

She Stoops to Conquer

Act 1

Scene 1&2

She Stoops to Conquer- Act 1

Act 1- Scene 1 Summary

- In a room in an "old-fashioned house," which resembles an inn, in the English countryside, Mrs. Hardcastle is in the midst of a discussion with her husband on the topic of town versus country.
- Mrs. Hardcastle would like to make occasional journeys to London to vary her routine.
- Mr. Hardcastle, however, is strongly opposed to the "follies" and "fopperies" of the town.
- The talk turns to Tony Lumpkin, Mrs. Hardcastle's son from her first marriage.
- Mrs. Hardcastle seems tolerant toward the young man.
- Reminded that Tony was sickly and didn't go to school but might study some Latin in the future, Mr. Hardcastle observes "the alehouse and the stable are the only schools he'll ever go to," meaning that drinking and horseback riding are Tony's sole pursuits.

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- Tony enters, announcing he is expected soon at the Three Pigeons, the local alehouse.
- His mother asks him not to go, but the rebellious Tony insists, saying he is not about to disappoint either his friends or himself by staying home.
- Mother and son exit, with Mr. Hardcastle muttering that they spoil each other.
- Kate Hardcastle enters and chats agreeably with her father.
- The two have an agreement about clothing: Kate dresses fashionably every morning to socialize but wears a "housewife's dress" in the evening to please her conservative, staid father, who disapproves of "city" fashions.
- Hardcastle tells Kate he expects a visit that very day from a young gentleman whom he has singled out to be Kate's husband.

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- He is the son of Hardcastle's old and dear friend, Sir Charles Marlow.
- According to Hardcastle, young Marlow is generous, brave, and handsome.
- Kate greets this news cheerfully, but when her father calls young Charles "bashful" and "reserved," she is less enthusiastic.
- Hardcastle exits, saying he must prepare the servants to receive young Marlow, for the family rarely entertains company.
- Constance Neville, Kate's cousin and Mrs. Hardcastle's niece, enters.
- The two women chat together. As heir to a modest fortune in jewelry, Constance is an attractive marriage prospect.
- Indeed, it appears Mrs. Hardcastle would like to make a match between Constance and her son Tony Lumpkin. But Constance Neville's heart lies elsewhere—with George Hastings, who is Charles Marlow's closest friend.

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Analysis

- The well-paced opening scene establishes several key elements of the play, including setting, character relationships, conflicts, and plot.
- The scene also introduces some important themes of the comedy.
- First, the audience learns *She Stoops to Conquer* is set in the countryside. The Hardcastles live in what Mrs. Hardcastle calls "an old rumbling mansion."
- This setting is important because a crucial misunderstanding in the play will involve the Hardcastles' residence being mistaken for an inn.
- As a foreshadowing of this misidentification, it is significant that Mrs. Hardcastle, in her second passage of dialogue, remarks, "Here we live in an old rambling mansion, that looks for all the world like an inn."

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- The setting also plays a major role in the theme of city versus country.
- This theme, in fact, is explicit in the opening dialogue, where Mrs. Hardcastle voices some impatience with the routine of country life, while her husband declares his fondness for "everything that's old"—including, he says, his wife Dorothy!
- The "rust" of country life is not the only topic about which the Hardcastles agree to disagree. Another is their contrasting opinions about Tony Lumpkin, Mrs. Hardcastle's son from her previous marriage.
- Mrs. Hardcastle spoils the young man and has become overly concerned that he may suffer from TB
- Mr. Hardcastle, on the other hand, is far less indulgent.
- When Tony enters to announce he has an appointment at the Three Pigeons, the local alehouse, it appears Mr. Hardcastle's opinion of the youth is accurate..

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- Intergenerational conflict will play a prominent part in the play, and this theme is foreshadowed by Tony's rebellious attitude when his mother asks him not to go to the alehouse.
- Tony flatly contradicts her, saying he will not disappoint himself.
- Tony's attitude pointedly contrasts with the harmony of Kate's relationship with her father.
- Their mutual regard extends even to the agreement they have made with each other: fashionable dress in the morning and conservative dress in the evening.
- Thus, it is not surprising that Kate maintains her equanimity when her father rather abruptly announces he is expecting a visit that same day from the young man he has chosen to be her husband.

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- The specifics of love matches versus arranged marriages seem to have been somewhat indeterminate in Goldsmith's day, with love matches gaining ground over arrangements.
- Money, property, and social status appear to have played critical roles, no matter who chose the spouses.
- In fact, Kate lightly comments that marriage making is "so like a thing of business."
- Later she tells Constance Neville, her cousin, she has been "threatened with a lover."

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Act 1- Scene 2 Summary

- The scene shifts to the Three Pigeons, the local alehouse, where Tony Lumpkin is enjoying drinks with "several shabby fellows."
- Tony entertains his friends with a rollicking song glorifying the alehouse and the pleasures of drinking.
- All his friends applaud him.
- The landlord enters to announce that a horse-drawn carriage has just arrived, carrying some travelers who have lost their way.
- The travelers are Marlow, the young man whom Hardcastle has chosen for Kate, and Marlow's friend Hastings.
- Both have traveled from London.
- Tony decides to play a practical joke on them by providing a complex series of directions and by leading them to think the Hardcastle house is really an inn. Tony solicits the landlord's cooperation in the deception, and the scene ends.

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Analysis

- This brief scene contains several interesting and important features.
- First, it reveals Tony Lumpkin as entertaining and more than a bit immature but, at the same time, a figure of fun.
- Like most of the characters in the play, Tony has considerable flaws, but, also like most of Goldsmith's figures, the playwright's sympathy nearly always redeems the characters and makes them ultimately likable.
- The song with which Tony entertains his friends at the beginning of the scene is a case in point. Glorifying the pleasures of drinking, it has more than a passing resemblance to the ditty sung by Charles Surface in Act 3, Scene 3 of Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*, though the song in Sheridan's play is more about womanizing than drinking.

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- A second important feature of the scene is Goldsmith's use of dialect for the "low" characters: the four fellows, as well as the landlord, to some extent.
- The distinction among social classes is another leading theme in the play, and nonstandard speech serves as a way of differentiating between "high" and "low" social class.
- Hastings and Marlow are close friends but quite different in personality, as Hastings emphasizes when he blames Marlow's character trait of "unaccountable reserve" for the pair's getting lost on the way. This trait will prove to be highly significant in the relationship between Marlow and Kate Hardcastle.
- Finally, the idea of travel directions is comically emphasized in Scene 2.

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- This strand in the play will also be much in evidence in Act 5.
- While using the idea of travel for comic effect, Goldsmith is also paying homage to the classical concept of the unity of place, which dictates that a dramatic work should be set in a single place.
- Although Goldsmith's play has multiple settings—the Hardcastle residence, the alehouse, and the garden—compounded by the characters' confusion, Goldsmith repeatedly simplifies the setting through the dialogue by making "the country" a place where people behave much differently than they do in "the city."

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Act 2

She Stoops to Conquer- Act 2

Act 2- Summary

- Act 2 opens with an amusing training session held by Mr. Hardcastle for "three or four awkward" servants.
- The training has lasted for three days.
- As Hardcastle remarked in Act 1, the family entertains guests rarely, and the servants need, in Hardcastle's opinion, to brush up on their behavior with company.
- They are more at home in the barn than at the dining table or in the kitchen.
- Thus, Hardcastle cautions them not to stare, not be so talkative, not to quarrel, not to partake of table conversation, and to serve wine with elegance.
- The servants respond in dialect and recall amusing old tales.

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- Upon hearing a coach arrive at the house, Hardcastle hastens to welcome his guests.
- Hastings and Marlow enter in good humor, calling the house they believe to be an inn "antique but creditable."
- Marlow pronounces it is the fate of travelers to "pay dearly for luxuries" in good inns or "be fleeced and starved" in bad ones.
- Hastings and Marlow briefly discuss Marlow's character trait of reserve, for his reluctance to ask directions is in part responsible for their journey taking so long.
- It is revealed Marlow is remarkably bashful with young women of high social standing but generous and forward with barmaids and servants.
- Marlow supposes that he may not be able to look the young lady he is expected to court directly in the face.

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- In fact, he maintains he has made the journey primarily to help Hastings win Constance Neville.
- Hardcastle enters, bidding the travelers a hearty welcome.
- From this point forward in the scene, an ingenious series of ambiguities keeps Marlow and Hastings believing they have arrived at an inn, while Hardcastle is firmly convinced the two young men are the guests he has been expecting.
- In comments delivered "aside" to the audience, Marlow and Hastings swiftly reach the conclusion that Hardcastle is an "impudent" social climber.
- When the talk turns to the supper menu, Hardcastle makes every effort to please his guests, but it is clear the meal he has planned is not to their taste. Now it is Hardcastle who, in a series of asides, speaks slightly of his guests' "impudence." Hardcastle and Marlow exit, and Constance Neville enters to greet her "dear Hastings."

