UNIT 6: OLIVER GOLDSMITH: *SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER* I

UNIT STRUCTURE

6.1 Learning Objectives

6.2 Introduction

6.3 Oliver Goldsmith: The Dramatist

6.3.1 His Life

6.3.2 His Works

6.4 Background of the Play *She Stoops to Conquer*

6.5 Act-wise summary of the Play

6.6 Let us Sum up

6.7 Further Reading

6.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

6.9 Model Questions

6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- discuss the life and works of the eighteenth century dramatist and novelist Oliver Goldsmith
- explain the tradition of sentimental comedy and comedy of manners
- discuss the significance of Goldsmith's satirical comedies that mocked the tradition of the Sentimental Comedy
- gain ideas on the background of his play *She Stoops to Conquer*
- explain the text of the play in details

6.2 INTRODUCTION

During the last years of the seventeenth century there emerged a tendency towards the introduction of pitiful sentiments and scenes. Instead of the passions that were prominently seen in the case of a Shakespearean tragedy, superficial emotions were inserted that lacked any sincerity. With

the passage of time,the genre of comedy began to gain prominence. But the earlier form of comedy such as the comedy of manners had degenerated, and the bourgeoisie audience was repelled by it. As such the sentimental comedy arose as reaction to the degenerate comedy of manners. In doing so, the wit and conversation associated with the comedy gave away to be replaced by expression of moral sentiment and humanitarian values. The true comic spirit of comedy was lost in the process. Oliver Goldsmith strongly reacted against the sentimental comedy and attacked it in his well known essay *A Comparison between Laughing Comedy and Sentimental Comedy*. According to him, the sentimental comedy emphasised too much on the virtues of the characters rather than displaying the flaws that are inherent in human beings. This did not allow the audience to learn anything about human nature.In this unit, you will not only get an opportunity to discuss the life and works of Oliver Goldsmith, but will also be able to see how his play *She Stoops to Conquer* slyly mocks the sentimental comedies of his time by allowing his characters to be flawed as they naturally are.

6.3 OLIVER GOLDSMITH: THE DRAMATIST

Oliver Goldsmith was an Irish dramatist, novelist and poet. He is best known for his plays *The Good Natured Man* (1768) and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1771), the novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), and the pastoral poem *The Deserted Village* (1770).

6.3.1 His Life and Works

Oliver Goldsmith was born on November 10, 1728 at Pallas, Longford of Ireland. His father was an Anglo-Irish clergyman. Goldsmith was the fifth child of Reverend Charles Goldsmith and Ann Goldsmith The family was poor but not in serious financial problem during Goldsmith's youth. When he was around eight years of age he contracted smallpox and was left badly scarred by the disease. This, along with an already unappealing appearance,

convinced him of his own ugliness and made him the subject of ridicule throughout his life. Goldsmith entered Trinity College, Dublin, in 1745 as a student under the "sizar system" that is one who was allowed to attend college for a small fee in exchange for performing menial work at the school. Disappointed with the harshness of his circumstances, Goldsmith neglected his studies and spent more time in revelry than attending classes. Although he left college briefly, he eventually earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1750. He spent his childhood at Lissoy, and it is believed that much of his memories involved in writing *The Deserted Village* has been drawn from it. As he was rejected for ordination, so he went to Edinburgh to study medicine. However, it remained incomplete, and during the period 1755-56, he wandered through different European countries, and returned as a destitute to London in 1756. He was financially able to support himself by working as a as a physician in Southwark, and as an usher in Peckham.

Goldsmith began his literary career as a reviewer for Ralph Griffith's *Monthly Review*. There, he first wrote a review of Edmund Burke's *Enquiry into…the Sublime and Beautiful*. During this period Burke became his close friend. In 1759, his first significant work, *An Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe* was published. Goldsmith also contributed to many periodicals such as Tobias Smollett's *British Magazine, Critical Review*, *Busy Body* and the *Ladies' Magazine*, before starting his own periodical called *The Bee*. Around the year 1761, he met Samuel Johnson and became one of the original members of the dining society called the Club. Johnson became his friend and supporter, and also helped him to sell the manuscript of *The Vicar of Wakefield* to John Newbery. Goldsmith also wrote many biographies, translations and abridgements: these include the Lives of Voltaire (1761), Nash (1762), Thomas Parnell(1770), and Bolingbroke (1770), a *History of England in a Series of Letters from a Nobleman to his Son* (1764),

a *Roman History* (1769), and a *Grecian History* (1774). His poem *The Traveller* (1764) earned him much literary respect.

Goldsmith's first comedy *The Good Natur'd Man* was rejected by David Garrick but was produced at Convent Garden in 1768. However, it was his second play, *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) that became a more successful endeavor. After the composition of the plays, Goldsmith wrote an essay regarding his views on comedy entitled *A Comparison between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy.* The essay was published in *Westminster Review* and it essentially highlights how the genre of comedy as a way of displaying wit.

Some of his best known poems such as "The Deserted Village" was published in the year 1770. His lighter verses include *Retaliation* in 1774, and *The Haunch of Venison* was published posthumously in 1776. His eight-volume *History of the Earth and Animated Earth* was written in the a fable form and it was much appreciated.

