“She Stoops To Conquer” By Oliver Goldsmith

Posted on May 7, 2020

View this essay online:
https://academic-master.com/she-stoops-to-conquer-by-oliver-goldsmith/

She Stoops to Conquer is a play that Oliver Goldsmith wrote and premiered in London in 1773. The play, which was initially titled Mistakes of a Night, presents a story that features Sir Charles Marlow, his family members and accomplices, including Mr Hardcastle, Mrs Hardcastle, Miss Kate Hardcastle, Tony Lumpkin, George Hastings, and Miss Constance Neville. The story begins when Tony meets Hastings and Marlow who were to come to the Hardcastle for an arranged marriage visit. Kate Hardcastle was supposed to marry Marlow. After deliberately choosing to mislead the two, Tony gets entangled in the marriage affair. As the story unfolds, new developments take place when Tony rejects his proposed marriage with Neville, who ends up hooking up with Hasting, with whom he later engages and plans to elope. This is a very interesting and thought-provoking comedy that addresses the themes of change, deception, classism, and conflict. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the element of change and the role of Tony Lumpkin in the comedy.

How The Play Deals With Changes In The Society

The events that took place in the play show that society was a complicated one. The desires and actions of each of the characters is a clear proof that the society was not static, but a dynamic one. As already hinted, class wars were one of the major themes in the comedy. The element of classism features when the parents tend to organize the marriage of their children along class lines. People like Sir Hardcastle believed that their children had no choice rather to marry the families that they had chosen for them. That justifies why he had to organize a marriage between his daughter Kate and Marlow. The same thing was done by Tony’s mother who had insisted that her son Tony had to marry Constance (Mohammed & Ahmed, 2023).

However, the intention of Mrs Hadcastle to compel her son to marry a lady of her choice flopped. There is a generational change in this society because the children have decided to change the old tradition of sitting down and letting their parents have a say in their marriage matters. Although Kate never opposed her father for choosing for her a suitor believing it was the best thing to do, Tony could not tolerate such a thing (Goldsmith 121). Instead, he decided to defy his mother by confidently choosing to refuse Constance. He flatly refused to marry Constance because he believed that it was not his choice. Instead, he felt that he could go ahead and marry another lady whom he loved more than Constance. This is a clear proof that there is a real change in the society.
The play used the youth to advocate for and bring change into the society. If everyone in the play

were like Kate, there would be no conflict or change in this society. However, with critical minds like Tony who could openly express their opinion, a change had to be introduced in the society. By using characters like Tony and giving them enough roles to play, the playwright demonstrates that he regarded change as an important aspect of society. He does not portray Tony as a defiant or cheat, but a change agent who is ready to do whatever it takes to liberate his society from the old traditions (Goldsmith 109). The success of Tony in searching for his fiancé is a clear manifestation that change is irresistible no matter how untimely it might come. The play is, therefore, proof that anything, including conservative culture, parental manipulation, and classism, can change at any time as long as people decide to do so.

The Character Who Impressed Me The Most

When I watched the film, I realized that there were many characters that were given different roles to play. Some of the leading characters whom I felt attracted to included Tony, Sir Hardcastle, Mrs Hardcastle, Constance, Kate, and Marlow. Although I liked all of them, I must say that I liked Tony more than any of them. Tony is one of Sir Hardcastle's sons. He is a half-brother to Kate because they do not share a mother. He appears as a jovial, lovely, friendly, kind, and firm character in the play. One of the things he did was to refuse to marry Constance, who his mother had chosen for him. Tony is the character who impressed me most in the pay because he has every quality that I am looking for in a comedy. There are three main reasons why I prefer Tony to any other character (Ahmed, 2025).

First and foremost, Tony featured a comical character who entertained me throughout the comedy. His jokes and enthusiasm made me realize that I was watching a comedy. The first instance when I fell in love with his comedy was when he decided to cheat on Marlow with his friend Hastings. Despite the fact that the two suitors were not aware of the deceit, as an audience, I knew so well that Tony was lying to them that they were in an inn, not at Sir Hardcastle's house. Apart from this case, Tony also impressed me with his comedy when he refused to marry the woman whose mother had chosen for him. I felt entertained when he used his wits to reject the offer. Instead of telling her mother to her face, he used his intelligence to play the game wisely (Goldsmith 111). I felt amused when, at one point, Tony encourages Constance to fall in love with Hastings, engage and elope with her before Mrs Hardcastle noticed. I felt amused (Alabdullah, 2022).

The other reason through which Tony impressed me is when he decided to prove his true personality in the comedy. Right from the beginning of the play, Tony comes out as a unique character who does things in his own way. He differs from other characters because he is a firm individual who no one can manipulate. In this society, people believe in classism, parental control, and materialism. These are the reasons why people like Sir Hardcastle and his wife believe that they have a responsibility to dictate their children. Such beliefs made Tony and Kate not have a say on who to marry. However, unlike the submissive Kate, Tony decides to defy the odds and sets a pace for the rest of the people in the society. He did not like the idea of an arranged marriage because it was undesirable for him (Goldsmith 99). This action impressed me because I like outspoken people who can accept being

manipulated without any resistance. I felt impressed because he is a bold character who knows his freedoms and cannot allow anyone to infringe on them unnecessarily.

Conclusion

What She Stoops to Conquer is an interesting comedy that presents a moving story of the Hardcastles and their close associates. Whatever the people like Marlow, Tony, and Kate went through shows how challenging life was in society at the time. The comedy successfully portrays the theme of change, social class, materials, and deception in society. Of all the characters, Tony is quite impressive because he develops the plot, builds the themes, and uses his comics to make the play interesting to watch. His inclusion in the play made it a success.

References

Ahmed, K. O. O. (2025). Role-playing, witty language, and woman's agency in Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*. *Raparin Journal of Humanities, 12*(3), 608–631. https://journal.uor.edu.krd/index.php/JUR/article/view/1760

Mohammed, S., & Ahmed, S. (2023). Wit, humour and intrigue in Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*. *Elementary Education Online, 19*(1), 1137–1143. https://ilkogretim-online.org/index.php/pub/article/view/7302

Alabdullah, R. A. A. (2022). The macaroni fashion vs. bumpkin: Masculinity in Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*. *Nasaq Journal, 36*(5). https://nasaqiraq.com/volume-36-issue-5/

Copyright © 2026 Academic Master.