

What the butler saw analysis essay



What the Butler Saw – Comedic Theory

What the Butler Saw is full of outrageous antics and extreme behavior. From the excerpt “Farce and Comedy” in Module One, the author states, “Because farce grows out of an improbable, absurd situation, its principal characters are comedy’s familiar types taken to extremes.” This is most definitely true of the tale told in What the Butler Saw. The author of the excerpt “Farce and Comedy” argues that this type of comedy is a way for people to take pleasure in things that are deemed taboo; “Jokes permit the delights of nonsense talk or uninhibited references to sex and vicarious indulgence of the body and all of its functions.

They give free rein to our hostilities against the curbs on our behavior demanded by proper social behavior. Like Freud’s interpretations of jokes, farce is a fantasy of humor acting out on stage our impulses on the one hand to pleasure and self-indulgence and on the other to aggression and hostility.”

Aside from the lying and attempted trickery, there are many, many examples of farce in What the Butler Saw. The first instance of farce in What the Butler Saw is revealed at the very beginning, when Dr. Prentice attempts to seduce Geraldine, who is applying to be his secretary. When his wife walks in and interrupts, Geraldine is left hiding, naked.

At the end of the play, it is revealed that Dr. Prentice cheated on his wife before they were married (of course, it was rape, and turned out to have been his wife, to which they were both unaware). His wife gave birth to twins, Geraldine and Nick, and gave them up for adoption because she was ashamed of the linen closet incident. Alternatively, Dr. Prentice recalls the indecency fondly and even left his victim a memento.

The entire situation is ludicrous, the epitome of farce. Adultery begins, and ends, the play. Considering what “ Farce and Comedy” says about farce and why people find it comedic, the doctors’ sneaky seduction of Geraldine, and the...