Goldsmith never married in his life, but his relationship with Mary Horneck, also known as the "Jessamy bride" remained an enigma. When he passed away in the year 1774, his friend Samuel Johnson wrote a Latin epitaph stating that he adorned whatever he touched.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is sentimental comedy?

Q 2: Did Oliver Goldsmith support sentimental comedy? If not, why?

Q 3: How did the literary career of Oliver Goldsmith begin?

Q 4: Mention the book by Goldsmith which is associated with his memories of childhood.

Q 5: Name a few works written by Oliver Goldsmith.

6.4 BACKGROUND OF THE PLAY *SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER*

Oliver Goldsmith wrote *She Stoops to Conquer* as a reaction against the sentimental comedies of his times. At the same time he was also dealing with numerous issues in this comedy. While the play is not explicitly a tract on class, the theme is central to it. The decisions the characters make and their perspectives on one another, are all largely based on what class they are a part of. Where Tony openly loves low-class people like the drunks in the Three Pigeons, Marlow must hide his love of common women from his father and "society." His dynamic relationship with Kate and the way he treats her is defined by who he thinks she is at the time – from high-class Kate to a poor barmaid to a woman from good family but with no fortune. Hastings' and Marlow's reaction to Hardcastle is also a great example of the importance of class—they find him impudent and absurd, because they believe him to be of low class, but his behaviour would be perfectly reasonable and expected from a member of the upper class, as he truly is. Also, one of the elements Goldsmith uses in his play's satirical moments is the aristocratic emphasis on behaviour as a way of judging character. In the play we find that many characters in the play are often blinded to a character's behaviour because of an assumption.

Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* deals primarily with the themes of love and marriage, which were the popular subjects during the eighteenth century. The institution of marriage was undergoing significant changes during the time of the play. Ever since the Middle Ages, the parents of the prospective bride and groom arranged the marriage, especially when it was related to the issues of wealth, social class and even politics. The wealthier the family, the more care was taken that the children of that family married someone from equal or higher social status, especially because divorces in those times were barely legal. In upper classes of England, the children had barely anything to say in issues concerning their marriage and as such they were brought up to comply and follow the wishes of the elders. The

rebellious young people who would not do so would usually made to comply with threats of disinheritance.

By the time of the play *She Stoops to Conquer,* however significant changes were seen in the English society. The consolidation of the nuclear family had caused the balance of power to shift. Although the aristocratic families still exerted considerable influence when it came to their children's marriages, families belonging to the gentry or the bourgeoisie class became more open to marriages based on affection between spouses. The young people of marriageable age were allowed to exercise their judgment. As such in the play, you will see that the Hardcastles and the Marlows, who belongs to the gentry, permits their children to make their own selection of spouses. Consequently marriage was based on temperamental compatibility that would lead to a lasting companionship.

6.5 ACT-WISE SUMMARY OF THE PLAY

Prologue

The play opens with a prologue that is attributed to David Garrick, Esq., a popular actor of his day. The basic premise of the prologue is that the arts related to the expression of comic are passing away, and that Dr. Goldsmith might prove the doctor, and The Play will become the medicine, that will cease its death.

At the play's opening, Mr. Woodward enters and speaks a prologue. Woodward, a celebrated actor of his day and one who had turned down the role of Tony Lumpkin in the play's initial production, is drying his eyes as though he has been crying. It is through verse that Woodward laments to the audience that the Comic Muse is dying. Unable to tell moralistic, sentimental stories, he fears that thefate of himself and similar actors is threatened.The prologue mirrors the trend in theatre that writers like Goldsmith were desperately trying to change. At the time of *She Stoops to Conquer*, popular theatre comedy was separated into what was commonly termed "sentimental comedy" and "laughing comedy." The former was concerned with bourgeoisie morality and with praising virtues while the latter,

which dated back to the Greeks and Romans and through Shakespeare, was more willing to engage in "low" humour for the sake of mocking vice.Woodward suggests that a certain class of actors were dying out as sentimental comedy became more popular. So Goldsmith's play must rejuvenate the joy taken in "laughing comedy," which could be willing to dramatise base characters and characteristics, and to mock even the characters who profess to be moral. This is followed by the first Act of the play.

Summary of Act I

The play opens in its primary setting, a chamber in the "old-fashioned" country house of Mr. Hardcastle, in a remote part of the country. The scene begins with a light banter between Mr. and MrsHardcastle. Mrs. Hardcastle is perturbed at her husband's refusal to take trips into London, while he insists he is not interested in the "vanity and affectation" of the metropolis. He asserts that he is tired of the pretentious London fashions that have found their way into his distant country community. Mrs. Hardcastle mocks him for his love of old-fashioned trends, so much that he keeps his house in such a way that it "looks for all the world like an inn." Her husband then jokes about her age, which she wishes to downplay, and speaks of her son from a first marriage, Tony Lumpkin. Mr. Hardcastle expresses his annoyance of Tony's roguish ways and laments how the boy wastes time by indulging in practical jokes and lacks the seriousness necessary for his future. On the other hand, Mrs. Hardcastle, who is Tony's natural mother, defends him, saying education is unnecessary for him since he needs only plan for spending his substantially large fortune, and so she begs her husband to be easier on Tony. They both grant that he is too inclined towards drink and jokes, but Mrs. Hardcastle believes that Tony is frail by nature and so requires sympathy.

