



She Stoops to Conquer

Oliver Goldsmith

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Wealthy countryman Mr. Hardcastle arranges for his daughter Kate to meet Charles Marlow, the son of a wealthy Londoner, hoping the pair will marry. Unfortunately Marlow is nervous around upper-class women, yet the complete opposite around lower-class females. On his first acquaintance with Kate, the latter realises she will have to pretend to be common, or Marlow will not woo her. Thus Kate stoops to conquer, by posing as a maid, hoping to put Marlow at his ease so he falls for her.

She Stoops to Conquer Details

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From Reader Review She Stoops to Conquer for online ebook

Mars says

I had to check the dictionary more often compared to when reading regular books. And sometimes, the dictionary doesn't even contain the words from this 1700's comedy! Other than that, it was pretty funny. I bet that it's more hilarious when performed. (Got to check out if there's some on YouTube.)

Hager says

choose between putting your fiance in a challenege and test to see whether or not they do believe in true love of feelings and not that of emotions and find out for yourself whether or not they deserve your true love and decency or not.

is it true that a woman could win the heart of any man she wishes in such as stooping to conquer method?and what about what seems to be a saloon marriage which ends up in a modernly fashionable way of getting around fate to win more love and respect for wittiness of ethics and smartness rather than be beautiful and use it to be a 'bar tender's ethics'?is it worth stooping to conquer?read the prologue first in her defence and the epilogue and then decide for yourself.

Alyssa Nelson says

I went into this book with very little expectation. I mean, it's a supposed classic that I've never heard of, and drama isn't my particular favorite. However, it was a free audiobook download from Sync this summer, and it was the recording of a theater production that included James Marsters (eek!). It's also only a couple of hours long (not a huge commitment at all), so I decided to give it a go.

Um, why haven't I heard of this play before? Because it's hilarious! 20 minutes in, I was laughing non-stop and having a thoroughly good time. The fact that this is recorded theatre gives it a huge advantage, since the performers give their lines with perfect emphasis and tone. *She Stoops to Conquer* is a typical comedy that centers around mistaken identities and misunderstood situations. All of the characters are funny and loveable, and the talent of the performers is unmistakable, even without being able to see them act it out.

I'm so glad that I had the chance to discover this play, and that I was able to do so in an audio format. I think that most plays are meant to be heard and/or seen, and I would definitely recommend staying away from the print and going straight to a performance or this audio version for *She Stoops to Conquer*. Many of the jokes wouldn't be very funny without hearing the interaction between the characters and without hearing the inflections of the words.

The plot is fairly predictable; however, because of its simplicity and some of the extremely ludicrous characters (like Mrs. Hardcastle), I believe this was written as a parody of the mistaken identities type of play that Shakespeare is so famous for.

If you ever get the chance to listen to this, or see it performed, do so! It's one of the funniest plays I've come

across.

Also posted on Purple People Readers.

Zak Al. says

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Lauren says

It's rare that I get to review a play after both reading and seeing it in a short period of time (although I've now had the chance to do that twice within a month).

Admittedly, I'm predisposed to like *She Stoops to Conquer*. I like Oliver Goldsmith and consider *The Vicar of Wakefield* tremendously underrated. I held off reading *She Stoops to Conquer* simply because Mr. Goldsmith doesn't have an extensive bibliography, and I want to savor his works.

She Stoops to Conquer was worth the wait as both a piece of literature and a play. It's an innocent comedy of manners, full of mistaken identities, crossed signals, and ridiculous misdirections. I enjoyed reading it, but, given all of the physical comedy, seeing it performed raised it to another level.

For those wary of classical theatre or intimidated by the language, *She Stoops to Conquer* would be a good introduction. Like so many good comedies, a delightful timelessness pervades *She Stoops to Conquer*, both grounding the play and allowing it to transcend its own era. Highly recommended.

David Sarkies says

A Question of Class

24 July 2017

What is it with romantic comedies? I grab a book from a second hand bookshop containing some comedies from times past, and of the fours, plays three of them are romantic comedies. Okay, the other compilation of comedies that I had was a little better, but with regards to this collection I'm sort of a little disappointed that the only comedy that I can appreciate (namely isn't some comedy of errors surrounding mistaken identities between lovers) is a play by Ben Jonson. Well, maybe we have Shakespeare to thank since pretty much all of his comedies generally fall into that category (and some of them are pretty sickening when I think about it).

You've probably guessed by now that I'm not one for romantic comedies. I'd have to say that I'm more of a Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels type of guy than, say, Pretty Woman or some such. Okay, there are some romantic comedies out there that I have liked, such as *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, but then I

really didn't particularly find that funny, which is another thing: why is it that when you have a film that is basically a romance you have to throw the word comedy next to it even though there isn't actually one funny line in the entire script?