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- Constance quickly disabuses Hastings of the notion the house is an inn, declaring Hastings's misunderstanding must be the result of a trick played by Tony Lumpkin.
- She reassures Hastings that her aunt's efforts to make a match between her and Tony will come to nothing. Neither is interested, and Hastings mentions escaping to France.
- Constance and Hastings agree it would be unwise to reveal Tony's practical joke to Marlow, who might suddenly depart in embarrassment.
- As the two talk, Marlow reenters, complaining of Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle's persistent attention. Hastings introduces Constance to Marlow, pretending she and Miss Kate Hardcastle have alighted by chance at the "inn" to dine and change horses. As Marlow worries about whether his clothing is suitable, Kate Hardcastle enters and Hastings introduces her to Marlow.

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- As a stage direction notes, Marlow at this point appears "very uneasy and disconcerted."
- With support from Hastings, the acutely bashful Marlow attempts to carry on a conversation with Kate.
- The dialogue is full of generalities, and Marlow is so shy he finds it impossible to look Kate in the face.
- His embarrassment and discomfort are magnified when Hastings insists on leaving the room with Constance, on the pretext that their continued presence might inhibit conversation.
- In an amusing irony of situation, Marlow and Kate's conversation grows more and more disjointed, almost breaking down completely.

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- A similarly light-spirited discussion involving Tony Lumpkin, Constance Neville, George Hastings, and Mrs. Hardcastle follows this encounter.
- The chief topics of the conversation, steered by Mrs. Hardcastle, are London and the fashions of the capital.
- Hastings smoothly flatters Mrs. Hardcastle, who wants to talk about hair styles, the "fashionable" ages of ladies, and her favorite bit of wish-fulfillment, a marriage between Tony Lumpkin and Constance Neville.
- As the act concludes, a tiff erupts between Tony and his mother.
- Tony, who can't bear his cousin Constance and accounts what, according to him, are her flaws, finds an unlikely ally in Hastings, who promises to take her off Tony's hands.
- Tony breaks out in another snatch of song at the end of the act.

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Analysis

- In contrast to the comic aspects of the opening scene, this part of Goldsmith's play exhibits a more sober dimension: a gently satirical link with the major theme of status and class consciousness that runs throughout the comedy.
- In a moment of dramatic irony, even as Hardcastle wants to be seen as a well-mannered country gentleman, the audience is already aware that when the guests arrive, they will be assuming Hardcastle is a mere innkeeper.
- Indeed their treatment of him reflects their vanity, a trait that might be more unappealing to 21st-century audiences than to those in the 18th century.

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- The dialect Goldsmith uses for the servants' speech recalls the idiomatic level of language he employs for the four shabby fellows at the Three Pigeons alehouse in Act 1, Scene 2.
- One of the play's keystones is the curious irregularity in Marlow's personality, which contrasts acute bashfulness in his encounters with young women of high social status and brash forwardness in his relations with barmaids and other young women of lower social status.
- Goldsmith does not analyze this inconsistency psychologically, and neither should a modern audience.
- It does seem, though, that issues of power are implicated in Marlow's approach to the opposite sex.

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- He seems to feel comfortable only with those women who cannot, or will not, challenge him.
- Yet this hint of a character flaw is made to fade away, largely because of Kate's maturity, generosity, and authentically kind disposition.
- As the play's title indicates, she "stoops" to court Marlow—the plot does not have it the other way around—because she is genuinely fond of him and because she has the insight to perceive what it will take to win him.
- Thus, Act 2 embarks on a significant deepening of insight into Kate's character.
- Not only does she enjoy an unusually close, trusting, and affectionate relationship with her father, but she also is capable of putting herself in the "driver's seat" on the journey of courting a lover and future husband.

She Stoops to Conquer- Act 2

- The first encounter between Kate Hardcastle and Charles Marlow illustrates an important feature of Goldsmith's comedy as a whole.
- If one reads between the lines, the scene would be much funnier when acted rather than merely read.
- This appraisal extends to many other scenes in the play: it is the stage business (as theatrical jargon would have it) and the manner in which the actors deliver the dialogue that are likely to produce more laughs than the written speeches themselves.
- As evidence for this point, readers may consider Goldsmith's artful use of hesitation, repetition, and non sequitur in the dialogue between Kate and Marlow.

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- Marlow's timid stammering pointedly contrasts with Kate's concise, almost epigrammatic phrasing: for example, "There must be some, who, wanting a relish for refined pleasures, pretend to despise what they are incapable of tasting."
- In the act's concluding encounter, humor takes another turn. Here it is Mrs. Hardcastle who, hungry for a taste of London fashion, hitches her wagon to the gentle flattery of George Hastings.
- Once again, dramatic irony charges Goldsmith's script: the audience knows Hastings is the favored suitor of Constance Neville, but Mrs. Hardcastle does not know because she is fixated on the idea that her son Tony Lumpkin may gain Constance's hand to keep the young woman's fortune in the family.
- Of course, the discussion of London fashions ties in clearly to the play's theme of city versus country.

She Stoops to Conquer- Act 2

- In Act 2, in contrast to Act 1, the pace of the action slows down.
- Nevertheless, in its initial display of the relationship between Kate and Marlow, this act marks an important advance in the plot.
- Act 2 also reveals several important conflicts. Among them are the friction between Hardcastle and the guests (each regarding the other as "impudent") and Tony Lumpkin versus Constance Neville—a mutual dislike that will operate in Hastings's favor.

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Act 3

She Stoops to Conquer- Act 3

Act 3- Summary

- This act begins with a short soliloquy (speech by a character alone on stage) delivered by Mr. Hardcastle.
- He reflects on what he regards as Charles Marlow's impudence as Marlow relaxing in the parlor uninvited and asking Hardcastle to attend to his boots.
- He wonders what Charles's father, Hardcastle's old friend, could have intended by recommending him as a potential husband for Kate.
- Kate then enters, plainly dressed.
- She and her father voice contrasting reactions to Marlow's behavior, considerably different toward each, with Kate's opinion significantly more positive.

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- After some discussion, both father and daughter agree to disagree about Marlow.
- Hardcastle and Kate exit, and Tony Lumpkin hastens in, together with Hastings.
- Tony declares he has managed to steal the casket of jewels that comprise Constance's inheritance and were being kept by Mrs. Hardcastle.
- But Hastings responds that Constance is trying to persuade her aunt to surrender the jewels to her.

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- Now Mrs. Hardcastle and Constance appear.
- Mrs. Hardcastle attempts to persuade her niece that a young woman like her has no need of the jewels at this point in life: let her wait until her "beauty begins to want repairs."
- The mix-up concerning the jewel casket causes considerable confusion, though Tony confesses to having removed it from Mrs. Hardcastle's bureau.
- Soon after, Mrs. Hardcastle reenters to announce that the jewels have been stolen.
- In a series of comic, dramatically ironic asides, Tony declares he knows who has filched them.

She Stoops to Conquer- Act 3

- Now the pace and focus change, as Kate Hardcastle and a maid in the household discuss Kate's prior interview with Marlow.
- Relying on the maid's report that Marlow did not glimpse her face during that encounter and on his mistaking her for the "barmaid" at the "inn," Kate decides to play out an impersonation of the barmaid.
- Indeed, Marlow does not recognize her, and after a few negative comments about Kate and her family, his attitude changes abruptly: "I vow, child," he says to Kate, "you are vastly handsome."
- A flirtatious scene follows, in which Marlow delivers ever more lavish compliments, and Kate responds with appropriate modesty.

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- When Marlow attempts to embrace Kate and informs her he is a favorite at the Ladies' Club, Hardcastle interposes, and Marlow hastily withdraws.
- Kate's father reproaches her, sarcastically commenting that Marlow hardly seems as "modest" as was reputed.
- He is about to ask Marlow to leave, but Kate insists the young man really is of good character and asks her father to grant her an hour to prove her claim.

She Stoops to Conquer- Act 3

Analysis

- In some ways, Act 3 marks the turning point, or structural climax, of the comedy.
- For instance, Kate implements her plan to "stoop to conquer," assuming that Marlow, at their first interview, was too shy to look at her.
- Kate knows this disguise has a good chance of eliciting love rather than bashfulness from Marlow.
- The act is bracketed by dialogues between Kate and her father.
- As strong as her father's reluctance to change his mind may seem, Kate nonetheless shoulders the burden of defending Marlow.
- Indeed, her perception and inner confidence are personality traits that make her such an appealing protagonist.

She Stoops to Conquer- Act 3

- Another notable feature in these dialogues between Kate and her father is Goldsmith's prose style, which elegantly displays the techniques of balance and antithesis (the lines echo one another but reverse each other's meaning), evident in these three excerpts:
- *HARDCASTLE: He met me with a loud voice, a lordly air, and a familiarity which made my blood freeze again.*
MISS HARDCASTLE: He treated me with diffidence and respect, censured the manners of the age ... tired me with apologies for being tiresome.
- *HARDCASTLE: If he be what he has shown himself, I'm determined he shall never have my consent.*
MISS HARDCASTLE: And if he be the sullen thing I take him, he shall never have mine.