At that instance, Tony passes by and tells them he is going to the Three Pigeons, a local pub. His parents tries to dissuade him from joining the "low company" of the denizens of pub, but he refuses and claims that the merry nature of his pub companions is not low. Mrs. Hardcastle is persistent but he walks out followed by her. As he is left alone, Mr. Hardcastle

blames it partially on how the modern fashions have occupied or entered their lives, and worries that even his own daughter Kate has been influenced by those fashions because of her having lived for a few years in London. At that moment, Kate Hardcastle enters dressed in an expensive gown, which her father finds troublesome. Kate reminds him that they have an agreement that in the morning she will dress as she likes in order to welcome friends, while in the evening she will dress plainly in order to please his tastes. Mr. Hardcastle then gives her news that Mr. Marlow, son of his old friend Charles Marlow has been invited to their house that evening in order to court Kate. Hardcastle has chosen Marlow as husband for her, but she is immediately worried that their interview will be overly formal and dull. Mr. Hardcastle considers this a virtue, and in fact insists to her that Marlow is a generous, brave, and handsome young man who is best known for his introversion. After giving this information, he leaves to prepare the servants, and Kate laments that she might have to spend her life with a boring man. She begins to wonder whether she might be able to find a way to be happy even in such a marriage or whether she can change him, but stops herself from thinking too far ahead.

Meanwhile her cousin, Constance Nelville enters and Kate tells her the news of Marlow. Constance reveals that she knows Marlow's reputation, since Marlow is friends with Mr. Hastings, her admirer and the man she hopes to marry. Constance tells how Marlow is known for excessive formality amongst women of reputation and virtue, but that he is a "very different character" amongst common women. Kate finds this description strange, and they then discuss how Mrs. Hardcastle disparately wants Constance to marry her son Tony, in hopes of keeping Constance's small fortune in the family. However Tony and Constance equally abhor the idea of getting married to one another.

After the completion of the first scene, the following scene is depicted in room in the Three Pigeons, where Tony socialises with several other drunk men. He sings and make merry, and at the same time speaks about his step-father in a mocking way. Soon the landlord brings news that two gentleman have arrived, and are lost on their way to Mr. Hardcastle's house.

Tony intuits quickly they must be Marlow and Hastings, and since Tony is still angry about Hardcastle's insults, decides he will play a prank on his step-father and his guests. He will convince them that Hardcastle's house is in fact an inn and so will they present themselves there not as gracious guests, but as entitled patrons. There,Tony gives them absurd and fake directions to Hardcastle's that make the place sound many miles away. Further he interrogates them, and they tell how they have heard about Hardcastle's well-bred daughter and roguish, spoiled son. Tony argues that their information is reversed, that it is the son who is much loved and the daughter a "talkative maypole." The men ask the landlord if they can stay, but, at Tony's instructions, he tells them there is no room, and so Tony suggests they head down to a nearby inn he knows of. He then gives directions to Hardcastle's house, cautioning them that landlord there puts on airs and expects to be treated as a gentleman rather than servant. They thank him, and leave for Hardcastle's home.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: What are the two most important themes of Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*?

Q 7: Describe some of the significant changes in the English society regarding depiction of family life.

Q 8: Who is addressed to in Goldsmith's Prologue of his play *She Stoops to Conquer?*

Q 9: Describe the setting of the play, *She Stoops to Conquer.*

Summary of Act II

While Act I was concerned with describing the set-up, Act II is primarily concerned with establishing the contradictions and complications of the play's characters. On the surface, all of these people are comic types: Tony is the trickster, Marlow and Hastings are the romantic leads; Constance and Kate represent the pure maidens who are to be won; and the Hardcastles

act as the traditionalists belonging to an old world who in some ways work as antagonists to the young. The second act begins in Hardcastle's house where the master of the house is instructing his servants on how to appear sophisticated in front of the expected guests. One of the servants, Diggory, brags over his ability to hold his hands properly while serving, but Hardcastle stops him and rebukes him for talking too much. He also instructs them not to laugh at funny stories, since they are not officially part of the company. As they exit, the servants continue to banter about where each should stand while serving. Another servant enters, leading in Marlow and Hastings. The men admire how much the inn seems as though it might have once been a mansion, but complain that they will be expected to pay a higher rate because of its quality. While discussing about inns, Hastings introduces the peculiar trait of Marlow's character. Marlow, in front of modest, reputable women, is "an idiot, such a trembler," while he is eloquent and lively around barmaids and common women. Marlow too laments the shortcoming, pointing out that the only modest woman he ever knew well was his mother. He tells Hastings he is overcome by the grace of modest women, and because of his bumbling will likely never make it through the formal courtship process and thus might never marry. When Hastings asks how he intends to address Kate,whom he has been invited for the purpose of courting, he says he will avoid looking her in the face and "bow low." Marlow then admits his purpose for the trip was not for himself, but to facilitate a meeting between his friend and the family of Constance, whom Hastings loves. Hastings assures Marlow that he is not at all interested in Constance's inheritance and so needs no such meeting, but rather would be perfectly happy with the woman herself.

