The half of the Millament's fortune was under her control and the other half was controlled by Lady Wishfort .

Mirabell loves Millamant and at the same time he loves her money .

Waitwell masquerade to be as Sir Roland in order to marry Lady Wishfort although he is married . he does not want to marry her in fact , but it was like a plot by Mirabell .

Mirabell makes a plot in order to convince Lady Wishfort to accept him as a suitor for Millamant , so he asked Waitwell to be as a gentle man and to pretend that he loves Lady Wishfort and then he appeared to tell her that this man is not good and to recover the real state .

Millamant is aware of the plot of Mirabell , probably through Foible . Mirabell , Millamant ,Foible , Mrs.Fainall, and Mr. Fainall know about the plot . somehow all the characters know about the plot , but Mirabell does not know that all of them know about this plot .

Foible tell Mrs.Fainall about the plot and Mrs.Marwood overhears them . she discovers two things when she hears them , she knows about the plot and about the relationship between Mirabell and Mrs.Fainall in the past .Mrs.Marwood also overhears insulting comments about herself , so she wants to take revenge by informs Fainall of the plot and tells him about the relationship between Mirabell and his wife in the past . we have two characters who wants to take revenge who are Fainall and Marwood . Fainall suspected before that his wife was once Mirabell's mistress, but now he is sure.

Lady Wishfort wants Millamant to marry Sir Wilfull , but she does not accept and chose Mirabell to be her husband .

Now Fainall wants to take a revenge, so he reveals the mask of Sir Rowland , and blackmails Lady Wishfort with the scandal of her daughter . He demands to have Millamant's fortune as well as Mrs. Fainall's and Lady Wishfort's .

Then Mirabell exposes the secret affair between Fainall and Mrs.Marwood, Fainall ignores the accusation and insists to have control over his wife's money and Lady Wishfort's fortune . Finally, Mirabell reveals that before Mrs.Fainall married Fainall she had entrusted Mirabell for her fortune . Fainall now has nothing to do since his wife does not control her own money .he and Mrs.Marwood leave in great anger , Lady Wishfort finally accepts Mirabell as a husband for Millamant because he had saved her and her daughter's reputation and fortune.

## **The themes of the play :**

**1 marry and marriage (materialism)**

**2 love**



### **3 hypocrisy**

The theme of materialism is the most important theme in the play .

## **Summary:**

### **Act I:**

Opens at the fashionable chocolate- house where Fainall has just beaten Mirabell in a game of cards. A footman arrives with the news that Mirabell's valet, Waitwell, has married Foible, Lady Wishfort's maid. This marriage is directly connected to Mirabell's secret of winning Millamant.

Through the conversation between Witwoud and Petulant, the audience learns that Sir. Willfull Witwoud is coming to town to court Millamant.

There is also a rumor that Mirabell's uncle is coming to woo Millamant. Witwoud and Petulant are also Millamant's suitors, but only because it is fashionable to court the prettiest woman in town. The act draws to a close as Mirabell proposes a walk in the Park where the ladies are waiting for them.

### **Act II:**

Shifts to typical Restoration setting of a public park. The opening conversation between Mrs. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood, regarding their

aversion to men, reveals that Mrs. Fainall detests her own husband. Mrs. Fainall realizes that although Mrs. Marwood claims to hate Mirabell, she is still in love with him. The arrival of Fainall and Mirabell abruptly ends their conversation.

Mrs. Fainall goes off for a walk with Mirabell. This leaves Fainall alone with Mrs. Marwood, his mistress. Fainall accuses Mrs. Marwood of loving Mirabell and reproaches her for revealing Mirabell's pretense of love to Lady Wishfort.

If Mirabell had married Millamant, Fainall would have acquired half of Millamant's fortune. However, Fainall is soon reconciled with Mrs. Marwood and claims that he married his wife only because of her money.

He tells Mrs. Marwood that he will marry her after getting rid of his wife and securing her fortune.

In the meantime, the audience learns that Mrs. Fainall to provide a cover for their affair in case it resulted in a child.

It is evident that Mrs. Fainall still loves Mirabell although their affair had ended. Mirabell takes Mrs. Fainall into his confidence by telling her his secret plot to win Milamant.

He reveals that he has arranged a marriage between his valet, Waitwell, and Lady Wishfort's maid, Foible. Waitwell is to pose as Mirabell's uncle, Sir Rowland, and lure Lady Wishfort into a sham marriage.