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- *HARDCASTLE: But depend on't I'm in the right.*
MISS HARDCASTLE: And depend on't I'm not much in the wrong.
- In her conversation with the maid, Kate alludes to one of the most popular comedies of the early 1700s: George Farquhar's *The Beaux' Stratagem* (1707). This play deals with the plans of two bachelors to restore their fortunes by marrying wealthy women.

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Act 5, Scene 1- 3

Act 5, Scene 1- 3

Act 5, Scene 1- Summary

- A servant confirms to Hastings that Mrs. Hardcastle and Constance Neville have left, accompanied by Tony Lumpkin.
- Sir Charles Marlow and Mr. Hardcastle enter, discussing Hardcastle's mistaken identity as an innkeeper.
- Hardcastle now is cheerful and excited about the prospect of a marriage between Kate and young Marlow.
- The latter enters, abjectly apologizing for his mistake, but Hardcastle dismisses his modest behavior, an action that produces some conflict between the older men.

Act 5, Scene 1- 3

- Still unaware of Kate's real identity, young Marlow denies interest in her, but moments later Kate contradicts his statements.
- She invites both fathers to conceal themselves behind a screen in about half an hour, when she will demonstrate that Charles really is in love with her.

Act 5, Scene 1- 3

Analysis

- In the first part of Act 5, Kate's relationship with her father is again emphasized.
- Hardcastle has complete confidence in his daughter's version of events, never questioning her about a possible misunderstanding or doubting her capabilities.
- The scene is also notable for its use of a screen as a concealment device—a technique Richard Brinsley Sheridan greatly expanded and varied in *The School for Scandal*.
- In that play, the ingenuity of the "screen scene" (Act 4, Scene 3) has made it the best known part of the comedy.

Act 5, Scene 1- 3

- Again Goldsmith displays his characteristic use of parallelism and antithesis in the final two lines of the scene when Sir Charles Marlow says, "And if I find him what you describe, all my happiness in him must have an end," and Kate responds, "And if you don't find him what I describe—I fear my happiness must never have a beginning."
- This scene signals the beginning of the end, in that the elder Marlow holds the answer to the inn-castle riddle.
- However, it also continues to build suspense in two ways. First, the audience holds its collective breath for the moment when the young men are called out, a scene that is sure to titillate. Second, Kate puts her relationship with her father and, to some extent, her future on the line by putting them behind the screen.

Act 5, Scene 1- 3

- If she cannot deliver, her marriage prospects will fail; her father will have no reason to trust her again; and their strong, loving relationship will be irreparably damaged.
- From Tony Lumpkin, the audience has already seen how he treats offspring with whom he is dissatisfied.
- Certainly a female child who disappoints him can expect no better and probably far worse.

Act 5, Scene 1- 3

Act 5, Scene 2- Summary

- The scene changes to the back of the garden, where Hastings is waiting for Tony Lumpkin.
- When he enters, Tony says he has ridden 25 miles on horseback, having led his fellow travelers lost in the dark.
- Supposedly on the way to Aunt Pedigree's house, Mrs. Hardcastle and Constance have actually journeyed around in a circle and are nearly back home.
- Mrs. Hardcastle, however, thinks she is miles away.
- Hastings, grateful he will soon see Constance, thanks Tony and departs.

Act 5, Scene 1- 3

- Mrs. Hardcastle enters, fatigued and anxious.
- Tony encourages her not to be afraid, at the same time as he adds to her fear.
- When she suddenly sees a man's shape in the dark, she trembles, thinking it may be a highwayman about to attack.
- In fact, it is Hardcastle on his evening stroll.
- Hardcastle finds it hard to understand why his wife doesn't recognize him, but she is petrified with fear.
- When Constance Neville and George Hastings meet, she tells him she has decided not to elope.
- Hastings reluctantly agrees.

Act 5, Scene 1- 3

Analysis

- This scene in the garden offers a good example of the general truth that the total effect of a play relies on the experience of seeing it acted in a performance space rather than merely read on the printed page.
- When read in print, Tony's deception of his mother and Hardcastle's puzzlement at his wife's behavior may seem rather foolish or inconsequential.
- When witnessed onstage, however, the action can be played for extremely humorous, even farcical, effect.
- Goldsmith, through Tony's character, uses a number of devices adding to the humor, such as repetition, hyperbole, asides, and dramatic irony in the following examples:

Act 5, Scene 1- 3

- **repetition:** Tony, who has arranged the practical joke on his mother, repeatedly exhorts Mrs. Hardcastle, "Don't be afraid." Mrs. Hardcastle repeatedly expresses her fright and alarm.
- **hyperbole (exaggeration):** Tony asks melodramatically, "Is that a man that's galloping behind us?" Mrs. Hardcastle says, "The fright will certainly kill me." Tony exclaims in mock-fear, "Ah, it's a highwayman with pistols as long as my arm."
- **asides:** Tony identifies Mr. Hardcastle in an aside. Mrs. Hardcastle makes several comments "from behind."
- **dramatic irony:** Tony remarks that the group may soon be upon Crackskull Common, "about forty miles from home," whereas the audience knows the scene takes place at the back of the garden.

Act 5, Scene 1- 3

- Another important consideration in this scene is the question of why Constance Neville cancels the elopement plans with Hastings.
- To understand her sudden decision, it is useful to reflect on her relationship with Mrs. Hardcastle and also to compare Constance with Kate.
- From the beginning of the play, Constance has been revealed as witty and independent.
- She cheerfully shoulders the burden of tolerating Mrs. Hardcastle's incessant efforts to pair her up with Tony Lumpkin, for example. Her heart belongs to Hastings, but she changes her mind about elopement, remaining true to her "constant" personality.

Act 5, Scene 1- 3

- Although she does say as much to Hastings, the audience may infer that Constance recognizes Mr. Hardcastle's decency, and that is why she commits herself to his "compassion and justice."
- In taking the lead in her relationships with Hastings, Constance may be compared to Kate, who takes the lead in her courtship of Marlow.

Act 5, Scene 1- 3

Act 5, Scene 3- Summary

- The scene shifts again to the interior of the Hardcastle house.
- Kate and young Marlow discuss their feelings for one another, their fathers, concealed behind a screen, observe them.
- The two older men soon reveal their presence, and Kate's true identity is revealed.
- George Hastings and Constance Neville enter to apologize for their elopement plan.
- Hardcastle also discloses that because Tony Lumpkin really is "of age"—a fact his mother and stepfather hid from him—he can formally renounce any romantic interest in Constance and claim his own inheritance.

Act 5, Scene 1- 3

- The play thus ends with the prospect of independence for one character and of two marriages: Constance Neville to George Hastings and Kate Hardcastle to Charles Marlow.
- The "mistakes of a night," the play's subtitle, have all been corrected.

Act 5, Scene 1- 3

Analysis

- In the final scene only Mrs. Hardcastle acts ungenerously, behavior that reflects her character throughout the play.
- Overindulgent and manipulative, she is finally thwarted and not happy about her son and her niece both being beyond her control now, no matter how ineffectual that control might have been.
- The lively dialogue in the concluding scene speedily covers a broad range of emotions.
- The two elders—Sir Charles Marlow and Hardcastle—at first display annoyance with young Charles Marlow but then relapse into forgiveness and cheer.

Act 5, Scene 1- 3

- Kate Hardcastle, when revealing her true identity, exhibits her characteristic wit by gently teasing Charles with her verbally ironic comment about "a faltering gentleman" and "the loud confident creature."
- Hastings and Constance expressively render their apologies for the elopement plan.
- In the end, sympathy between the characters reigns.
- Tony Lumpkin's refusal of Constance lightly parodies a traditional wedding service, and Goldsmith gives the final cheerful lines of dialogue to Hardcastle: "the mistakes of the night shall be crowned with a merry morning."
- By concluding the play's action before the night is over, Goldsmith honors the final classical unity, which is the unity of time.

She Stoops to Conquer- Act IV

Hastings and Constance enter, bringing news that Charles Marlow (father of our young hero) is expected to visit the house that evening. Since he would surely recognize Hastings and thereby ruin the plan for elopement, the lovers know they must move with speed. Hastings has meanwhile sent the casket with jewels to Marlow for safekeeping. Before she exits, Constance says to herself that she will delude her aunt "with the old pretense of a violent passion for [Tony]" so as to keep her off their trail.

