**The Dining Room**

**By A.R Gurney, Jr.**

The play is a comedy of manners, set in a single dining room where 18 scenes from different households overlap and intertwine. Presumably, each story is focused around a different family during different time periods who has in their possession the same dining room furniture set, manufactured in 1898. The stories are about White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) families. Some scenes are about the furniture itself and the emotional attachment to it, while other scenes simply flesh out the culture of the WASPs. Overall, it tells the story of the dying and relatively short-lived culture of upper-middle class Americans, and the transition into a much more efficient society with less emphasis on tradition and more emphasis on progress. Some characters are made fun of, as is the culture itself, but there is also a genuine longing for the sense of stability, comfort and togetherness that the culture provides.

From the back of the playbook:

The play is set in the dining room of a typical well-to-do household, the place where the family assembled daily for breakfast and dinner and for any and all special occasions. The action is a mosaic of interrelated scenes—some funny, some touching, some rueful—which, taken together, create an in-depth portrait of a vanishing species: the upper-middle-class WASP. The actors change roles, personalities and ages with virtuoso skill as they portray a wide variety of characters, from little boys to stern grandfathers, and from giggling teenage girls to Irish housemaids. Each vignette introduces a new set of people and events; a father lectures his son on grammar and politics; a boy returns from boarding school to discover his mother's infidelity; a senile grandmother doesn't recognize her own sons at Thanksgiving dinner; a daughter, her marriage a shambles, pleads futilely to return home, etc. Dovetailing swiftly and smoothly, the varied scenes coalesce, ultimately, into a theatrical experience of exceptional range, compassionate humor and abundant humanity.