

Comedy

A Comedy is a fictional work which aims to amuse the audience; the characters and their discomfiture engage our pleasurable attention rather than our profound concern. We are made to feel confident that no great disaster will occur and usually the action turns out to be happily for the chief characters.

The Comedy of Manners

The Comedy of Manners is a genre of dramatic comedy that aims at satirising contemporary manners and affectations of a society.

Origins and Development

Meander(342-292 bc) is considered the forerunner of the Comedy of Manners.

Roman dramatists Plautus and Terence developed the genre in the third and second centuries BC.

One of the greatest exponent of the Comedy of Manners was Moliere who satirised the follies of 17th century French society.

In England, the Comedy of Manners arguably reached its fullest potential in the Restoration Period.

Characteristics of the Comedy of Manners

The subject of satire is generally upper class and middle class people.

Marriage, love, adultery, fortune hunting, lust greed, gossip and rumours are the staple elements in the comedy of manners.

Witty dialogues is the hallmark of the comedy of manners.

The plays are largely peopled by stock characters such as hypocrites, romantic lovers, interfering parents etc.

Examples

Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* can be considered one of the first comedy of manners in English.

The chief practitioners of comedy of manners in the 17th and 18th century were William Wycherley, George Etherege, William Congreve, Richard Sheridan, and Oliver Goldsmith.