

What Are the Features of Restoration Comedy?

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Or Write a short note on Restoration Comedy.

Restoration comedy was a dramatic genre that was highly popular during the reign of King Charles II (1660-1685) in late 1600s England. Restoration comedies explored themes of marriage and class, wit, and humor. It also comments on contemporary society through its defining characteristics of incisive dialogue and crude humor.

Wit and Humor: Restoration Comedy was known for its clever and witty dialogue. The characters engaged in sharp banter, wordplay, and puns, often using sophisticated language to create humour. Though so many playwrights introduced wit in their plays, no other dramatist succeeded in using it so skillfully, smoothly, and effectively as William Congreve (1670 – 1729) in his masterpiece “The Way of the World” (1700).

Social Satire: The plays often mocked and satirised the social norms, customs, and behaviours of the time. They poked fun at the upper classes, manners, and pretensions, providing a humorous commentary on the era's society.

Conspiracy/Intrigue: Conspiracy is also essential to ‘Comedy of Manners.’ Finally, the son-in-law of Lady Wishfort in ‘The Way of the World’ was intriguing to her mother-in-law to give him his wife’s wealth and half of Millamant’s wealth as well.

Love, Marriage, and Sex: Comedy of Manners lacks true and passionate love. True love is rarely seen in these comedies. The constancy of love was supposed to be dull. In their married life, there was no intimacy between husband and wife. In ‘The Way of the World, Mirabell flirted with Mrs Fainall and had an illicit relationship with her. Consequently, she became pregnant. Then he helped Mrs Fainall to Marry Fainall so the child could not be called illegitimate.

In conclusion, these are the most striking features of restoration comedy. William Congreve’s masterpiece, ‘The Way of the World,’ is a prominent example that provides all these characteristics.