Meanwhile, Hardcastle enters excitedly, asking for Marlow and offering them "hearty reception." Because of Tony's lie, they believe him to be the innkeeper. To himself, Marlow assumes aloud that the servants had given this man their first names (which he uses, perfectly acceptable for their host but impudent for a landlord). Marlow and Hastings converse with themselves about what clothes they ought to wear, which inspires Hastings to begin telling a story, which they ignore and interrupt, thinking it impudent in a landlord. Finally, Marlow cuts him off and asks for a glass of punch,

which Hardcastle finds not only rude, but distinctly out of character from the modesty he had been led to expect.

He serves them a different sort of punch that what they requested, but they decide to humour him rather than confront him. They are amused by Hardcastle's loquaciousness and the way he speaks about politics as though he were a man of repute. They cut off another of his stories to ask for dinner, and when he tells them the cook is at work preparing it, they are shocked to hear they cannot choose their own meal at an inn. He attempts to impress them by revealing that the meal will include pork with prune sauce and other delicacies, but they rudely diminish the value of such a fine meal and demand "plain eating" like calf's tongue and brains. In essence, they want pub food. When he apologizes for lacking such food, they instruct him to bring what he has and decide to retire. Despite their confusion over this seemingly pushy landlord, the men allow Hardcastle to accompany them to their rooms. However, Hastings stays behind, remarking to himself on the strangeness of the situation, and Constance enters to find him. They are happily reunited, and Constance quickly understands the trick Tony played on the two men, and corrects the mistake for Hastings. Hastings insists Constance to elope with him, but she believes her fortune will prove crucial in their lives, and begs time to try and persuade her aunt to turn the jewellery over. Hastings suggests they not correct Marlow's false assumptions since Marlow's timidity would make him to leave quickly in embarrassment, and any plan for elopement would be negated.

They are still discussing the issue when Marlow re-enters, confused over why Hardcastle would want to dine with them. Hastings spins a new lie, telling Marlow that Constance and Kate Hardcastle are themselves staying at the inn that night. Marlow is terrified by the news, and begs Hastings to postpone his meeting until the next day, when he can meet her at the Hardcastle home. Constance informs that Kate would see such a refusal to meet as insulting. The argument remains unresolved as Kate herself enters, and is introduced to Marlow. He holds up decently at first, partially due to the encouragement of Hastings but the situation becomes hilarious once Hastings and Constance abruptly leave despite Marlow's pleas to the

contrary. Marlow keeps his head down during the entire interview, and stammers pleasantries, while Kate controls the conversation, amusing herself with the man's timidity. She asks questions about his time with women, about light, "sentimental" conversations that mean nothing, and about hypocrisy, with his responses slowly devolving until she is forced to complete his sentences for him. All the while, she is confused because she expected an impudent man but instead finds a timid man. Marlow finally finds a way to politely exit, and Kate, now alone, laughs to herself at his ridiculous shyness. She does, however, note both his "good sense" and good looks, and wonders whether she might be able to teach him a confidence to accentuate those qualities.

She exits, and then four others enter: Tony, Constance, Hastings, and Mrs. Hardcastle. Constance is attempting to talk to Tony, who assumes she is pursuing the marriage desired by Mrs. Hardcastle, and so ignores her. The focus shifts to the other two, where Mrs. Hardcastle enjoys talking of London with Hastings. She explains that, out in the country, the best she can do with London style is imitate it from magazines. She laments being with Hardcastle, but is enlivened to hear that the fashion in London now sees the age of fifty as fashionable. She talks to Hastings of how much Constance loves Tony, and mistakes their bickering for flirtation. When Tony explicitly shows disdain for Constance, Mrs. Hardcastle attacks him, and they argue over Tony's ungratefulness towards his mother.

Hastings asks the privilege to speak to Tony directly, and so the ladies leave. Alone, Hastings strikes a deal: if Tony can help them to escape, Hastings will "take her off his hands." As an addendum to a deal he greatly endorses, Tony promises to try and help get her jewels so the lovers can have them.

Summary of Act III

In the third act we see that Hardcastle enters alone, confused over what his friend Charles Marlow meant by describing the young Marlow as modest, considering the young man's behaviour has not been gentle. Hardcastle is particularly worried that the behaviour will disappoint his daughter. Kate enters, in a plain dress as per her father's wishes, and both

express their shock at how different Marlow is from his or her expectations. While Kate is confused over his modesty (expecting impudence), and Hardcastle over his impudence (expecting modesty). They realise the contradiction but Hardcastle does see they both know enough to "reject him," a decision Kate approves unless she can reveal him to be more pleasing to each of them than they yet realize. Hardcastle finds such an outcome unlikely, but grants her license to attempt to correct his first impression, assuming her desire to do so is only because she thinks he is handsome, and so wants to find something to like in his character. They leave, and Tony rushes on, holding the casket containing Constance's jewels. Hastings joins him, and Tony reveals he has stolen the jewels, which concerns Hastings since he knows Constance is slowly finding success at convincing the old woman to turn over the jewels willfully. Tony calms him, assuring Hastings that he himself will take care of any resentment that might arise in Mrs.Hardcastle.

