

The Way of the World Key Info

Writer: William Congreve | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Key Facts

Full Title: The Way of the World

Playwright: William Congreve (1670–1729)

Written Time: Late 1699 – Early 1700

First Performed: March 1700 at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, London

Published Date: 1700

Total Acts & Scenes: 5 Acts (scene divisions vary by edition). The entire play is set on one day.

Genre: Comedy of Manners, Restoration Comedy

Point of View: Third-Person Objective (through stage action and witty dialogue)

Climax: Act V, Scene I: Lady Wishfort discovers Mirabell's whole plan, Foible's involvement, and that Sir Rowland is actually Waitwell in disguise

Protagonist: Mirabell

Antagonist: Mr. Fainall

Setting:

- **Time Setting:** Early 18th century (Restoration period)
- **Place Setting:** London, mainly inside Lady Wishfort's house

Key Notes

Comedy of Manners: Comedy of Manners is a type of comedy that became popular during the Restoration period. It portrays the behavior, love affairs, and foolishness of the wealthy upper class. The characters talk in witty language and are often clever, selfish, and fake. These plays satirize social conventions, marriage, and relationships. They usually take place in

drawing rooms or fashionable houses. William Congreve's "The Way of the World" is a great example. In this comedy, we see how love, money, and marriage are treated like games. The primary aim is to entertain and make people laugh at society.

Restoration Period: The Restoration Period commenced in 1660, when King Charles II ascended to the English throne. After many years of strict rule, people now wanted fun, fashion, and entertainment. This was a golden age for English theatre. Women were allowed to act on stage for the first time. Playwrights like William Congreve and Dryden wrote clever and funny plays. These plays depicted the real lives of the rich, full of love affairs, fashion, and deception. The period lasted until around 1700. The plays of this era are renowned for their wit, satire, and critique of high-society life.

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