

You Never Can Tell Themes

Writer: George Bernard Shaw | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Themes

Love and Marriage: The play presents love and marriage as uncertain yet natural human experiences. Gloria resists marriage to preserve her independence, while Valentine believes love is mutual and natural. Their differing views create humor and conflict, revealing Shaw's ironic view of romance.

Feminism and Independence: Mrs. Clandon represents early feminist ideals, teaching her daughter Gloria that women must remain free from male control. The clash between Gloria's independence and her emotional attraction to Valentine reveals the tension between personal freedom and romantic desire.

Family and Reconciliation: At the center lies the Clandon family's reunion after years of separation. Mrs. Clandon and Mr. Crampton represent two opposing worlds. Their children's confusion and gradual acceptance highlight the difficulty and imperfection of reconciliation in family relationships.

Social Change: Shaw depicts a society in transition from rigid Victorian norms to modern liberal values. Mrs. Clandon's rational feminism opposes Crampton's patriarchal mindset. Their ideological conflict mirrors the broader shift toward individual freedom and equality in late nineteenth-century England.

The Unpredictability of Life: The title reflects Shaw's belief in life's uncertainty. Unexpected encounters, shifting emotions, and ironic outcomes define the story. Through the waiter William's observations, Shaw reminds us that in love and life alike, "you never can tell."