

The Ultimate Study Guide for Ben Jonson's Volpone

Ben Jonson's *Volpone* is a timeless masterpiece of Jacobean drama, renowned for its satirical wit, complex characters, and enduring themes. This comprehensive study guide provides an in-depth analysis of the play, exploring its characters, themes, literary devices, and critical reception.



Study Guide for Ben Jonson's Volpone (Course Hero Study Guides) by Course Hero

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Character Analysis

Volpone is a complex and multifaceted play, populated by a cast of memorable characters. Here's a detailed analysis of the main characters:

- **Volpone:** The titular character, Volpone is a wealthy Venetian nobleman who feigns illness to attract fortune hunters and swindle them out of their money.
- **Mosca:** Volpone's cunning and resourceful servant, who helps him in his schemes and provides comic relief.

- **Corbaccio:** A wealthy and miserly old man who is Volpone's primary target.
- **Voltore:** A corrupt lawyer who plots to inherit Volpone's wealth.
- **Corvino:** A braggart and jealous husband who suspects his wife of infidelity.
- **Celia:** Corvino's beautiful and virtuous wife, who becomes a symbol of innocence and goodness.

Theme Analysis

Volpone explores a wide range of themes, including:

- **Greed and avarice:** The play satirizes the human desire for wealth and possessions, showing how it can lead to corruption and moral decay.
- **Deception and betrayal:** Volpone's schemes rely on deception and betrayal, exposing the dark side of human nature.
- **Justice and retribution:** Despite Volpone's cunning, the play ultimately suggests that justice will prevail and the wicked will be punished.

Literary Devices

Jonson uses a variety of literary devices to create a vivid and engaging play, including:

- **Satire:** Volpone is a biting satire that ridicules human folly and corruption.

- **Comedy:** Despite its dark themes, the play contains elements of comedy, providing relief from the satirical elements.
- **Blank verse:** The play is written in blank verse, which gives it a formal and elevated tone.
- **Symbolism:** Jonson uses symbols, such as the fox (Volpone) and the raven (Corvino), to represent the characters and their motivations.

Plot Summary

The play follows Volpone's elaborate scheme to swindle his fortune hunters. He pretends to be deathly ill and announces that he has left his entire fortune to Mosca. This attracts Corbaccio, Voltore, and Corvino, who compete to outdo each other in their attempts to win Volpone's favor. However, Mosca reveals Volpone's deception and the three fortune hunters turn against him. In the end, Volpone is arrested and his wealth is confiscated. Justice is served, and the virtuous Celia is rewarded.

Critical Essays

Volpone has been the subject of numerous critical essays, which explore its various themes and characters. Some of the most notable essays include:

- "Volpone: A Study in Greed" by Jonas Barish
- "The Morality of Volpone" by Alvin Kernan
- "Volpone and the Comedy of Humours" by David Riggs

Study Questions

To test your understanding of the play, consider the following study questions:

- What are Volpone's motives for feigning illness?
- How does Mosca contribute to Volpone's schemes?
- What are the flaws in the characters of Corbaccio, Voltore, and Corvino?
- How does the play explore the theme of justice and retribution?
- What are the literary devices that Jonson uses in the play?

Ben Jonson's *Volpone* is a masterpiece of English literature that continues to captivate and engage audiences today. Its complex characters, enduring themes, and skillful use of literary devices make it a must-read for students of drama and literature. This comprehensive study guide provides an in-depth analysis of the play, helping you to understand its nuances and appreciate its enduring significance.



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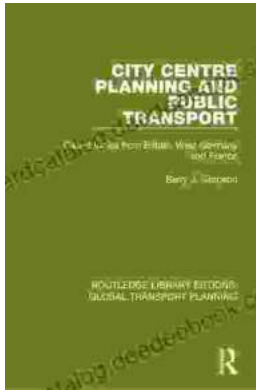
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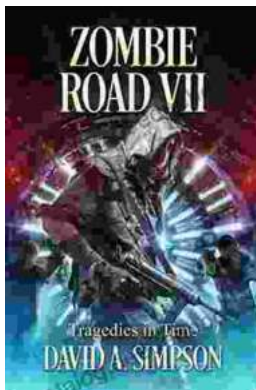
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