They hear the women approaching, so Hastings exits quickly with the casket. Mrs. Hardcastle attempts to convince Constance that a young woman does not need ornaments since these should be reserved to disguise her faded beauty when she gets older. Constance does not accept the argument, so Mrs. Hardcastle attempts to make Tony praise her beauty to dissuade her from pursuing the jewels.

Tony pulls his mother aside, and suggests she lie to Constance, claiming the jewels have been stolen so as to put an end to the matter. Mrs. Hardcastle, who admits to him that she merely wants to save the jewels for him (and hence does she try to set them up in marriage), gladly accepts the plan. Mrs. Hardcastle makes a mock confession of the missing jewels, which Constance refuses to believe until Tony stands as witness to the lie, claiming he too has seen them missing. Constance is upset, and Mrs. Hardcastle's offer to lend the girl her garnets does nothing to comfort her, but Mrs. Hardcastle nevertheless leaves to fetch them. After she is gone, Tony confesses his plan to Constance who is at once pleased. However, Mrs. Hardcastle returns quickly, having discovered the jewels have actually been stolen. She laments their loss dramatically, and Tony plays along, as though

this is still their play-acting for Constance's benefits. As everyone exit, Kate enters with a maid, laughing about the joke Tony played on the men. The maid tells Kate that, as they passed Marlow moments before, he asked the maid about Kate, believing her to be a barmaid because of her simple dress, and because he was so shy with her before that he had never seen her face. Kate sees in this mistake an opportunity to deceive him, and decides to continue playing the barmaid so that she can glimpse his true character and so that she "shall be *seen*."

Marlow enters, remarking to himself how terrible is his situation and how he will leave soon. Kate, acting the barmaid, approaches him and asks if she can help, offers he refuses until he notices her beauty. He immediately becomes open, and begins appreciating her beauty. They speak with great wit, and he confesses to his ability with ladies in town, speaking in lively tones of his life there. Kate asks whether he was so free when he spoke with Miss Hardcastle and he insists he is not in awe of her. Kate also says, in character, that she has lived in the house for 18 years. Overcome with passion, he pulls her close right as Mr. Hardcastle enters. Marlow quickly exits, and Hardcastle confronts Kate, accusing her of lying about Marlow's modesty before since he witnessed Marlow's acts. Kate asks for more time to reveal his true character—his "virtues that will improve with age." Hardcastle denies her until she promises to prove her point by the end of the evening.

Summary of Act IV

The succeeding Act takes place in Mr.Hardcastle's house. Here we come to know that Hastings and Constance enter, bringing news that Charles Marlow is expected to visit the house that evening. Since he would surely recognise Hastings and thereby ruin the plan for elopement, the lovers decide to carry out their plan to flee fast. Hastings has meanwhile sent the casket with jewels to Marlow for safekeeping. Before she exits, Constance says to herself that she will deceive her aunt by feigning that she is violently in love with Tony so as to keep her off their trail. Marlow enters with a servant, confused why Hastings sent him the casket. He asks the servant to bring the casket to Mrs.Hardcastle, whom he still believes is the land lady for

safekeeping. Then he speaks to himself about his nascent passion for the barmaid. Hastings enters and Marlow tells him about the barmaid and his new infatuation. Hastings is shocked that Marlow would rob a girl of her virtue, whereas Marlow insists he will "pay" for the virtue. When Hastings inquires after the casket, he's angered to hear Marlow has sent it to the landlady. However, Hastings cannot reveal the reasons for his displeasure without alerting Marlow to the duplicity being played on him, and so Hastings must decide on his own that he and Constance will leave without the jewels.

Soon, Hardcastle enters to find Marlow, whom he welcomes again as son to his old friend. However, Hardcastle wishes Marlow to control Marlow's servants, who got drunk and unruly. When Jeremy, one of the servants, enters drunkenly and makes a fool of himself, Marlow refuses to discipline him but instead mocks Hardcastle's request. Fed up, Hardcastle demands Marlow and his servants to leave immediately. Marlow is disgusted with the idea of being put out in the middle of the night, but Hardcastle insists until Marlow asks for his bill. In the confusion over why Marlow is requesting a bill, Marlow suddenly realises what is going on, but not before Hardcastle exits angrily.

As Marlow is grappling with his mistake, Kate (still disguised as barmaid) passes through, and he confronts her immediately about where they are. Realising she needs to play the situation right so as not to counteract her well-designed act, she answers him that it is Hardcastle's house, and laughs at the prospect that he considered it an inn. What's more, she provides she is not a barmaid but a poor relation who relies on the Hardcastles for the charity of shelter. Marlow is shocked to have potentially treated her as a lower class woman, and apologises for having mistaken her behaviour for that of a barmaid. He admits to her that he cannot pursue her since she is of a higher social standing. Kate is impressed with the virtue he shows here, and she suggests that they could be wed even if she lacks fortune. He is touched by her simplicity but admits "I owe too much to the opinion of the world, too much to the authority of a father," and so he leaves her as an act of courage. When he leaves, she decides to herself that she will maintain the deceit long enough to show her father his true character.

