

# Farce

## Definition of Farce

A farce is a literary [genre](#) and type of [comedy](#) that makes use of highly exaggerated and funny situations aimed at entertaining the [audience](#). Farce is also a subcategory of dramatic comedy, which is different from other forms of comedy as it only aims at making the audience laugh. It uses elements like physical [humor](#), deliberate absurdity, bawdy jokes, and drunkenness just to make people laugh. We often see one-dimensional characters in ludicrous situations in farces.

## Examples of Farce in Literature

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### Example #1: *The Importance of Being Earnest* (By Oscar Wilde)

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Oscar Wilde's novel, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, is one of the best verbal farces. Just like a typical farce that contains basic elements, such as mockery of the upper class, disgraceful physical humor, absurdity, and mistaken identities, this novel also demonstrates these features of a farce. The most absurd thing in tale is the fact that Miss Prism commits a blunder by leaving her manuscript in the pram, and puts her child into her handbag.

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### Example #2: *The Taming of the Shrew* (By William Shakespeare)

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In Shakespeare's play, *The Taming of the Shrew*, the farcical elements are manifested in terms of characters, plot, and particularly the writing [style](#). The play contains stereotype characters that are typically farcical in nature, such as Katherine is an excellent instance of the farcical [character](#). Although Katherina (Kate) is a stereotype and a boisterous shrew, Shakespeare portrays her as an individual needing sympathy, because Bianca is the favorite child of her father, Baptista.

Realizing that Baptista prefers her sister, Bianca, Kate says:

“What, will you not suffer me? Nay, now I see  
She is your treasure, she must have a husband,  
I must dance barefoot on her wedding day ...”

As far as the plot is concerned, Shakespeare develops the plot to look like a situational comedy. Though the [subplot](#) is romantic, both the main plot and the subplot move around an idea of the favoring father, whom his daughter and her lover outwit. In terms of the writing style, Shakespeare has used three basic comical techniques to produce humorous effects, such as Kate’s statements, and her husband’s replies, which demonstrate verbal humor. All these three elements demonstrate this play as a farce.

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### **Example #3: *She Stoops to Conquer* (Oliver Goldsmith)**

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Oliver Goldsmith’s play, *She Stoops to Conquer*, is another good example of farce or comedy of errors, as it contains multiple misunderstandings. It uses comedy of manners, in which the author ridicules the manners of a particular society – specifically the upper class.

*She Stoops to Conquer* includes several farcical elements, including themes, human manners, and even the plot itself. In the play, two Londoners search for Mr. Hardcastle’s home. When they find, they are deceived to believe that they have reached in an inn, not home; thus they conduct themselves according to the situation.

One of the gentlemen, Marlow, pursues Kate Hardcastle. However, she pretends to be a maid until he reveals his passionate feelings for her, and that he plans to elope with Kate. She, on the other hand, looks bawdy in her manners. As the gentlemen do not know the reality of the situation, they behave rudely with other household members. All such misunderstandings create humor and give farcical touches to this play.

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### **Example #4: *Waiting for Godot* (By Samuel Beckett)**

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We find several farcical situations in Samuel Beckett’s play *Waiting for Godot*. However, most of these situations have deeper meanings than just

their apparent meanings. For instance, we have a funny situation in which Vladimir and Estragon put on and take off their hats. Though it is a farcical situation, the aim is to tell the audience that the world of tramps has no significant actions and place, except to do trivial things.

Perhaps the most hilarious farcical situation occurs when the tramps test the strength of a string in order to hang themselves. The Estragon's trousers fall down to his ankles while pulling the cord, and due to strain, the cord breaks.

## **Function of Farce**

The basic purpose of a farcical comedy is to evoke laughter. We usually find farces in theater and films, and sometimes in other literary works too. In fact, all of these forms combine stereotyped characters and [exaggeration](#) to create humor. Although a farce may appear only to be funny, they often contain deeper implications on account of the use of satirical elements. In terms of plots, farces are often incomprehensible; hence, the audiences are not encouraged to follow the plot in order to avoid becoming overwhelmed and confused. Moreover, farces also contain improbable coincidences, and generally mock weaknesses of humans and human society.