When Lady Wishfort marries Sir Rowland, Mirabell will reveal Waitwell's true identity and offer Lady Wishfort a means of escape from a degrading alliance; he will provide Waitwell's certificate of marriage if Lady Wishfort consents to his union with Millamant. Millamant knows about Mirabell's plans and seems prepared to go along with everything.

Waitwell and Foible update Mirabell on the progress of the plan. Mrs. Marwood, who is passing by in a mask, notices Foible with Mirabell. Foible foresees the trouble that Mrs. Marwood could cause with Lady Wishfort and hurries away.

Waitwell displays considerable eagerness to perform the role of Sir Rowland. The general framework in *The Way of the World* is wit. It is a comedy of manners in behavior and conduct, and there is criticism, satire and irony.

Moreover, these people, generally speaking are intellectuals ; they are not stupid, they are not uneducated and they have knowledge of a lot of

things. They were affected by their new life and they were entranced by different ways of life. The criticism is ironic in the comedy of manner. The audience has to learn at the end that there is a distinction between passion and affection, between real love and affecting.

Nobody says, for example, that Mirabel doesn't love Millamant, but the idea of being very keen on getting the wealth and money is different from previous romantic notices that were centered on marriage as a natural result of mutual love that is based only on love.

The dialogues in *The Way of the World* are always full of wit and a kind of almost special sophisticated humor in which there was intelligence and wit in telling people about their flaws in a humorous way. Their follies were ridiculed with humor in a witty way because as we said earlier, wit was the criteria.

There were people who were really witty. They knew that wit was the most important thing, so they wanted to be witty, but they were not witty in nature, so the situation was to affect wit by memorizing, for example, some lines of poetry, some sayings and some witty manners .

In fact, these people were who William Congreve in particular was criticizing, he criticized those people who were affecting to be intelligent, witty and clever.

He also criticized people who were affecting to be moral, religious and puritan. These people were affecting to be moral because of the austere life Cromwell previously imposed, and they thought that the best way to have a good life is to pretend what the society expects you to be.

The idea is that those people were just faking to be moral and religious but in reality there were the quite opposite. So, why should they affect things without trying to be what they are affecting?

## **Act III:**

It takes place in Lady Wishfort's house. We are introduced to Lady Wishfort who is encouraged to marry 'Sir. Rowland' - Mirabell's supposed uncle- by Foible so that Mirabell will lose his inheritance.

It opens with Lady Wishfort's frantic efforts to disguise her age as she prepares to receive Sir. Rowland.

Mrs. Marwood tells her that she saw Foible talking to Mirabell in the park. Foible avoids the early detection of Mirabell's plot by inventing

a story. She says that Mirabell stopped her in the park only to insult Lady Wishfort.

This disclosure results in Lady Wishfort's determination to accept Sir. Rowland's proposal, with the understanding that Sir. Rowland will disinherit his unworthy nephew, Mirabell.

The dramatic tension increases when Mrs. Marwood overhears the conversation between Mrs. Fainall and Foible, who discuss the details of Mirabell's scheme.

Foible expresses surprise that Mrs. Fainall should be privy to Mirabell's plot since she was formally his mistress. Foible also comments that although Mrs. Marwood loves Mirabell, he finds her unattractive.

In the meantime, Sir. Wilfull Witwoud's half -brother and Millamant's suitor arrives.

He literally doesn't recognize the foppish Witwoud, and Witwoud refuses to acknowledge his relatives from the country. Mrs. Marwood swears revenge for her wounded vanity.

She confirms Fainall's suspicion that his wife is having an affair with Mirabell. As proof of her hatred of Mirabell, she reveals the details of his plot to Fainall. Both of them devise a counter plot to thwart Mirabell.

Mrs. Marwood plans to send an anonymous letter revealing Sir. Rowland's true identity.

Fainall says that he will get Sir. Wilfull drunk so that he cannot woo Millamant.

He resolves to threaten to divorce his wife on charges of adultery unless her entire fortune is handed over to him.

Mrs. Marwood is certain that Lady Wishfort, who loves her daughter very much will agree to Fainall's conditions. The scene between Mrs. Marwood and Millamant, like all scenes between women in the play, is a duel.

It has an additional importance in supplying motivation for Mrs. Marwood's later behavior.

The scene between the brothers Witwoud is close to the farcical. It is important to see the basic good sense of Sir. Wilfull and the basic shallowness of young Witwoud.