Tony and Constance enter, with the former explaining that his mother believes the missing jewels were due simply to a servant's mistake but that he cannot steal them again. A servant brings a letter for Tony, the handwriting of which Constance immediately recognises as belonging to Hastings, which could ruin them. Tony, who cannot read, tries to sort it out, but before he can give it to his mother to read, Constance grabs it and pretends to read it, making up a nonsense letter on the spot. Her attempts to blow it off do not deter Tony, who gives it to his mother to read. She reads from it that Hastings awaits them in anticipation of the elopement. Though polite, she insists she will not be bested at this game, and decides she will use the horses Tony prepared to bring Constance far away from Hastings and any attempt to run away. She then leaves.

Constance, now depressed, is joined by Hastings, who accuses Tony of betraying them. Before he can suitably defend himself, Marlow enters, angry at having been deceived. A servant enters to inform Constance that Mrs. Hardcastle awaits her for a quick departure. In the meantime, the resentment between everyone grows harsher. With a quick and sad goodbye, Constance exits. Tony suddenly develops a plan, and tells everyone to meet him in two hours at the "bottom of the garden" where he will prove that he is good natured.

Summary of Act V

In Act V, Hastings enters with a servant, who informs him that Mrs Hardcastle and Constance left a while before, and must be far away. The servant also tells him that Charles Marlow has arrived, and Hastings, who still wants to avoid detection, heads to the garden even though he has little faith that Tony will save him.

He exits as Hardcastle and Charles Marlow enter, laughing about young Marlow mistaking Hardcastle for an innkeeper, and Charles Marlow offers that his son will not need much fortune in the way of dowry, since he is already wealthy. Hardcastle shares that Kate believes the two young people like one another, but Charles Marlow waits to see for himself. Marlow enters to apologise again for his impudence, but Hardcastle amused by the hilarious mistake, is able to laugh it off. They discuss about Kate Hardcastle,

whom Marlow praises but says he did not share any intimacy with. Hardcastle, who saw Marlow take her hand in Act III, accuses him of lying, while Marlow continues to insist that their meeting was "without emotion." Sir Charles attempts to rectify the situation, but neither of the two men understands why the other believes what he does, and Marlow leaves. The elders interrogate Kate and when she answers that Marlow did indeed meet her more than once and spoke in effusive tones. Then, Kate proposes they all meet after an hour and half, and the men can listen behind a curtain while she confronts Marlow so as to know the complete truth. Everyone agrees to the plan.

The scene then shifts to the back of the garden. Hastings waits alone feeling sure that Tony will not come. However the latter finally arrives, covered in mud and he assures Hastings he is "the best friend you have in the world" and explains what he has done. He drove the horses around in circles, through difficult areas, until he finally crashed the carriage into a pond nearby. Thinking herself to be miles away from home, Mrs. Hardcastle is in a state of panic. Tony stresses that his means of conflict resolution has proved superior since no one has been harmed, and Hardcastle agrees.

Mrs. Hardcastle enters, terrified and lamenting being so far from home. She wonders whether the night could grow worse through a robbery, and almost right away, Tony points out a hat that can be spied over the bushes. He realises it must be Mr. Hardcastle out on his nightly walk, and so exaggerates the appearance to convince his mother it must be a highwayman. He instructs her to hide in the thickets, which she does. Hardcastle enters and is surprised to find Tony back so soon. As Mrs. Hardcastle prays to herself that Tony will not be harmed, Tony tries to dissuade Hardcastle from investigation by claiming he was talking to himself and so the latter did not hear any voices. Hardcastle persists in pushing through, which leads Mrs. Hardcastle to throw herself at the mercy of the "bandit" to save her son, at which point it takes a few passages of confusion for all to sort itself out and everyone to be angry with Tony again, although Hardcastle sees "morality" in the way he abuses his mother in pursuit of justice, and forces her to reap the spoiled nature she has sown in him.

Hastings and Constance enter, the former begging the latter to join him in eloping. But Constance, having been through so many ordeals in a single night, asserts that she no longer wishes to be a part of duplicity and wants instead to seek for Hardcastle's permission to marry as she is confident of her guardian's leniency. Hastings insists he lacks the power to grant their wish as it is up to Mrs. Hardcastle to decide, but she believes that Mr. Hardcastle's sense of justice might lead him to use his influence on their behalf.

Meanwhile, Sir Charles laments his situation to Kate stating that either his son is a liar or is an impudent fellow. Kate suggests it might be not that bad, and the man retires so as to observe the meeting between the young people. Once he arrives, Marlow expresses sorrow for his situation, where his passion is enflamed by the grace and appearance of this girl who believes lacks the fortune to please his father. He insists he must leave her immediately, and she grants him permission, feeling sad that his ambitions were set on fortune and social status. However he assures her that it was not thatattracted him towards her but rather her qualities, which he is learning to see as "refined simplicity." Through his speech to himself, he resolves to stay with her despite his father's lack of approval. She refuses him, claiming such a union will surely result in resentment, but he claims otherwise, and gets down on one knee before her to propose to her.