So, that brings us to the story of *She Stoops to Conquer*. Okay, sure, it's a romantic comedy, but at least it is clever in its construction and simply doesn't fall into the category of boy meets girl, boy loses girl, and boy gets girl back and everybody dances off and gets married and sing happy songs while Malvolio ends up rotting in a pit somewhere. Okay, everything does end up working out well in the end, but I'd hardly call it a spoiler since we pretty much are expecting that the moment we sit in our seats with a bottle of craft beer and the curtain rises for the act, with one exception – this play actually isn't performed all that much, or at least where I tend to drift about.

Then again, I suspect that maybe I wouldn't be rushing out to actually see this play in a hurry, namely because it is a romantic comedy and they really don't do all that much for me. Well, let us consider this one though – our hero has this problem in that he simply is not able to communicate with high class girls, so he ends up going after lower class women such as maids. However, there is a young lady that is interested in him, so to grab his attention she pretends to be a maid, only to discover that the world of the lower classes is pretty horrifying to a woman from a high-born social group.

This I can easily understand, particularly when it comes to me intermingling with Christians (and I'm not talking about those over zealous, fundamentalist Christians either, I'm talking about average middle class people who happen to be Christian). The thing is that like it or not our world is divided into various social classes, and while we might pretend that we live in this so called classless society, in reality we don't. For instance bankers and bricklayers simply do not mix, nor do fashion designers and engineers – while they may not necessarily be of a different class in the sense of aristocratic or working class, they still exist in a class of their own, which brings me to the point with regards to Christians – most of them are university educated middle class people.

Okay, I'm technically middle class, and I'm also university educated, but I come from a vastly different background to what many of them have come from. In fact I remember when I was in university most of them simply hung around in their own little clique, and rarely stepped outside of it to actually see what was going on. I didn't stay within the clique – I ended up walking out of it into a completely different social group, and saw and did things that would make people's head spin (unless of course you were in a similar group). Yet, when I wandered back I discovered something quite surprising – they were economically and politically conservative, and I was completely the opposite. In fact most of the people in the finance industry are economically conservative, which is probably why I don't really mix all that well.

It seems as if I, as usual, have drifted far away from the original premise of this play, but then again I probably haven't. In a way it has some similarities to the first part of *Henry IV*, though I don't think anybody was actually chasing young Harry around the inn, it is just that, like our hero in this play, young Harry finds himself associating with people not really of his class.

Sarah says

MISS HARDCASTLE: I never knew half his merits till now. He shall not go, if I have power or art to detain him. I'll still preserve the character in which I stooped to conquer, but will undeceive my papa, who, perhaps, may laugh him out of his resolution.

-Act IV

I have to be honest: I have been meaning to read *She Stoops to Conquer* for quite a long time, but just never got around to it until recently. Plays are in high favor for me because of their tendency to be easy to read in one long sitting, unless the play is bad and it feels as if it drags on for ever and ever. Good thing this play was exactly the opposite. *Stoops* is a wonderful comedy of manners that feels clever, is written wittily by a fantastic playwright, and is probably a whole lot of fun for actors as well. I can only imagine that seeing this play would be quite a riot; I plan on seeing it when I get the chance.

The basic premise is that a man is set to be engaged to a woman of high class, but he has a weird anxiety around high class women that renders him almost speechless and extremely awkward. However, he takes a special liking to lower class girls such as maids. Additionally, the step brother of the young lady is quite the trickster who figures out this oddity and causes the identity confusion that really carries the play through.

I thoroughly enjoy the way this play is written in particular. I know that a lot of other reviewers have commented on the difficult vocabulary, but to me this makes it that much more colorful and vivid.

Additionally, I am sad that Goldsmith has a small bibliography, so I do not plan to rush on to his next work. For now, I will savor what a brilliant little play *Stoops* is- it is compact, vibrant, and terribly, terribly funny and dripping with wit and intelligence.

Leslie says

I still think that this play needs to be seen to fully appreciate it but I liked this audiobook recording of a live performance. It was easier to listen to this time (I have had more practice!) and thus I found it even funnier than when I heard it a few years ago.

May 2014 review

4.5 stars. This full cast audiobook was a fun way to revisit one of my favorite Restoration comedies. However, I did find that some of the humor was a bit harder to visualize listening rather than reading.

sologdin says

The introduction notes that this text is part of a debate between comedians on the nature and purpose of the thalian arts. The classical theory, “which Ben Jonson had handed on to the Restoration playwrights,” contended that “the purpose of comedy was to expose, by hardheaded, satirical ridicule, the follies and vices” (vii) of fictional persons so as to correct those defects in the Real. We might think of it as a Hegelian theory of comedy, defined by the confrontation of Right with Wrong (as opposed to tragedy, the confrontation of Right with Right)—does Malvolio, for instance, have any plausible Right (as opposed to Goneril)? Goldsmith by contrast thinks that “folly, instead of being ridiculed, is commended” (ix), a sentimental representation that teaches audiences to pardon and sympathize.

This debate is taken up in the text. The Prologue promises that those who deal in “sentimentals” will succeed (xvi), and the aesthetic polemic continues with lines such as “I have often been surprised how a man of sentiment could ever admire those light airy pleasures where nothing reaches the heart” and “There must be some who, wanting a relish for refined pleasures, pretend to despise what they are incapable of tasting” (25).