No polished Restoration gentleman would ever be so gauche as to admit that he was ashamed of an elder brother. He would carry off the situation with what aplomb he could.

## **ACT IV:**

Opens as Lady Wishfort receives Sir. Rowland. The inebriated Sir. Willful meets Millamant but is unable to propose to her. Millamant and Mirabell discuss the conditions under which they will marry in the famous “proviso” scene. Millamant finally decides to accept Mirabell.

In the meantime, Sir. Rowland’s wooing of Lady Wishfort is rudely interrupted by the arrival of anonymous letter revealing his true identity. Sir. Rowland convinces Lady Wishfort that the handwriting is that of Mirabell, who wants to prevent this marriage since he will be disinherited.

Foible adds credibility to the story by saying that Mirabell had come to meet Millamant earlier that afternoon. Lady Wishfort agrees to marry Sir. Rowland ostensibly on humanitarian grounds. Sir. Rowland tells her that he will come back with a black box containing the documents of his estate to prove his identity. He says that he will also bring a marriage contract for them to sign that night.



Millamant has just completed her part in the proviso scene. At the moment she is a symbol of the ideal of love in the period, unsentimental perhaps, but relational, dignified, and based on mutual esteem. She becomes the beleaguered goddess, buffeted by forces of an unpleasant realism.

In a few minutes, Millamant is surrounded by two women, one the loser in the game of love, the other, love's travesty; and three men, one too shallow, one too close to the animal, and third too much the realist.

The proviso scene presented a triumphant reconciliation of love and wordiness; now we have seen the way of the world.

## **ACT V:**

The concluding act is highly eventual. Fainall has exposed Mirabell's plot. He has Waitwell arrested when he goes out to get the papers.

Furthermore, Fainall threatens to divorce his wife on the charge of adultery unless her entire fortune is transferred over to him.

He also demands that Lady Wishfort never re-marry so that he may be the sole heir of her estate.

Moreover, he demands the money that Millamant forfeited by refusing to marry Sir. Wilfull Witwoud, Lady Wishfort's choice for her.

Millamant decides to accept Sir. Wilfull as her husband to save her fortune. Mirabell is prepared to resign his contract with her, but Fainall still insists on the fulfillment of the rest of his conditions.

He threatens to disgrace Mrs. Fainall's reputation by dragging the matter through a public trial.

Mirabell offers to help Lady Wishfort, and she promises him Millamant's hand as a reward. He calls in Foible and Mincing, who attest to Fainall's adulterous affair with Mrs. Marwood.

Fainall still insists that he will blacken Mrs. Fainall's reputation if they do not comply with his conditions.

Mirabell then produces his ultimate trump card. He produces a deed by which Mrs. Fainall, as a young widow, had placed her property in trust

with him since she didn't trust Fainall. Witwoud and Petulant testify to the authenticity of the document.

Thus, Fainall and Mrs. Marwood are defeated by Mirabell. Sir. Wilfull gracefully relinquishes his claim over Millamant, and the two lovers are finally united.

## **THEMES OF *THE WAY OF THE WORLD*:**

### **Marriage and love:**

In *The Way of the World* there are two main themes: marriage and love and equality between men and women. As for the first theme you need to explore Congreve's outlook upon marriage and love as displayed in the relationship between Mirabell and Millamant.

For Mirabell one's personality is the only thing that matter and the other important aspect is that a partner must compromise.

Nobody is perfect; therefore one should forget the other's failings. One should concentrated and highlight one partner's positive points. It is only on this way that partners can live and perform well. Millamant has some failings but Mirabell chooses to concentrate on her charms.

Throughout this Congreve manages to advocate the principle of marriage that is based on mutual love and understanding. The fact that lovers should compromise brings the idea that love is blind and lovers can't see their mistakes. Of course, the idea of “love is blind” is a call to concentrate on the person's individuality.

In fact Millamant wants to marry Mirabell, but on her own terms. She wants to retain certain elements of her own freedom and individuality after they have married. She attracts Mirabell not only by her wit and beauty but by flirting with him until he has won by her changeable charms.

She only agrees to marry him when he accepts her conditions. Once he has agreed to her conditions, she starts to help him to win Lady Wishfort's approval for the marriage.

It is a call to forget and forgive your lover's failings. This call is emphasized through the fact that human beings are not perfect, so Congreve asserts the idea that marriage and love should be built upon compromise.