Marlow enters with a servant, confused why Hastings sent him the casket. He asks the servant to bring the casket to Mrs. Hardcastle (whom he still believes is the landlady) for safekeeping (uh oh!) and then speaks to himself about his hopeful passion for the barmaid. Hastings enters and Marlow tells him about the barmaid and his new obsession. Hastings is shocked that Marlow would rob a girl of her virtue, whereas Marlow insists he will "pay" for the virtue. When Hastings inquires after the casket, he's angered to hear Marlow has sent it to the landlady (since that has returned it to the hands of his antagonist Mrs. Hardcastle). However, Hastings cannot reveal the reasons for his displeasure without alerting Marlow to the duplicity being played on him, and so Hastings must decide on his own that he and Constance will leave without the jewels.

Hardcastle enters to find Marlow, whom he welcomes again as son to his old friend. However, Hardcastle (who Marlow still thinks the landlord) wishes Marlow to control Marlow's servants, who are getting drunk and causing a ruckus. When Jeremy, one of the servants, enters drunkenly and makes a fool of himself, Marlow refuses to discipline him but instead mocks Hardcastle's request. Fed up, Hardcastle demands Marlow and his servants leave immediately. Marlow is disgusted with the idea of being put out in the middle of the night, but Hardcastle insists until Marlow asks for his bill. In the confusion over why Marlow is requesting a bill, Marlow suddenly realizes what is going on, but not before Hardcastle exits angrily.

As Marlow is dealing with his mistake, Kate (still disguised as barmaid) passes through, and he confronts her immediately about where they are. Realizing she needs to play the situation right so as not to counteract her well-designed ruse, she answers him that it is Hardcastle's house, and laughs at the prospect that he considered it an inn. What's more, she provides she is not a barmaid but a "poor relation" who relies on the Hardcastles for the charity of shelter. Marlow is shocked to have potentially treated her as a lower class woman, and apologizes for having mistaken her behavior for that of a barmaid. He admits to her that he cannot pursue her since "the difference of our birth... makes an honorable connection impossible" and so he must not endeavor to ruin her. Kate is impressed with the virtue he shows here, and she suggests that they could be wed even if she lacks fortune. He is touched by her "pretty simplicity" but admits "I owe too much to the opinion of the world, too much to the authority of a father," and so he leaves her as an act of courage. When he leaves, she decides to herself that she will maintain the deceit long enough to show her father his true character.

Tony and Constance enter, with the former explaining that his mother believes the missing jewels were due simply to a servant's mistake but that he cannot steal them again. However, he has prepared some horses for their escape, and if he and Constance can fool his mother for a while longer, she and Hastings should be able to escape. As Mrs. Hardcastle enters, they pretend to be caught fondling each other, and she, so happy to see it, promises she will have them married the next day.

A servant brings a letter for Tony, the handwriting of which Constance immediately recognizes as belonging to Hastings, which could ruin them. Tony, who cannot read, tries to sort it out, but before he can give it to his mother to read, Constance grabs it and pretends to read it, making up a nonsense letter on the spot. Her attempts to blow it off don't deter Tony, who gives it to his mother to read. She reads from it that Hastings awaits them in anticipation of the elopement. Though polite, she insists she will not be bested at this game, and decides she will use the horses Tony prepared to bring Constance far away from Hastings and any attempt to run away. She then leaves.

Constance, now depressed, is joined by Hastings, who accuses Tony of betraying them. Before he can suitably defend himself, Marlow enters, angry at having been duped. In short order, everyone turns on Tony. A servant enters to inform Constance that Mrs. Hardcastle awaits her for a quick departure. In the meanwhile, the resentment between everyone grows harsher. With a quick and sad goodbye, Constance exits. Tony suddenly develops a plan, and tells everyone to meet him in two hours at the "bottom of the garden" where he'll prove to all he's more good-natured than they believe.

She Stoops to Conquer

Brief and List of Characters

She Stoops to Conquer

- One of the eighteenth-century's most enduring comedies, *She Stoops to Conquer* takes a comedic, often farcical, look at the behavior and marital expectations of the upper classes in England at this time.
- The play centers around the desire of Hardcastle, a wealthy landowner in the country, for his daughter, Kate Hardcastle, to marry the well-educated Charles Marlow.
- Together with Marlow's father, Sir Charles Marlow, they arrange for the younger Marlow to visit the Hardcastle's house and court Kate.
- Kate is less than impressed when she finds out that, despite his otherwise strong, respectable character, Charles is extremely shy and reserved around ladies. She ;therefore, vows to herself that she could never marry him.
- Before Charles and his friend, George Hastings, can arrive at the house, they are waylaid by Mr. Hardcastle's stepson at the local inn.

She Stoops to Conquer

- A harmful joker, Tony Lumpkin persuades them that the Hardcastle's house is, in fact, the local inn. Thus, when Marlow and Hastings arrive, Marlow treats the Hardcastle family with rudeness and disrespect, falsely believing them to be servants there.
- In order to get to the bottom of his true character, Kate disguises herself as a maid and comedy ensues as Marlow makes love to the "maid" and disregards her father.
- Meanwhile, George Hastings is thrilled to find his true love, Constance Neville, living at the Hardcastle's house.
- Through the scheming of Mrs. Hardcastle, she is due to marry Tony, despite their mutual dislike of each other.
- Finding a way to get out of his marriage, Tony helps Constance to regain her inheritance and gets his mother out of the way.

She Stoops to Conquer

- Finally, as Marlow's father arrives, all is put to right and Charles Marlow is mortified by his behavior.
- Forgiven by all, the two couples find happiness with each other, and Tony successfully gains his rightful inheritance without an unwanted engagement.

She Stoops to Conquer

List of Characters

Major Characters

Kate Hardcastle

- Called "Miss Hardcastle" in the play. The heroine of the play (Protagonist), she is able to balance the "refined simplicity" of country life with the love of life associated with the town. She pretends to be a barmaid in order to judge her suitor Marlow's true character.

Hardcastle

- The patriarch of the Hardcastle family, and owner of the estate where the play is set. He despises the ways of the town, and is dedicated to the simplicity of country life and old-fashioned traditions.

Mrs. Hardcastle

- Matriarch of the Hardcastle family, most notable for her pronounced vanity. She coddles her son Tony, and wants him to marry her niece, Constance Neville.

She Stoops to Conquer

List of Characters

Tony Lumpkin

- Son of Mrs. Hardcastle from an earlier marriage, and known for his free-wheeling ways of drinking and tomfoolery. Loves to play practical jokes. Proves to be good-natured and kind despite his superficial disdain for everyone. His mother wants him to marry Constance but he is set against the idea.

Constance Neville

- Called "Miss Neville" in the play. Niece of Mrs. Hardcastle, an orphan whose only inheritance is a set of jewels in the care of her aunt. Her aunt wishes her to marry Tony Lumpkin, but Constance wants to marry Hastings.

George Hastings

- Friend of Marlow's, and lover of Constance Neville. A decent fellow who is willing to marry Constance even without her money.

She Stoops to Conquer

List of Characters

Charles Marlow

- Apparently the hero of a play. A respectable fellow who comes to Hardcastle's home to meet Kate Hardcastle. Possessed of a strange contradictory character, wherein he is mortified to speak to any "modest" woman, but is lively and excitable in conversation with barmaids or other low-class women.

Sir Charles Marlow

- The father of Young Marlow and friend of Hardcastle. A respectable and aristocratic fellow from the town who believes his son is of very modest character.

She Stoops to Conquer

List of Characters

Minor Characters

Diggory

- Hardcastle's head servant.

