

**\*Core 311 History of English Literature :1890-1939\***

**\*UNIT 03 :Play\***

**\* \_'The Silver Box' \_ \***

**-by \*John Galsworthy\***

**\*01. About the Author:\***

Δ John Galsworthy (1867-1933) was educated at Harrow and studied law at New College, Oxford.

Δ He travelled widely and at the age of twenty-eight began to write, at first for his own amusement.

Δ His first stories were published under the pseudonym John Sinjohn and later were withdrawn.

Δ Galsworthy was a dramatist of considerable technical skill.

Δ His plays often took up specific social grievances such as the double standard of justice as applied to the upper and lower classes in *\*The Silver Box (1906)* and the confrontation of capital and labour in *Strife (1909)*.\*

Δ *\*Justice (1910)*, his most famous play, led to a prison reform in England.\*

Δ *\*Born: 14 August 1867,\** Kingston upon Thames, United Kingdom.

Δ *\*Died: 31 January 1933\* ,* Hampstead, London, United Kingdom.

**\*Δ His Best Works:\***

-The First and the Last.

-The Little Man.

-Hall-Marked (in Gutenberg's "Four Short Plays" file)

-Defeat (in Gutenberg's "Four -Short Plays" file)

-The Sun (in Gutenberg's "Four Short Plays" file)

-Punch and Go (in Gutenberg's "Four Short Plays" file)

**\*Δ His Awards:\***

He was awarded \*the 1932 Nobel Prize for Literature, having been appointed to the OM in 1929.\*

**02. About the Text:\***

Δ The Silver Box is a three-act comedy, the first play by the English writer John Galsworthy.

Δ It was originally produced in London in 1906, and attracted much attention.

Δ The silver Box was first produced on 25 September 1906 at the Royal Court Theatre in London.

Δ In New York it was first seen in 1907.

Δ In the play, the disappearance of a cigarette box (the silver box) leads to a comparison of the behaviour of the son of a prosperous politician, with that of an unemployed man, and the exposure of attitudes of different social classes.

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**\*03. Characters:\***

**\*(1) JOHN BARTHWICK:\***

- Bald headed, elderly person,
- Member of Parliament,
- Proclaims himself to be a Liberal,
- Too serious,
- Proud of his Rich status and respectability,
- Hypocrite, selfish and self-centred,
- Has no sympathy for the poor (but proclaims to be sympathetic).

**\*(2) MRS BARTHWICK:\***

- Wife of Mr.Barthwick,
- Grey-haired rich lady,
- Narrow minded,
- Has sheer contempt for lower classes,
- Thinks poor people are not truthful,
- Fond mother of Jack Barthwick, – Dotes her son and remains dumb to his failings.

**\*(3) JACK BARTHWICK:\***

- ☐ Son of MR John Barthwick and Mrs Barthwick,
- ☐ Pampered by his mother,
- ☐ Addicted to drinks,
- ☐ Gets heavily into debt,
- ☐ A thoroughly spoilt young man,
- ☐ Spend money lavishly.

**\*(4) MRS JONES:\***

- ☒ Chairwoman(servant) of the Barthwick household,
- ☒ Gentle, meek and modest
- ☒ Endures sorrows and sufferings with utmost endurance,
- ☒ Suffers poverty without complaint or murmur,
- ☒ Lacks firmness and boldness,
- ☒ Patient to her husband Jones' brutal and arrogant behavior,
- ☒ Faithful and dutiful wife,
- ☒ Innocent and simple.

**\*(5) MR JONES:\***

- ☒ A drunkard,
- ☒ Unemployed,
- ☒ Violent when he is drunk and ill treats his wife,
- ☒ Has grievances against civilized society,
- ☒ He is unjustly treated as a social outcast,
- ☒ Gets deeply hurt when his children suffer hunger and poverty,
- ☒ Blamed for theft,
- ☒ Unjustly treated throughout the trial at the court.

**\*(6) Thomas Marlowe and Butler:\***

Δ They were also servants of Barthwick family.

**\*(7) Mr. Snow:\***

He was the police man who arrested Jones in the story.

**\*04. Theme:\***

“The Silver Box” is Galsworthy’s most discussed and controversial problem play which unveils **\*\_disparity, discrimination, snobbery and hypocrisy in the society.\_\***

It also comments on the various social and moral issues like poverty, inequality and unemployment just like other social plays as ‘Justice’.

**\*05. Conflict:\***

In the conflict that takes place **\*between the two classes,\*** the upper class wins, successfully preventing all the unsavoury facts about Jack from coming out.

Jones has no advocate to speak for him, and all the facts about his actions come out and he is sentenced to imprisonment.

**\*06. Setting:\***

The three scenes of the first Act take place in ***\*the London dining room of John Barthwick, a Liberal member of parliament.\****

Jack Barthwick, son of the family, comes home at night drunk, carrying a lady's reticule (handbag).

***\*07. Quote:\****

***\*"Love has no age, no limit; and no death."\****

***\*08. Critical Appreciation:\****

The story starts with a rich family and their notorious son named "Jack Barthwick". He was the only son of Mr. Barthwick. He was a man who believed in equal rights for the poor. He was tired of his son and his bad habits.

One night, Jack came late. Mr. Jones helped him to enter the house. He was drunk and had a bag in his hand. Jack appreciated Jones' assistance and gave him a drink and a silver cigarette box. In the morning, the Barthwick family was on breakfast table and two servants came up to Mr. Barthwick. Thomas informed him that his silver box is missing. They blamed Mrs. Jones. Further, the Barthwick family rushed to police station and registered FIR against the poor house maid.

The police officers came to Mrs. Jones and found silver box was now Mr. Jones' property. He even resisted police officers and ended up in police station. After days, court trials began. Mr. Jones said that he had not stolen this silver box but it was a gift to him by Jack Barthwick. On the other side, Jack said he was drunk

and didn't know when he gifted him box. The story ends when court sentenced Mr. Jones one month imprisonment.

***\*09. Conclusion:\****

This book of John Galsworthy highlights the dual character of society. Mr. Barthwick showed himself as the one who felt bad for the poor but bought justice with his wealth. He even saved his son from getting a penalty although he was a criminal. Further, the end words of Mr. Jones are the real voice of the poor who are deprived of justice in this society. He wanted to deliver a message that money can put innocents into prison.

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