

Fremont Public Library Great Books Book Club

“Jeeves and the Yule-tide Spirit” and other selected short stories by P.G. Wodehouse December 16, 2023

QUESTIONS

1. Wodehouse's works often feature upper-class characters who are portrayed as bumbling, out of touch with reality, or extremely eccentric. Why do so many of the characters in the Jeeves and Wooster stories exhibit eccentricities? Is this characterization intended as a critique of the privileged classes or something else? Do you have a favorite character?
2. Wodehouse's works often satirize English society and its customs, particularly the rigid class system and social conventions. Can you think of examples of satire from the stories we selected?
3. While still a toddler, Wodehouse's parents shipped him from Hong Kong to a series of aunts. Perhaps inspired by real life, domineering Aunt Dahlia and Aunt Agatha constantly pull Bertie (and Jeeves) into ridiculous situations. How do aunts (and occasionally uncles) figure into the action of the stories?
4. Once Wodehouse was old enough, he was sent to boarding school in England. Wodehouse compared his 6 years at Dulwich College to heaven. How did the author's time in College influence the world of Bertie and his Drones Club friends and frenemies?
5. The relationship between Jeeves and Wooster is central to many of Wodehouse's works. How does the author use role reversal between master and servant to further the plot?
6. Characters in Wodehouse's stories are constantly falling in and out of love and in and out of engagements. Jeeves must then extract Bertie (and friends, like Gussie) from disadvantageous or disastrous marriages. Do you agree with Bertie and friend's assessment of the women they date and reasons for breaking things off? What is Wodehouse saying about love and marriage? Does Jeeves want Bertie to get married at all?
7. Many of the Jeeves and Wooster plots include speculation and mysteries arounds light-hearted thefts or pranks, as well as imposters flitting about country houses. Bertie then feels it imperative to take on the role of bumbling detective. Do you think Wodehouse's work shaped and influenced subsequent classic crime literature (Dorothy Sayers, Agatha Christie, etc.)?
8. Some critics have compared Bertie to J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan and Jeeves to Wendy. If you are familiar with these characters from "Peter Pan," do you agree or disagree?
9. The first selection we read was published in 1916 and the last in 1926 (the last Jeeves story, "Aunts Aren't Gentleman" was published in 1974). However, the stories take place in pre-World War I Edwardian England (despite many later film and television adaptations being set in the 1920's and 1930's). Do you notice any growth in the recurring characters? Do you see any change in Wodehouse's writing style over the period we selected? Why do you think Wodehouse set the stories in the Edwardian era?
10. Wodehouse's command of humorous language and inventive turns of phrase abounds in the selections we read. Do you have a favorite (or few favorite) quotes?

QUESTION SOURCES

https://wodehouse.fandom.com/wiki/List_of_Jeeves_stories

<https://www.quora.com/What-are-some-hidden-messages-or-themes-in-the-works-of-P-G-Wodehouse>

<https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/plenty-of-room-for-stupidity-on-p-g-wodehouse>

<https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/plenty-of-room-for-stupidity-on-p-g-wodehouse>

<https://crossexaminingcrime.wordpress.com/2020/06/27/cross-examining-crimes-5-year-anniversary-p-g-wodehouses-influence-on-classic-crime-fiction/>

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<https://newcriterion.com/issues/2000/10/the-genius-of-wodehouse>

SELECTIONS

“Jeeves and the Yule-Tide Spirit,” 1927

Print: [“Very Good Jeeves”](#)

[Wikipedia summary](#)

[Audiobook on Hoopla \(starts at 1:13:42\)](#)

[eBook on Standard eBooks](#)

[“Jeeves and Wooster” Season 1, Episode 1](#)

“Extricating Young Gussie,” 1915

Print: [“The Man With Two Left Feet and Other Stories”](#)

[Wikipedia summary](#)

[Audiobook on Hoopla](#) (first story presented)

[eBook on Project Gutenberg](#) (note there are Kindle and other formats available on this site)

“Jeeves and the Unbidden Guest,” 1916

Print: [“Carry on Jeeves”](#)

[Wikipedia summary](#)

[Audiobook on Hoopla](#) (starts at 41:57)

[eBook on Project Gutenberg](#) or [Hoopla](#)

[“Jeeves and Wooster” Season 3, Episode 1](#)

“Jeeves Takes Charge,” 1916

Print: [“Carry on Jeeves”](#)

[Wikipedia summary](#)

[Audiobook on Hoopla](#) (first story presented)

[eBook on Project Gutenberg](#) or [Hoopla](#)

[“Jeeves and Wooster” Season 1, Episode 1](#)

“Jeeves and the Hard-Boiled Egg,” 1917

Print: [“Carry on Jeeves”](#)

[Wikipedia summary](#)

[Audiobook on Hoopla](#) (starts at 3:25:02)

[eBook on Project Gutenberg](#) or [Hoopla](#)

[“Jeeves and Wooster” Season 3, Episode 2](#)

“Jeeves and the Impending Doom,” 1926

Print: [“Very Good Jeeves”](#)

[Wikipedia summary](#)

[Audiobook on Hoopla \(starts at 3:51\)](#)

[eBook on Standard eBooks](#)

“Episode of the Dog Macintosh, 1929”

Print: [“Very Good Jeeves”](#)

[Wikipedia summary](#)

[Audiobook on Hoopla \(starts at 2:22:06\)](#)

[“Jeeves and Wooster” Season 1, Episode 2](#)