Maid

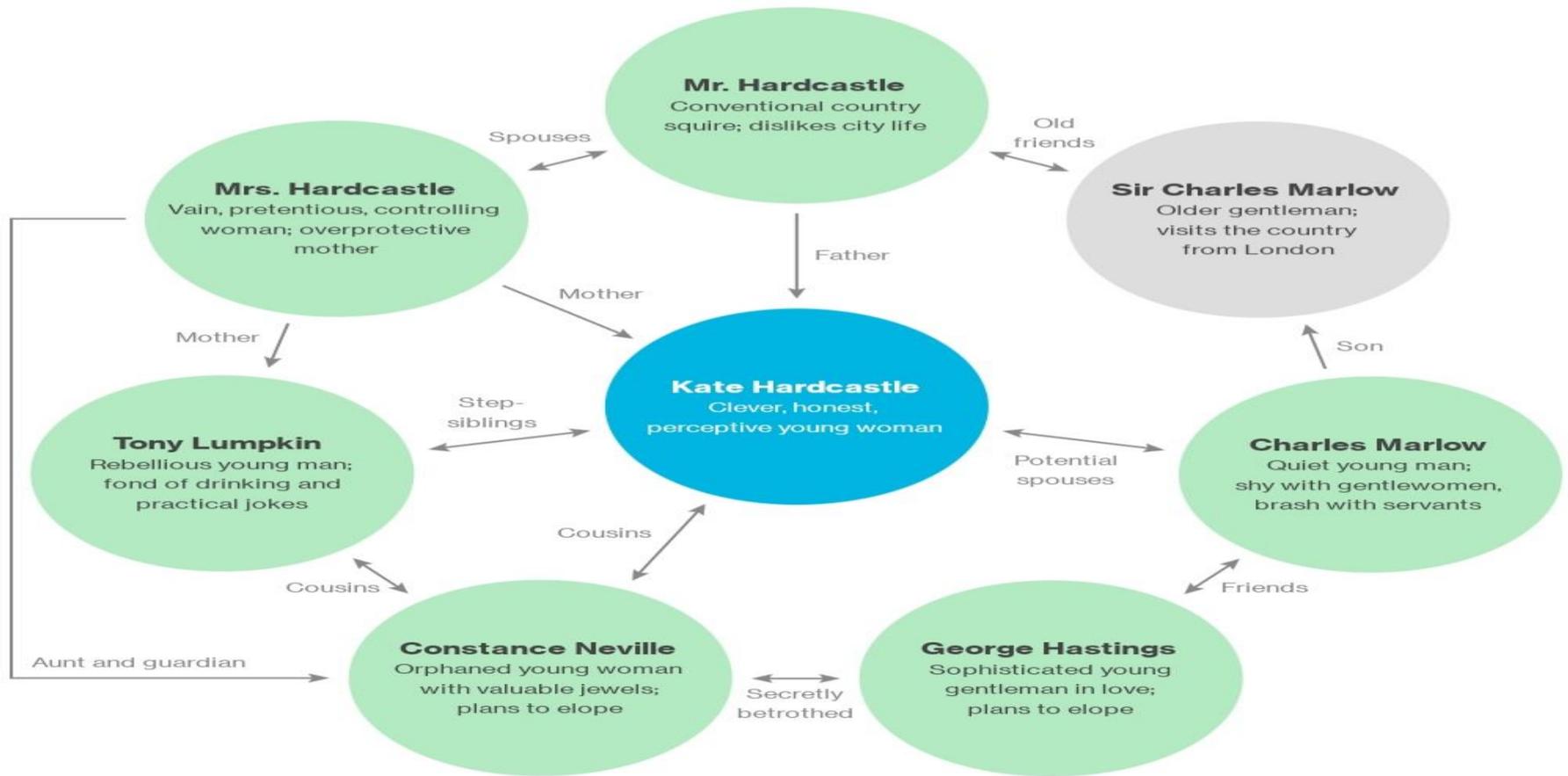
- Kate's servant. The woman who tells her that Marlow believed Kate to be a barmaid, which leads Kate towards her plan to stoop and conquer.

Landlord

- Landlord of the Three Pigeons, who welcomes Marlow and Hastings, and helps Tony to play his trick on them.

Jeremy

- Marlow's drunken servant. His drunken impertinence offends Hardcastle, which leads Hardcastle to order Marlow to leave.



- Main Character
- Other Major Character
- Minor Character

She Stoops to Conquer

Plot Summary

She Stoops to Conquer- Plot Summary

Prologue

- **Prologue**, a **preface** or introduction to a **literary** work. In a dramatic work, the term describes a speech, often in verse, addressed to the audience by one or more of the actors at the opening of a play.
- The speaker laments that the Comic Muse is gravely ill. Spectators in the audience should imagine the play they will watch is a medicine prescribed by a doctor to revive comedy. The audience, then, will judge whether the play is an effective cure.
- The Prologue depends on a single extended metaphor. The Muse of Comedy, asserts the speaker, is gravely ill and urgently requires medical attention. Fortunately, a doctor is at hand who has prescribed a cure: five "draughts" of a potion. The audience must agree to try this cure. If it fails, the doctor will be paid no fee, and spectators are at liberty to pronounce him a quack.

She Stoops to Conquer- Plot Summary

Act 1

- At their old-fashioned house in the country, the Hardcastles, a couple in their late 50s, discuss country life and city life.
- Mrs. Hardcastle complains of "the rust" of routine in the country, while Mr. Hardcastle dismisses London's "follies" and "fopperies."
- Their talk turns to Tony Lumpkin, Mrs. Hardcastle's son by a former marriage. Mr. Hardcastle evidently considers Tony something of a wastrel.
- When the young man enters, he refuses his mother's request to refrain from going to the "Three Pigeons", the local inn, or tavern, where his friends expect him.
- In a conversation with his daughter, Kate Hardcastle, Mr. Hardcastle reveals he has invited Charles Marlow, the son of an old friend, to visit that very day as a potential husband for her.

She Stoops to Conquer- Plot Summary

- Kate assents, although she expresses some reservations to her cousin, Constance Neville.
- Constance's aunt and guardian, Mrs. Hardcastle, is eager for Constance to marry Tony Lumpkin as a means of keeping Constance's inheritance within the family.
- At the Three Pigeons inn, Tony Lumpkin entertains his comrades with a rollicking drinking song.
- The landlord announces the arrival of two young visitors who seem to be from London.
- When the travelers confess they are lost, Tony plays a practical joke, giving them complex directions to the Hardcastles' house but leading them to believe the private residence is really an inn.

She Stoops to Conquer- Plot Summary

Act 2

- At the Hardcastles' house, Mr. Hardcastle is training his rather awkward servants to display good manners when visitors arrive, for the family is not used to entertaining guests.
- After some fun with the staff, Hardcastle hospitably receives the young travelers, Charles Marlow and George Hastings.
- The two visitors are under the impression Mr. Hardcastle is an innkeeper—a misunderstanding that gives occasion for some lightly comic asides.
- Constance Neville, who is Hastings's sweetheart, enters and quickly realizes her cousin, Tony Lumpkin, has played another of his practical jokes. But she and Hastings decide not to clear up the matter with Marlow and thus continue pretending the house is an inn.
- The young man's first encounter with Kate Hardcastle develops awkwardly, with Marlow suffering acutely from bashfulness.

She Stoops to Conquer- Plot Summary

- He is shy and reserved with young ladies of high social status and far more at ease with young women from humbler backgrounds, like barmaids.
- This personality trait gives Kate the idea of impersonating the "inn's" barmaid because she finds Marlow appealing and because he has already mistaken her for that role.
- She will, as the title suggests, "stoop," socially, "to conquer."
- Toward the end of the act, Mrs. Hardcastle indulges her fascination with London and fashionable ways by discussing the city and the latest style trends with Hastings.
- Unknown to her, Hastings plans to escape with Constance and to enlist Tony Lumpkin for the success of this project.

She Stoops to Conquer- Plot Summary

Act 3

- Hardcastle and Kate discuss their contrasting reactions to young Marlow. Kate's father finds the young man unaccountably impudent, but Kate reassures him she believes Marlow to be typical.
- Tony rushes in to exclaim he has succeeded in stealing the jewel casket that contains Constance's inheritance.
- The jewels should be a welcome resource for Constance and George Hastings in their escape plan.
- Constance, in fact, has been pestering her aunt to give them to her, but Mrs. Hardcastle has refused, hoping to make a match between Constance and Tony and thus keep the jewels in the family.
- Now Mrs. Hardcastle is distraught upon discovering her desk has been broken into and the jewels taken.
- As Kate Hardcastle proceeds with her plan to disguise as a barmaid, Marlow is enchanted with her, flirts openly, and attempts to embrace her.

She Stoops to Conquer- Plot Summary

- Kate's father witnesses this attempt and reproaches his daughter.
- He is ready to ask the visitors to leave because of Marlow's impudence, but Kate says she will prove the young man's worth if her father will grant her one hour to do so.

She Stoops to Conquer- Plot Summary

Act 4

- George Hastings and Constance Neville discuss the whereabouts of the jewel casket just before their escape.
- The casket, it turns out, has taken a circuitous route.
- After Tony gave it to him, George consigned it to Charles Marlow for safekeeping. Charles then gave it to the "landlady," Mrs. Hardcastle. So the jewels are back where they started.
- Hastings prepares himself to escape without Constance's fortune.
- Marlow waxes eloquent on the looks and appeal of the "barmaid." But then Kate's father enters in an angry frame of mind.
- What he regards as the insolence of his guests has exhausted his patience. He demands that Marlow leave the house.
- Marlow, almost as intemperate, demands Hardcastle give him the bill.

She Stoops to Conquer- Plot Summary

- Kate, determined to deceive Marlow as long as she can, pretends she is a "poor relation" of the family. But the truth about the Hardcastle residence is soon unveiled, and Marlow is mortified with embarrassment.
- Meanwhile, Mrs. Hardcastle reads a letter from Hastings to Tony regarding the planned escape.
- Furious, she rants she will convey Constance to Aunt Pedigree for safekeeping.
- Aunt Pedigree's name is suggestive of her role: she is meant to protect the family pedigree from marriages that do not get family approval.
- Hastings and Marlow both express their irritation and frustration to Tony, who promises at the end of the act that he will save the day.

