

every man in his humour summary sparknotes

Every Man in His Humour Summary SparkNotes: A Comprehensive Guide

Are you facing a mountain of Shakespearean text, desperately searching for a concise and insightful summary of Every Man in His Humour? Look no further! This comprehensive guide provides a detailed SparkNotes-style summary, exploring the play's key characters, plot points, and themes. We'll delve into the hilarious world of Jonson's comedy, making understanding this Elizabethan masterpiece both easy and enjoyable. Forget wrestling with archaic language – let's unlock the wit and wisdom of Every Man in His Humour together.

I. Setting the Stage: A Brief Overview of the Play

Every Man in His Humour, written by Ben Jonson in 1598, is a comedy of humours. Jonson's "humour" refers to a dominant personality trait or obsession that governs a character's actions. This isn't simply eccentricity; these humours drive the plot and create comedic conflict. The play is set primarily in London, amongst a vibrant cast of characters representing various social classes and personality types. Unlike some Shakespearean comedies with fantastical elements, Every Man in His Humour grounds its humour in relatable human flaws and social interactions. This makes it accessible even to modern audiences unfamiliar with 16th-century English society.

II. Key Characters and Their Defining Humours

Understanding the characters' "humours" is crucial to grasping the play's essence. Let's meet some of the key players:

Edward Knowell: A young man, somewhat naive and easily influenced, prone to youthful folly and impulsive actions. His "humour" could be described as a susceptibility to the whims of his friends.

Kitely: A jealous husband, consumed by suspicion and prone to misinterpreting innocent situations. His humour is his intense, unfounded jealousy. He serves as a comedic foil, constantly creating problems through his own insecurities.

Bobadill: A braggart soldier, full of boasts and empty promises. His "humour" is an inflated sense of self-importance and a penchant for deception. He is a master of creating elaborate, yet entirely false, narratives.

Matthew: Kitley's brother-in-law, a parasite who constantly seeks to exploit others for his own gain. His humour is his parasitic nature and insatiable craving for material comforts.

Master Stephen: A foolish and easily manipulated young man, obsessed with the latest fashions and trends. His "humour" is his shallowness and susceptibility to being led astray.

These characters, each driven by their particular "humour," create a dynamic and often chaotic interplay of personalities. Their interactions form the backbone of the comedic action.

III. The Plot Thickens: A Summary of the Main Events

The plot revolves around Kitley's unfounded jealousy of his young wife, and the various schemes orchestrated by Bobadill and Master Stephen. Edward Knowell, seemingly under the sway of bad influences, becomes a central figure in this tangled web. Here's a simplified breakdown:

Kitley's suspicions: Kitley's jealousy is constantly fueled by his misinterpretations of events. He suspects his wife of infidelity, based on very little evidence.

Bobadill's schemes: Bobadill, with his extravagant lies and boasts, plays a significant role in escalating Kitley's suspicions, further complicating the situation.

Master Stephen's foolishness: Master Stephen's gullibility and obsession with appearing fashionable makes him an easy target for manipulation.

Edward's journey: Edward's eventual realization of the folly of his ways, his father's patience, and the ultimate exposure of Bobadill's lies resolve the plot's central conflicts.

The play masterfully uses mistaken identity, deception, and witty dialogue to create a rollercoaster of comedic situations, all leading to a satisfying resolution.

IV. Themes Explored in Every Man in His Humour

Beyond the laughter, Every Man in His Humour explores several significant themes:

The Nature of Humour: The play's central theme explores the impact of individual personality quirks on social interactions and relationships. It highlights how unchecked humours can lead to conflict and unhappiness.

Jealousy and Suspicion: Kitley's character serves as a cautionary tale about the destructive nature of unfounded jealousy and the importance of trust in

relationships.

Social Commentary: Jonson subtly critiques various aspects of Elizabethan society, particularly the pretensions of the upper class and the parasitic nature of some social climbers.

The Power of Deception: The play explores the consequences of deception and the eventual unraveling of falsehoods.

Redemption and Forgiveness: While the play is primarily comedic, it also touches upon the possibility of redemption and forgiveness, seen in the resolution of Edward's actions and Kitemare's eventual understanding.

V. Why Study Every Man in His Humour?

Understanding *Every Man in His Humour* provides valuable insights into Elizabethan society, the development of English comedy, and the enduring power of human flaws as sources of comedic conflict. It showcases Jonson's mastery of characterization and his sharp wit. Its accessibility, even without extensive knowledge of Shakespearean English, makes it a rewarding and enriching read.

Conclusion

Every Man in His Humour remains a remarkably relevant and entertaining play. Its exploration of human nature, combined with Jonson's masterful comedic timing, makes it a classic of Elizabethan drama. This SparkNotes-style summary should provide a solid foundation for understanding the play's complexities, allowing you to appreciate its wit and wisdom more fully. Whether you're a student grappling with a literary assignment or simply a curious reader, this guide will help you navigate the vibrant world of Jonson's comedic masterpiece.

FAQs

1. Is *Every Man in His Humour* difficult to understand? While written in Elizabethan English, the play's plot is relatively straightforward, and the humor transcends the language barrier. Modern adaptations and summaries, like this one, can greatly aid comprehension.
1. What makes *Every Man in His Humour* a comedy of humours? It's a comedy of humours because the characters' actions are driven by their dominant personality traits or obsessions ("humours"), which create comedic conflict and situations.

1. How does Every Man in His Humour compare to Shakespeare's comedies? While both Jonson and Shakespeare wrote comedies, Jonson's style is often considered more satirical and focused on social commentary, whereas Shakespeare's comedies often incorporate more fantastical elements.
1. What are the major themes of the play? Major themes include the nature of humour, jealousy and suspicion, social commentary, the power of deception, and the possibility of redemption and forgiveness.
1. Where can I find a full text of Every Man in His Humour? Numerous online resources and print editions offer the full text of the play. A simple online search should lead you to several options.

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