

Discuss Congreve's Use of Wit and Humour in “The Way of the World.”

Writer: William Congreve | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

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William Congreve's (1670-1729) “The Way of the World” (1700) is a funny and clever play. He uses wit and humour to make people laugh. But his jokes also show the problems of rich people. He makes fun of their fake love, fashion, and lies. The words are smart, and the scenes are funny. Congreve's comedy gives both fun and a message. The play is full of smart talk, funny plans, and strange people. That is why it is also called a Comedy of Manners.

Clever Talk: The people in the play talk very smartly. Their words are full of jokes. They speak in a way that makes people laugh. Mirabell and Millamant are the best at this. They say funny things without sounding rude. In the following manner, Mirabell tries to convince Millamant without making any harsh or insulting comments.

“For beauty is the lover's gift: 'tis he bestows your charm.”

Besides, in the "Proviso Scene", they talk about how they will live after marriage. Their talk is both funny and sharp.

Funny Plans: The play has many funny plans. Mirabell makes a fake plan to marry Millamant. He makes his servant dress like his rich uncle. This makes Lady Wishfort fall in love. She dreams of marriage, but it is a trick. When people find out, they are shocked. But for the audience, it is very funny. These plans are full of lies, fun, and laughter. They make the story light and enjoyable. This is called situational comedy.

Strange People: Many people in the play act very strangely. Lady Wishfort is old but wants to look young. She puts on too much makeup. She dreams of romance at her age. It is funny but also a little sad. The following quote shows her extreme vanity.

“I look like an old peeled wall. Thou must repair me, Foible, before Sir Rowland comes.”

Petulant and Witwoud talk too much and act silly. They try to look smart but end up looking foolish. These people bring fun to the play.

Social Jokes: Congreve makes fun of rich people's habits. They love fashion more than truth. They care more about money than love. They lie to get married. They do not feel shame when they cheat. All these things are shown in a funny way. The play shows how women talk about fashion all the time. Men also try to look rich and wise. But they are fake inside. This makes us laugh, but also think. It is humour with a message.

Funny Situations: The play has many silly scenes. Lady Wishfort falls for fake Sir Rowland. She does not know he is a servant. Mirabell tricks her easily. Millamant tests Mirabell with funny rules. These situations make us laugh. The characters act foolishly. Their mistakes create humour.

In conclusion, Congreve uses wit and humour in a smart way. His jokes are not just for fun. They show the silly life of rich people. The clever talk, strange people, and funny tricks make the play enjoyable. But at the same time, it tells the truth about love, lies, and greed. "The Way of the World" is not only a fun play. It is also a play that shows real problems in a funny way. That is why Congreve's wit is so powerful.