She Stoops to Conquer- Plot Summary

Act 5

- Hastings checks from a servant at Mr. Hardcastle's house that Mrs. Hardcastle has ridden off with Constance Neville.
- Sir Charles Marlow, young Charles Marlow's father, has arrived at the house.
- He now enters with Hardcastle, both of them expressing amusement at the misidentification of Hardcastle as an innkeeper.
- Young Marlow enters to apologize. Hardcastle blames him on his forward approach to Kate.
- Kate arrives and is questioned by both her father and Sir Charles.
- When asked about Marlow's feelings, she answers that young Charles did, indeed, profess affection for her—after he has denied such sentiments.
- Kate invites both fathers to conceal themselves behind a screen to witness the truth of her statements.

She Stoops to Conquer- Plot Summary

- The scene changes to the Hardcastles' garden where Hastings meets Tony Lumpkin, who asserts he has led Mrs. Hardcastle and Constance around in a circle rather than to Aunt Pedigree's house.
- Expressing his gratitude, Hastings exits.
- Mrs. Hardcastle enters, frightened by the confusing journey in the darkness.
- Repeatedly encouraging her not to be afraid, Tony leads his mother to believe they are far from home and may encounter a "highwayman." He urges her to conceal herself.
- Mr. Hardcastle enters. His appearance adds to Mrs. Hardcastle's consternation. Hastings and Constance then enter, furthering the confusion. Constance tells Hastings she has decided not to escape but to seek Hardcastle's consent for their marriage.

She Stoops to Conquer- Plot Summary

- Back inside, Sir Charles and Mr. Hardcastle, from their vantage point behind the screen, witness the encounter between Kate and young Charles.
- Kate reveals she is Mr. Hardcastle's daughter.
- Tony Lumpkin formally renounces romantic interest in Constance, and the play ends with the prospects of marriage: Constance to Hastings and Kate to young Marlow.

She Stoops to Conquer- Plot Summary

Epilogues 1 and 2

- An **epilogue** is a piece of writing at the end of a work of literature, usually used to bring closure to the work. It is presented from the perspective of within the story.
- In Epilogue 1, delivered by the performer playing Kate Hardcastle, Goldsmith summarizes the progress of the plot, emphasizing how Kate "stooped to conquer."
- In Epilogue 2, delivered by the character of Tony Lumpkin, the speaker boasts of his carefree spirit and independence.

She Stoops to Conquer- Plot Summary

Introduction

1. Hardcastle tells Kate he has found her a suitable husband.

Rising Action

2. Tony's prank makes the men think Hardcastles' home is an inn.

3. Hastings and Constance plan to escape, with her jewels.

4. Shy with ladies, Marlow falls for Kate playing a barmaid.

5. Hardcastle grows furious at the guests' impudence.

6. Marlow learns the residence is not an inn.

7. Kate asks for time to prove Marlow's good character.

8. To help Constance and Hastings, Tony tricks his mother.

Climax

9. The fathers secretly observe Kate's successful plan.

Falling Action

10. Constance decides to abandon plans to escape.

11. Tony learns he can claim his inheritance and independence.

Resolution

12. Wedding plans for the two couples are discussed.

She Stoops to Conquer Plot Diagram



She Stoops to Conquer

Prologue & Epilogues

She Stoops to Conquer- Prologue & Epilogues

Prologue

Summary

- The Prologue depends on a single extended metaphor. The Muse of Comedy, asserts the speaker, is gravely ill and urgently requires medical attention. Fortunately, a doctor is at hand who has prescribed a cure: five "draughts" of a potion. The audience must agree to try this cure. If it fails, the doctor will be paid no fee, and spectators are at liberty to pronounce him a fraud.

She Stoops to Conquer- Prologue & Epilogues

Analysis

- The doctor to whom the speaker refers is the playwright Oliver Goldsmith (1728–1774), whose medical studies as a young man in Edinburgh allowed him to be called "doctor" even though he did not practice medicine.
- The "five draughts" of the potion the doctor prescribes for the Comic Muse's recovery are the five acts of the play.
- The atmosphere of grave illness is enhanced by the realistic hints of mourning and sorrow: for example, the speaker's black costume and the handkerchief held to his eyes to wipe away tears of grief.
- Consisting of 46 lines in rhyming couplets, the Prologue was written by the actor and theater manager David Garrick (1717–1779).
- By the time Goldsmith's play was first performed (1773), Garrick, a friend of both Goldsmith and Samuel Johnson, had been the manager of the Drury Lane Theater in London for more than 25 years.

She Stoops to Conquer- Prologue & Epilogues

- The extended metaphor that dominates the Prologue reflects an 18th-century debate on two types of comic play: "sentimental comedy" and "laughing comedy."
- Sentimental comedy, the word sentiment or a form of it appears three times in the Prologue, arose in the late 1600s as a reaction to the scandalous morals and situations of some Restoration comedies, such as William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675).
- Sentimental comedy was designed to elicit tears rather than laughter.
- It featured middle-class protagonists involved in exaggerated emotional situations.
- Leading examples include *Love's Last Shaft* (1696) by Colley Cibber (1671–1757) and *The Constant Couple* (1699) by George Farquhar (1678–1707).
- Perhaps the most popular sentimental comedy of the era was *The Conscious Lovers* (1722) by the essayist Sir Richard Steele (1672–1739).

She Stoops to Conquer- Prologue & Epilogues

- The trend of sentimental comedy was challenged, in turn, by traditionalists who believed the goal of comedy was to entertain by making the audience laugh.
- Both Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751–1816) were firmly in this camp, and so, it would seem, was David Garrick.
- Goldsmith himself deals with the issue in his brief essay "A Comparison Between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy" (1773).
- Goldsmith, like Garrick, fears humor is "departing from the stage" and warns "it is not easy to recover an art when once lost."
- Classical dramatists believed drama served the social function of catharsis, which is an emotional or spiritual release that transpires while experiencing or responding to a work of art.

She Stoops to Conquer- Prologue & Epilogues

- Audiences who were under tremendous daily pressures could attend a play, have their emotions artificially heightened to a breaking point, and then experience a release that carried over into their daily lives. Thus, drama served to cure some of society's ills.
- In sentimental comedy, Goldsmith finds characters to be too pure, too good, and too sympathetic to truly move an audience.
- Instead, he wishes the audience to see characters more like themselves, full up with vices and follies, so they may learn how to amend them.

She Stoops to Conquer- Prologue & Epilogues

Epilogues

Summary

- The performer playing Kate Hardcastle speaks the rhymed couplets in Epilogue 1.
- The first line alludes to the play's title and then refers to Jaques's monologue in William Shakespeare's play *As You Like It* (1603): "Our life is all a play, composed to please." Then the speaker comments humorously on each phase of the action, act by act.
- In Epilogue 2 the speaker uses couplets in the persona of Tony Lumpkin. Even though he is originally from the countryside, he boasts that he will indulge himself with pleasant diversions in London, showing he is every bit as genteel as the city folk.

She Stoops to Conquer- Prologue & Epilogues

Analysis

- Just as the Prologue hinges on a single extended metaphor—the grave illness of the Comic Muse—Epilogue 1 is shaped by the persona of Kate as barmaid.
- Goldsmith emphasizes the social aspects of "stooping to conquer." The elegant allusion to Shakespeare's pastoral comedy "As You Like it"
- It echoes the metaphor of life as a stage performance: "We have our exits and our entrances" (Jaques's monologue in Act 2, Scene 7 begins with the line, "All the world's a stage").
- Midway through Epilogue 1, the speaker refers to Nancy Dawson, the stage name for a London actress and dancer whose theatrical career unfolded in the 1750s and 1760s.

She Stoops to Conquer- Prologue & Epilogues

- Epilogue 2 echoes the theme of country versus city, along with the sprightly temperament of Tony Lumpkin.
- The second epilogue was apparently written by a friend of Goldsmith's named J. Cradock to be spoken by Tony.
- Epilogue 2 was initially rejected by George Colman (1762–1836), who was the manager of the first theater to produce the play, but appeared in the printed version of the play as having arrived "too late."

She Stoops to Conquer

Most Important Quotes

Quotes

1.

- *“Pray, would you know the reason why I'm crying? / The Comic Muse, long sick, is now a-dying!”*
- Narrator, **Prologue**
- This rhymed couplet, written by the actor and theater manager David Garrick, forms part of the Prologue to the play. The "illness" of true comedy is an extended metaphor. It refers to the eclipse of "laughing comedy" in the 1700s in favor of "sentimental comedy." In a brief essay, Goldsmith compares and contrasts the two types of play.

Quotes

2.

- *"Is there a creature in the whole country but ourselves, that does not take a trip to town now and then, to rub off the rust a little?"*
- Mrs. Hardcastle, Act 1, Scene 1
- Mrs. Hardcastle's rhetorical question wittily introduces the theme of city versus country at the start of the play. The metaphor in the phrase "rub off the rust" is both elegant and precise. Mrs. Hardcastle's figurative language does not hide her impatience with the tedious routine of country life and its lack of social activity.

Quotes

3.