Some equivocation perhaps on whether it possible to be “too grave and sentimental” (39).

Plenty of wit and mistaken identity and whatnot otherwise to go around. As the title suggests, there is a class conflict here. The title refers specifically to (view spoiler).

Whereas a “reserved lover, it is said, always makes a suspicious husband,” it is difficult when “I’m disposing of a husband, before I have secured the lover” (5)—but one also can be ‘threatened with a lover” (6), NB.

Some dialectic between impudence and modesty: “An impudent fellow may counterfeit modesty, but I’ll be hanged if a modest man can ever counterfeit impudence” (15) and thereafter. This is tied into a repeated refrain about the rights arising from the oikos: “a man in his own house” being unrestrained (19 e.g.). This is all ultimately confounded (a repeated term in the text) in a character’s “modest impudence” (58) on the one hand and another’s “mild, modest, sentimental man of gravity” (67) on the other.

Recommended for those who find the art of reconciling contradictions, readers who send forth sublime commands in peremptory tones, and persons who mistake assiduity for assurance and simplicity for allurement.

Ana Rînceanu says

This was a funny play about mistaken identities which I picked up because of the title. 'Stoops to conquer' is a phrase that was made popular by Aphra Behn in the mid 17th century in her play *The Rover*, referring to a person of the upper class pretending to be a maid/servant in order to gain the affections of their intended.

J says

A very fun, very innocent comedy compared to others of the time in which there was a bit darker elements. Sort of more like a Shakespearean comedy of errors, as a prank leads to a series of misunderstandings and some fooling around leads to much more trickery.

Lucy Banks says

Re-reading for a bit of fun - still amusing!

Considering this was written in the late 1700s, it feels remarkably fresh and very accessible, and some of the jokes are even funny by today's standards, which is an impressive thing for Goldsmith to have pulled off!

It's classic Restoration fare - bawdy humour, plenty of misunderstanding and miscommunication, and a happy resolution at the end. The characters are particularly 'larger-than-life' which helps keep the attention; think typically Shakespearean-based plot-line, only a bit less wordy!

Good fun.

Alice says

I listened to an audio performance of this play, knowing very little about it or the author going in. It was a pleasant surprise. *She Stoops to Conquer* has aged well, and, I feel, should be studied alongside Austen.

The play predates Austen by about 30 years, but it fills in a lot of the gaps in Austen's work. She rarely acknowledges servants or employees of any kind, while this play highlights, if not the people themselves, how the gentry treated them.

Marlow is a painfully shy young man, off to meet Kate Hardcastle, the girl his father hopes he'll marry. He's accompanied by his friend Hastings, who's in love with Constance Neville, a ward of the Hardcastle family. On their way to the house, Marlow and Hastings get lost, and Tony, the stepson of Mr. Hardcastle, tells them the house is really an inn. Marlow is much more comfortable talking to servants and barmaids, but his behavior is baffling to Mr. Hardcastle. It allows Kate to see another side of her suitor, though, and she keeps up the pretense to draw him out.

Marlow's behavior toward the Hardcastle family is truly appalling, but all is forgiven when the mistake is uncovered. It goes to show how differently servants were treated in so-called polite society. Anyone who wants to resurrect the Napoleonic attitudes needs to realize the vast majority of us are people who work for a living, and are therefore subject to being treated like we're subhuman. The scandals in Austen's work where people fall in love with those below their station is much more easily understood, in this context.

Marlow, who's considered the very model of a gentleman, tries to proposition Kate as a prostitute, and is confused to be rebuffed. Her distance and objections are seen as flirtation, and he assumes she can't possibly mean "no" when she says it. It simply doesn't occur to him that a simple barmaid wouldn't want to sleep around.

L.A. Theatre Works, who recorded this production, includes the sounds of an audience. Though the audience often found remarks uproarious, I found very little to laugh about in this play. It's sharply satirical, and a comedy in the classical sense, in that nobody dies and there's a happily ever after. But, I found the play more eye-opening than funny. Maybe if I were more familiar with the context, as audiences of the time would've been, I would've laughed more.

The performance was a good one. It sounded like a stage production, well-acted by professionals. The inclusion of James Marsters in the cast certainly added to my decision to pick this up, but the others were also excellent.

Abby says

This play is really unique because even though it uses 18th century language, it's pretty easy to understand, and really funny! I didn't think I'd actually laugh out loud, but I did! Some parts needed reading twice to understand, but that was fine. A very enjoyable read!

Maan Kawas says

A beautiful and light play by Oliver Goldsmith, which is filled with misunderstanding, practical jokes, and deceit! The play addresses various themes and ideas, such as class (the characters' behaviors and actions are changeable according to the social status of the other person), the importance of money and property (e.g. the jewels), appearances vs. reality, the importance of keeping one's appearance, love and courting, wittiness, cheating and tricks as means for achieving one's goals, and parent-child relationship. I loved the happy ending and the dialogue was so beautiful.
