

“Code of the Woosters” by P.G. Wodehouse

Discussion Questions

1. Based on reading this selection, do you consider P.G. Wodehouse one of the finest writers of English comedy, as some critics claim? What is the source of the comedy in this novel (plot, character, language, etc.)?
2. Do you think Jeeves and Wooster are comparable to other famous literary pairs like Don Quixote and Sancho Panza or Sherlock and Holmes or movie duos like Abbot and Costello?
3. Why do you think Bertie Wooster never mentions his parents, but goes on and on about his aunts?
4. Is Bertie Wooster as “mentally negligible” and loopy as he seems? If so, what is the purpose of Bertie’s constant, although sometimes inaccurate, allusions to poetry and literature? Why would Bertie’s Aunt Dahlia constantly involve him in her schemes if he is such a nincompoop?
5. Is Jeeves merely a *deus ex machina*, as some critics claim, or is he a fully fleshed out character? Or, is Jeeves a mother figure for Bertie? What reason(s) might a genius like Jeeves be working for someone like Bertie?
6. Why do you think Wodehouse chose Bertie to narrate the story instead of Jeeves?
7. What is the code of the Woosters?
8. What was your initial reaction to the character of Roderick Spode, leader of the “Black Shorts,” who was fashioned after the leader of a 1930s English Fascist group?
9. “Code of the Woosters” was written in 1938. 2 years later, Wodehouse and his wife were captured in France and kept in an internment camp until 1941. According to MI5 files released in 1999, Wodehouse’s series of 1941 radio broadcasts sympathetic to the Nazi regime from Germany was not a joke, but a paid propaganda stunt. Wodehouse never returned to Britain after WWII and continued to receive pay from the Nazi government through 1944 after moving to France to continue Nazi propaganda work. It is claimed that he would have been tried for treason had he returned to his native land (he was later knighted in 1975, so this claim is questionable).

With this knowledge of the author’s personal life, does your view of Roderick Spode and the presentation of the fictional Fascist group change?

See the link below to an article in The Independent for more information

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/wodehouse-secretly-in-pay-of-the-nazis-say-mi5-files-742072.html>