- *"No, no, the alehouse and the stable are the only schools he'll ever go to."*
- Mr. Hardcastle, Act 1, Scene 1
- Mr. Hardcastle refers to his stepson, Tony Lumpkin, of whose behavior he disapproves. Tony, in his stepfather's view, is a wastrel and a drunkard. His mother defends him excessively, but Goldsmith, too, seems to take a sympathetic view of Tony, characterizing him as a humorous free spirit.

Quotes

4.

- *"As for disappointing them, I should not so much mind; but I can't abide to disappoint myself."*
- Tony Lumpkin, Act 1, Scene 1
- The context here is Tony Lumpkin's rebellious refusal to heed his mother's command to refrain from going to the alehouse. He phrases his refusal with typical ingenuity and wit.

Quotes

5.

- *"A reserved lover, it is said, always makes a suspicious husband."*
- Kate Hardcastle, Act 1, Scene 1
- Kate's comment illustrates an important feature of Goldsmith's style: concise, epigrammatic phrasing. The comment also reflects Kate's judgment and perception.

Quotes

6.

- *"The daughter, a tall, trapesing, trolloping, talkative maypole, the son, a pretty, well-bred, agreeable youth, that everybody is fond of."*
- Tony Lumpkin, Act 1, Scene 2
- This passage is typical of the exaggerated, figurative language Goldsmith gives to Tony Lumpkin. No other character in the play exhibits such a rich vocabulary.

Quotes

7.

- *"You must not be so talkative, Diggory ... You must hear us talk, and not think of talking; you must see us drink, and not think of drinking; you must see us eat, and not think of eating.*
- Mr. Hardcastle, Act 2
- Mr. Hardcastle's strict command to Diggory, one of his house servants, captures the snobbish double standard and class prejudice Goldsmith satirizes throughout the play. Hardcastle is by no means a cruel taskmaster, but he does hold—and exhibit—the class-conscious values of the era.

Quotes

8.

- *"An impudent fellow may counterfeit modesty, but I'll be hanged if a modest man can ever counterfeit impudence."*
- Charles Marlow, Act 2
- In this antithetical general statement, Marlow highlights two of the play's key social concepts. *Impudence* implies shamelessness, while *modesty* connotes good behavior. Kate's goal is to prove to her father that Charles's behavior is ruled by modesty rather than impudence.

Quotes

9.

- *"His uncle a colonel! We shall soon hear of his mother being a justice of the peace!"*
- George Hastings, Act 2
- Hastings's sarcastic aside expresses his opinion of Hardcastle, whom he takes to be an innkeeper. The comment displays social snobbery and class discrimination, both of which characterize Hastings's attitudes.

Quotes

10.

- *"You'd adore him if you knew how heartily he despises me."*
- Constance Neville, Act 2
- Here Constance reassures George Hastings that there is no substance to the idea that Tony Lumpkin, her cousin, has any emotional claim on her. The phrasing is typical of Goldsmith's concise, pointed prose style.

Quotes

11.

- *"Pray, Mr. Hastings, what do you take to be the most fashionable age about town?"*
- Mrs. Hardcastle, Act 2
- Mrs. Hardcastle's inexperienced and somewhat foolish question seems intended to reveal a superficial and vain side of her personality. So much in love with London, she worries about how old people must be in order to be stylish there.

Quotes

12.

- *"Ask me no questions, and I'll tell you no fibs."*
- Tony Lumpkin, Act 3
- Tony Lumpkin's clever response to George Hastings about how Tony rifled his mother's bureau to gain possession of the jewel casket has a proverbial ring.

Quotes

13.

- *"You must learn resignation, my dear; for though we lose our fortune, yet we should not lose our patience."*
- Mrs. Hardcastle, Act 3
- Mrs. Hardcastle's admonition to Constance displays the rhetorical figure of *zeugma*, the use of two contrasting direct objects (*fortune* and *patience*) with the same verb (*lose*). In context, the speech is dramatically ironic because very soon afterward, Mrs. Hardcastle becomes totally unnerved when she finds her bureau has been broken into and the jewel casket stolen. Constance dryly anticipates the irony when she responds to her aunt, "People are generally calm at the misfortunes of others."

Quotes

14.

- *"O! sir, I must not tell my age. They say women and music should never be dated."*
- Kate Hardcastle, Act 3
- Kate, "disguised" as a barmaid, demurely resists Charles Marlow's flirtation. Her remark offers a good illustration of Goldsmith's elegant style.

Quotes

15.

- *"Ah, it's a highwayman with pistols as long as my arm. A damned ill-looking fellow."*
- Tony Lumpkin, Act 5, Scene 2
- Tony Lumpkin's climactic prank in the play is to trick his mother into believing she is threatened by a highwayman while they are supposedly on the way to Aunt Pedigree's house with Constance Neville. Actually, they are very near their own house, and the shape in the dark is Mr. Hardcastle, on one of his night walks.

She Stoops to Conquer

Themes & Symbols

Themes & Symbols

Themes

Country versus City

- The dialogue between Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle in the first scene establishes the theme of country versus city.
- Mr. Hardcastle regards the city as a center of folly and foppery, while Mrs. Hardcastle finds the city an intriguing center of style and fashion.
- From her statements, an audience can infer Mrs. Hardcastle is bored.
- She reveals her dissatisfaction in their social life by singling out the "allegorical names" of Mrs. Oddfish, the curate's wife, and Cripplegate, the dancing-master, as the Hardcastles' most frequent visitors.

Themes & Symbols

- In fact, this lack of entertainment is soon confirmed by Hardcastle's drilling of the servants before Charles Marlow's visit—a training session made necessary because the Hardcastles entertain visitors so infrequently.
- For Mr. Hardcastle, London is a center of "follies" and "fopperies."
- He professes to be fond of everything "old," including his wife.
- Traditional and conservative, he disapproves of his stepson Tony Lumpkin's unconventional lifestyle, and his irritation gradually but unmistakably mounts at his young city visitors' "impudent" behavior.

Themes & Symbols

- Perhaps the clearest, as well as the most humorous, display of the "country versus city" theme occurs in Act 2, when Mrs. Hardcastle questions George Hastings on the manners and current fashions in London.
- Mrs. Hardcastle is plainly fascinated by the great city: "There's nothing in the world I love to talk of as much as London and the fashions, though I was never there myself," she avows.
- Hastings, the suave visitor from the capital, flatters Mrs. Hardcastle amiably, saying he had assumed she was thoroughly acquainted with the ways of the town.
- Mrs. Hardcastle demurs: "We country persons can have no manner at all."
- She goes on to discuss hair styles in some detail, casually referring to her husband as "a piece of antiquity by my side."

Themes & Symbols

- Oliver Goldsmith's theme of country versus city may be situated within a context that stretches back, theatrically and socially, for more than century.
- The theme was one of the mainsprings, for example, for William Wycherley's rollicking Restoration comedy, *The Country Wife* (1675).
- Three years before the debut of *She Stoops to conquer*, Goldsmith himself had published a lengthy poem of social commentary, *The Deserted Village*, in which he lamented the decline of village life and traditional country ways.

Themes & Symbols

Social Class and Snobbery

- The social stratification of English life is a key theme in *She Stoops to Conquer*.
- The play's title implies social distinctions—Kate Hardcastle "conquers," in the courtship game, by "stooping" when she pretends to be a humble barmaid to secure Charles Marlow's affections.
- Numerous scenes in the play highlight the theme of social stratification.
- At the beginning of Act 2, for example, Hardcastle coaches his servants in social refinements, cautioning them not to assume they are part of the visiting company, who are their "betters."

Themes & Symbols

- Hastings and Marlow display considerable snobbery when they discuss what they think are the "innkeeper" Hardcastle's pretensions.
- Kate courts Marlow by leading him to believe she is a humble barmaid because he seems to have a preference for young women of lower social class.
- Mrs. Hardcastle is virtually obsessed by fashion and style, as she reveals in her conversation with Hastings.
- Before Kate finally reveals she is Hardcastle's daughter, Marlow dismisses the possibility of a match since he is still under the impression that Kate is a "poor relation," as she tells him in Act 4.

Themes & Symbols

- Indeed, a present-day audience might have some difficulty accepting Marlow's "positive" qualities, for his inherent snobbishness and attitude toward those he considers his inferiors, like Hardcastle as "innkeeper", may emphasize Hardcastle's original opinion and diminish Kate's.

Themes & Symbols

Generational Conflict

- The clash between generations underlies much of Goldsmith's plot.
- The most graphic illustration of this theme is the character of Tony Lumpkin, Mrs. Hardcastle's son from her previous marriage.
- Tony is rebellious from his first entrance in the play, when he refuses to conform to his mother's wish that he refrain from going to the Three Pigeons, the local alehouse.
- Hardcastle, Tony's stepfather, states his disapproval of the young man's behavior.