It is only way that lovers or married couples prosper, and it is in view of Mirabell's readiness to compromise that he starts liking Millamant's failings.

According to Congreve, the basis for a successful relationship can be built in mutual love, respect and understanding. When the lover built highlights his partner's charms, he can easily forget and forgive his partner's failings.

## **The Equality:**

In *The Way of the World*, Congreve highlights another significant theme. It is the call between men and women. Women complain that they are maltreated by men. Men are described as being over jealous over their wives.

This over jealousy is indicative with man's lack of trust in his love. Men are also presented as one sided; they either love or hate and detest.

Mrs. Fainall's complaint emerges as a cry against her situation. As a woman, she seeks a sense of independence and identity.

Mrs. Marwood shares the same attitude towards men but she is different. She likes to build relationships with men.

She does not want to be ignored and forgotten. For Mrs. Marwood, being ignored is a feeling of absence and nothingness.

It is a feeling of nonentity; therefore she seeks of identity through being attached to a man in a love relationship. She does not want to have the feeling that she attracts no man's attention.

Mrs. Marwood readiness to develop a relationship with men shows her readiness to compromise.

Thus, Congreve asserts that without compromise people cannot live together. Congreve called for female independent, makes him seem to be feminist because he encourages women to understand their situation and improve it.

By understanding the man, women can assert themselves and seek to make men appreciated them and value their charms.

## **The Materialism:**

*The Way of the World* is a very materialistic play. There is no innocence, here. Lack of knowledge implies stupidity; for instance Lady Wishfort's failure to understand the true nature of people's motive leads to her being easily and frequently manipulated by many of the other characters such as Mirabell and the servants Foible and Waitwell and, later by Sir. Willful and Millmamnt as well as by Mrs. Marwood and Fainall.

Congreve is dealing with material elements of life: money, sex, and power. His city characters despise those from the country.

The fashionable world of London was based upon materialistic views. It doesn't occur to Mirabell that he should marry Millamant without her whole fortune. Fainall married his wife for her money, and he is ready to divorce her to get more money.

Women have power when they have money. For instance, Lady Wishfort is the target of two plots of Mirabell and Fainall. Millamant has a fortune and so she attracts admirers. But women have also the power of sexual attractiveness.

Mrs. Fainall attracted Mirabell when she was a widow; Mrs. Marwood attracts Fainall who is prepared to spend his wife's money on her.

The negative aspects of the power of sexual attraction and money were obviously age and poverty. Equally, however, a loss of social power was suffered by those whose reputations were damaged by scandal.

## **Some ideas for topics**

Here are ideas for some topics which are related to the second play The Way of the World .

### **1) Materialism :** (Money and Financial complication )

\*The play is based on material elements of life such as money, sex and power.

Lady Wishfort is the guardian on Mrs. Millamant's fortune. In fact , Millamant is unable to use her money unless lady Wishfort gives her the permission to do so . { Women have power when they have money }

Mr. Fainall's marriage to Arabella , Mrs. Fainall, is a bargain (for money). He needs money to give it to his mistress, Mrs Marwood.

Once again, we find that money dominates the relationship between characters, relatives, men and women, etc.

### **2) The guardianship/ the authority of substituted parents:**

Lady Wishfort, who is the guardians on Mrs. Millamant, wants to marry Millamant to her nephew Sir. Wilfull Witwoud.



Mr. Fainall is the guardian of his wife, Arabella, who wants to control her money.

### **3) Disguise:**

Waitwell, the servant of Mirabell, disguises as Sir. Rowland in order to enforce Lady Wishfort to accept Mirabell's marriage to Mrs. Millamant. So, here, the idea of disguise is to control Lady Wishfort.

### **4) Love & Marriage :**

It is used in both ways by men to have women under their power or to control them.

We see that Joseph wants to have Lady Teazle under his power; that is why he tried to court and seduce her and consequently to have her money.

In The Way of the World, we see also that Mirabell wants to have Lady Wishfort under his power by signing a marriage contract with Sir. Rowland.

Also, we see that Mr. Fainall marries Arabella, who is a wealthy widow, for money as being the heiress because Mirabell asks him to do so.

So, Mr. Fainall accepts to marry her because he needs money to spend on his mistress, Mrs. Marwood.

So, we see that love, marriage, money, as well as blackmailing by Mr. Fainall, who demands Mrs. Millamant's fortune and his wife's, are related to each other.

**- THE END -**