At such a move, Sir Charles and Mr. Hardcastle appear from behind the screen and each accuse Marlow of falsehood, though for different reasons. In the attacks they launch at him, the truth of Kate's identity is revealed and Marlow is immediately embarrassed by the situation. Having been caught, Kate continues to mock Marlow, asking which of his part of his character he intends to use now. Hardcastlesasks Kate to forgive him, at which the lovers move off to speak privately.

Mrs. Hardcastle enters, claiming loudly that her niece has eloped with Hastings and that she will never release the girl's fortune. Hardcastle accuses her of being greedy like a tradesman but she tells him to mind his own business, reminding him that if Tony refuses to marry Constance based on his own decision once he is of age, then her fortune goes immediately to her.

As Hastings and Constance arrive to beg forgiveness, Hardcastle reveals that Tony is actually of age and pretends otherwise, and so the fortune is finally inherited by Constance after all the obstacles. They had kept Tony's true age a secret in hopes it might induce him to mature more quickly. As his first act of age, Tony takes Constance's hand and in a parody of a marriage proposal, swears her that he would be a mate forever. Mrs. Hardcastle complains this is all "but the whining end of a modern novel" and shows no sign of having learned anything.

With this, Mr. Hardcastle gives a final speech wherein he hopes the "Mistakes of a Night" shall lead all to never mistake in his or her beloved such faulty qualities again. Interestingly enough, Goldsmith's ending could easily be criticised as falling into the sentimentality he claims to want to remove. Marlow is the best example. While he certainly passes the test Kate poses for him, prostrating himself before a woman he considers below him in terms of fortune because he loves her, he nevertheless is a character of two minds. His baser nature is not removed, but rather he is kneeling before this girl as a modest woman he feels comfortable speaking to. Further Kate only acquires Marlow as an acceptable husband through comic acts of trickery. She must force him to confront his own vice and folly, his own assumptions about behaviour and class, in order for him to truly feel anything that could lead to a happy marriage. In his reversal speech, where he decides he will stay with her, Marlow speaks as though her character or behavior has changed, but the truth is that the only change has been in how he perceives her social class. And ultimately, one is left to wonder whether the match would have persisted if he did not have such a tidy fortune as to not need a big dowry.

The theme of appearance and its fallacious nature remains very strong up to the end of the play. Both of the older fellows are unable to imagine a Marlow with contradictions; each needs the young man to be what he expects. Where the father will necessarily be disappointed to find his son is impudent as well as modest, Hardcastle will necessarily be disappointed to find a streak of modesty in a young man he had identified as forthright.

Epilogue

The play finally closes with the epilogue that is intended to be spoken by Kate. The character begins by summarising that she has "stooped to conquer with success" and that the author has thereby conquered his audience. She proposes that "our life is all a play" and then traces the five act life of a pretty country barmaid. In her first act, she is simple, afraid and eager to please. In her second act, she is loud and authoritative. She next moves to town where she impresses everyone with her character and charm. Her fourth act has her wedded to a man of repute, and pretending towards snobbish taste, she ends up losing her sharpness. Goldsmith (as the author) is responsible for her fifth act, in which she might again become judge. There is also a second Epilogue that is spoken by Tony Lumpkin. Tony expresses his intention to settle in London with his beloved Bet Bouncer and claims tha the would soon teach the genteel people of London what it is like to be gentle. The second Epilogue is a way of ending the play in a light mood.

It is however the First Epilogue that significantly summarises of the goal Goldsmith set out for himself in his critical essay on comedy. Though it is not explicitly stated, the barmaid whose life he describes is likely meant to represent the theatre itself. She learned to confront her audience and demand things of them, then was brought to high society, where she grew pretentious and lost her independence(regressing into "sentimental comedy"), and now sits docile, waiting for someone like Goldsmith ("the doctor" from the prologue) to see where he can lead her. He wants to recapture her bawdy charm from her younger days, and he hopes he can "conquer" his audience by doing so. So the epilogue here serves as a challenge to the audience – did he succeed? Did he conquer them into accepting the low and bawdy nature of comedy again, leading them to repudiate their assumptions about high-minded theatre? In 1772, Oliver Goldsmith published the essay entitled "A Comparison Between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy." The essay came after the poor reception of his play *A Good-Natured Man* and in anticipation of *She Stoops to Conquer*. It is easy to understand this essay as an explicit statement of purpose for the

latter comedy, which was in the process of being completed for production at the time of essay's publication, and as such should be studied in conjunction with it. The essay notes that people tend to "mistake change for improvement," and that this trend is manifest in attitudes on the contemporary theatre. Goldsmith writes how at one time, tragedy was considered the best dramatic genre, though comedy has outranked it in terms of fame and success over the centuries. According to Goldsmith, comedy is a "natural portrait of human folly and frailty, of what all are judges, because all have sat for the picture." In other words, we turn to comedy because it reminds us that we are all imperfect, and allow us to find humour in that fact.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 10: Comment on the second act of the play, *She Stoops to Conquer* by Oliver Goldsmith.