Themes & Symbols

- In Act 1, Scene 2 Tony is depicted as a barfly who leads his companion in a tuneful paean to the joys of drinking.
- Later in the scene, he becomes a prankster, misleading the young London visitors, George Hastings and Charles Marlow, about local geography, as well as deceiving them into thinking the Hardcastle residence is an inn.
- He does so, at least in part, to be "revenged on the old grumbletonian," as he refers to Hardcastle.
- Furthermore, Tony continually resists his mother's attempts to make a romantic match between him and Constance Neville, whose jewels Mrs. Hardcastle would like to keep in the family.

Themes & Symbols

- Tony is not the only young person in rebellion. Constance, too, has been avoiding her aunt's attempts at matchmaking, though she chooses to do so in a subtler way.
- In fact, a major plot strand involves the romance between George Hastings and Constance Neville, which they are determined to pursue by eloping—with Tony's help.
- Admittedly, they give up this plan in the end, but for much of the play they plan to avoid Mrs. Hardcastle's guardianship, gain possession of the jewels that comprise Constance's inheritance, and escape the control of their elders.
- The couple's rebellious outlook is concisely captured in the letter to Tony, in which George refers to Mrs. Hardcastle as "the hag" (Act 4).

Themes & Symbols

- However, the conflict between generations is not only one of young people rebelling against their elders but also of older people deceiving their children.
- In an attempt to control her son, Mrs. Hardcastle, together with her husband, has kept his true age a secret.
- At the end of the play, Tony is delighted to learn he is of legal age and can live independently on his income. Of course, how he chooses to live is another matter entirely.
- The notable exception to this pattern is the warm and trusting relationship between Kate Hardcastle and her father.
- Yet, even here, there are some pressure points, as signaled by the dialogue at the beginning of Act 3, when Kate and her father express strongly contrasting opinions of Charles Marlow.

Themes & Symbols

Mistaken Identity

- The theme of mistaken identity is established when Tony Lumpkin decides in Act 1, Scene 2 to play a practical joke on the travelers from London, Charles Marlow and George Hastings.
- Tony unloads a complicated, and amusing, set of directions on the visitors, telling them the Hardcastle home is really an inn.
- Marlow holds this mistaken assumption throughout most of the play.
- An important corollary of this theme is Kate Hardcastle's disguised identity.
- In Act 2 Charles Marlow is so bashful he never looks at Kate's face.

Themes & Symbols

- This quirk sets up the opportunity for Kate to pretend to be a barmaid, and then a "poor relation" of the family, to secure Marlow's affection. Thus, she "stoops" in social rank in order "to conquer."
- Another offshoot of Tony Lumpkin's practical joke is the social positioning of Hardcastle as a humble innkeeper instead of a well-to-do country squire.
- Much of the play's humor and social satire depends on this aspect of mistaken identity.
- Finally, the theme reaches an amusing climax in Tony's outlandish prank in Act 5.
- Pretending to escort his mother and Constance to the house of Aunt Pedigree by night, Tony actually leads them around in a circle so that they become confused and disoriented.

Themes & Symbols

- Completely befuddled, Mrs. Hardcastle is ready to believe she is about to be assaulted by a highwayman (who is, in fact, her own husband out on one of his nighttime walks).

Themes & Symbols

Wit

- From the Restoration-era plays of William Wycherley (1641–1716), John Dryden (1631–1700), John Vanbrugh (1664–1726), and George Farquhar (1677–1707) onward, wit was a leading theme on the English comic stage.
- Etymologically derived from the ancient Greek verb *oida*, meaning "I know," wit was a predominantly intellectual concept, referring to intelligence, cleverness, and facility of understanding.
- This springboard was the rationale for wit's connection to humor and laughter.
- Wit is often produced by the arrangement of words in a pithy phrase or the clever use of antithesis, a rhetorical device that shapes a pointed contrast.

Themes & Symbols

- Young Marlow offers an example in Act 2: "An impudent fellow may counterfeit modesty, but I'll be hanged if a modest man can ever counterfeit impudence."

Themes & Symbols

Symbols

London

- The symbolism of London is ambiguous in the play.
- For Mr. Hardcastle the capital symbolizes pretentiousness.
- For his wife, however, London symbolizes fashion and excitement.
- As visitors to the countryside, Londoners George Hastings and Charles Marlow are portrayed as sophisticated and worldly.
- They are ready, for example, to dismiss Hardcastle as a country bumpkin of low social status when they misidentify him as an innkeeper.

Themes & Symbols

- Yet Goldsmith rejects such attitudes as shallow.
- Although an important theme of the play is the conflict between town and country, the idea that the countryside is deprived and backward is nowhere endorsed in *She Stoops to Conquer*.
- In fact, Goldsmith might be expected to affirm the opposite.
- His ideas about the country appear in his affectionate and nostalgic portrait of the countryside in his poem *The Deserted Village* (1770), in which he laments the decline of England's rural population and the disappearance of the country folks' humble ways.

Themes & Symbols

Jewels Casket

- Constance Neville's inherited casket of jewels receives much attention.
- She and George Hastings count on the jewelry as a means for independence when they plan their elopement.
- Mrs. Hardcastle, however, is determined to keep the wealth in the family by betrothing Constance to Tony Lumpkin.
- Thus, the jewel casket assumes a symbolic importance as a ticket to marital free choice and social status.
- The most significant development, though, is that the jewel casket, though temporarily filched by Tony Lumpkin from his mother's bureau, makes its way back to its original custodian: Mrs. Hardcastle.

Themes & Symbols

- Both George Hastings and Constance are ultimately willing to forgo the casket's importance.
- Compared to the jewels, the young couple's love for each other is more important.

Themes & Symbols

Tony Lumpkin

- A completely free spirit, Tony Lumpkin may be considered as a symbol of the force of comedy.
- Determined to be independent and freewheeling, he is rebellious from the play's beginning, firmly rejecting his mother's order not to go out to the Three Pigeons alehouse.
- Goldsmith gives Tony by far the major share of imaginative, figurative language in the play.
- In terms of plot, it is Tony who sets up the key framework of mistaken identity by playing a practical joke on the travelers, Hastings and Marlow.
- It is also Tony who "saves the day" by pretending to escort his mother and Constance to Aunt Pedigree, but in reality driving them around in circles only to arrive at home once again.

Themes & Symbols

- Importantly, through the figure of Lumpkin, many of the other characters' flaws are revealed.
- Tony shows how Mrs. Hardcastle tries and fails to control the lives of others while she is utterly undone by what she believes is a ride through the countryside.
- He immediately identifies Marlow and Hastings's latent snobbery.
- And while Tony believes he understands Hastings's greed, he inadvertently shows the man to be better than he thought when Hastings ultimately refuses the jewels and agrees to marry Constance on her own merits.
- It may seem possible to imagine that in a staged performance of the play, Tony Lumpkin would be the most amusing role for an actor.
- Tony does more than any other character to revitalize the gravely ill "Comic Muse" in the play's Prologue.

She Stoops to Conquer

By Oliver Goldsmith

She Stoops to Conquer

- She Stoops to Conquer is a comedy written by Oliver Goldsmith.
- It is first performed in London in 1773, and was a massive success.
- The play is a favorite for study by English literature and theatre classes in the English-speaking world.
- It is one of the few plays from the 18th century to have retained its appeal and is regularly performed.
- The play has been adapted into a film several times.
- Initially the play was titled "Mistakes of a Night" and the events within the play take place in one long night.
- She Stoops to Conquer, uses satire to explore divisions between city and countryside, men and women, and rich and poor.
- The play consists of five ACTS as well as a prologue and epilogues.

Oliver Goldsmith

- **Oliver Goldsmith** (10 November 1728 – 4 April 1774) was an Anglo-Irish novelist, playwright and poet.
- Oliver Goldsmith, one of the most popular 18th century English writers, lived a fascinating life of contradictions, between his unquestionable brilliance and self-destructive tendencies.
- He was one of seven children, and his father was a county vicar.
- In his early days, he was frequently bullied because of facial disfigurement caused by smallpox.
- He was always noted for his intelligence, and earned a Bachelor of Arts at Trinity College, Dublin in 1750.
- Despite a strong acumen for literary work, Goldsmith was unable to settle on a career for a long time, flitting between the church, law, and education.

Oliver Goldsmith

- In 1752, he began to study medicine in Edinburgh. Though there is no evidence that he ever completed his course of study, he did later practice medicine, and in fact referred to himself as Dr. Goldsmith throughout his career.
- Goldsmith traveled for many years, until settling in London in 1756. It was here that he finally turned to literature, and his career took off.
- Dr. Samuel Johnson, one of England's most famous men of letters, became a great admirer of Goldsmith's work. He invited Goldsmith to join his exclusive Turk's Head Club, and through Johnson's patronage, Goldsmith began to publish his first master works, including the novel "The Vicar of Wakefield". This novel, along with his masterful comic play "She Stoops to Conquer", found great success, and remain his best-loved works.
- Goldsmith died suddenly on April 4, 1774, after suffering from a kidney disease that he refused to treat properly.