Q 11: Do you think Goldsmith's ending in the play *She Stoops to Conquer* falls prey to sentimental comedy?

Q 12: How many epilogues are there in this play?

Q 13: What is Oliver Goldsmith's definition of comedy?



6.6 LET US SUM UP

From your reading of the previous sections of this unit, it must be clear to you that Oliver Goldsmith the Anglo-Irish novelist, playwright and poet, is best known for his much acclaimed novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), and plays like *The Good-Natur'd Man* (1768) and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1771, first performed in 1773). You have also learnt that Goldsmith wrote *She Stoops to Conquer* as a reaction against the sentimental comedies of his times. This play deals primarily with the themes of love and marriage, which were the popular subjects during the eighteenth century.



6.7 FURTHER READING

(1) Birch, D. (ed). (2009). *The Oxford Companion to English literature*. Oxford University Press.

(2) Goldsmith, O. (1991). *She Stoops to Conquer*. Courier Dover Publications.

(3) Gwynn, S. L. (1977). *Oliver Goldsmith*. Norwood Editions.

(4) Jeffares, A.N. *York Notes: A Critical Commentary on She Stoops to Conquer.*

(5) Thorndike, A. H. (1965). *English comedy*. Cooper Square Publishers.

6.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: The sentimental comedy which arose as reaction to the degenerate comedy of manners is one that emphasised on expression of moral sentiment and humanitarian values.

Ans to Q No 2: Oliver Goldsmith strongly reacted against the sentimental comedy and attacked it in his well-known essay *A Comparison between Laughing Comedy and Sentimental Comedy*. According to him, the sentimental comedy emphasized too much on the virtues of the characters rather than displaying the flaws those are inherent in human beings. This did not allow the audience to learn anything about human nature.

Ans to Q No 3: Goldsmith began his literary career as a reviewer for Ralph Griffith's *Monthly Review*. There, he first wrote a review of Edmund Burke's *Enquiry into…the Sublime and Beautiful*.

Ans to Q No 4: *The Deserted Village.*He spent his childhood at Lissoy and it is believed that much of his memories involved in writing of this book.

Ans to Q No 5: *The Good Natured Man* (1768) and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1771), the novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), and the pastoral poem *The Deserted Village* (1770).Goldsmith also contributed in

many periodicals such as Tobias Smollett's *British Magazine, Critical Review*, *Busy Body* and the *Ladies' Magazine*, before starting his own periodical called *The Bee*.Goldsmith also wrote many biographies, translations and abridgements: these include the lives of *Voltaire* (1761), *Nash* (1762), Thomas Parnell (1770), and *Bolingbroke* (1770), a *History of England in a series of letters from a Nobleman to his Son* (1764), a *Roman History* (1769), and a *Grecian History* (1774). His poem *The Traveller* (1764) earned him much literary respect.

Ans to Q No 6: Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* deals primarily with the themes of love and marriage, which were the popular subjects during the eighteenth century.

Ans to Q No 7: By the time of the play *She Stoops to Conquer,* however significant changes were seen in the English society. The consolidation of the nuclear family had caused the balance of power to shift. Although the aristocratic families still exerted considerable influence when it came to their children's marriages, families belonging to the gentry or the bourgeoisie class became more open to marriages based on affection between spouses. The young people of marriageable age were allowed to exercise their judgment.

Ans to Q No 8: David Garrick, Esq., a popular actor of his day.

Ans to Q No 9: The play opens in its primary setting, a chamber in the "old-fashioned" country house of Mr. Hardcastle, in a remote part of the country.

Ans to Q No 10: Act II is primarily concerned with establishing the contradictions and complications of the play's characters. On the surface, all of these people are comic types: Tony is the trickster, Marlow and Hastings are the romantic leads; Constance and Kate represent the pure maidens who are to be won; and the Hardcastles act as the traditionalists belonging to an old world who in some ways work as antagonists to the young. The second act begins in Hardcastle's house where the master of the house is instructing his servants on how to appear sophisticated in front of the expected guests.

Ans to Q No 11: Interestingly enough, Goldsmith's ending could easily be criticised as falling into the sentimentality he claims to want to remove. Marlow is the best example.

Ans to Q No 12: Two Epilogues.

Ans to Q No 13: According to Goldsmith, comedy is a "natural portrait of human folly and frailty, of what all are judges, because all have sat for the picture."



6.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1. Discuss the life and works of Oliver Goldsmith.

Q 2. How many Acts comprise the play *She Stoops to Conquer* by Oliver Goldsmith? Discuss.

Q 3. Describe the significance of the Prologue and Epilogue in the play *She Stoops to Conquer* by Oliver Goldsmith.

Q 4. What is the significance of Goldsmith's satirical comedies? Substantiate your answer by focusing upon Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*?

Q 5. Briefly describe the background of the play *She Stoops to Conquer.*

Q 6. *She Stoops to Conquer* is also known as *The Mistakes of a Night*. Which is the better title and why?