SOFTWARE & TECH

Justice Second Series Plays By John Galsworthy

PUBLISHED
November 25, 2026

REFERENCE
#1795581551230132

Introduction: Galsworthy's Theatre of Conscience

When we consider the landscape of early 20th-century drama, the name John Galsworthy stands as a towering figure, a playwright whose work transcended mere entertainment to become a powerful instrument of social critique. While the world often remembers him for the sweeping family saga of **The Forsyte Saga**, his contributions to the theatre, particularly his plays of social conscience, are equally profound. Among these, the collection known as the **Justice Second Series Plays By John Galsworthy** represents a pinnacle of his artistic and moral vision. This term, however, can be a point of confusion for scholars and enthusiasts alike. It typically refers to the second volume of Galsworthy's collected plays, published as *Plays: Second Series*, which houses some of his most incendiary and emotionally devastating works, including the masterpiece that gives the series its thematic weight: **Justice**.

To understand the term fully, one must appreciate that Galsworthy organized his plays into "series" for publication. The **Justice Second Series Plays By John Galsworthy**is not just a random collection; it is a carefully curated statement on the failings of the British legal and penal systems. This volume is a masterclass in dramatic naturalism, where the dialogue is as precise as a legal document, and the emotions are as raw as a prison cell. In this comprehensive analysis, we will explore the contents of this essential volume, dissect its major themes, examine its enduring relevance, and understand why Galsworthy's voice remains a vital part of the literary conversation about justice and humanity.

The Contents of the Second Series

The volume commonly referred to as the **Justice Second Series Plays By John Galsworthy**was published in 1912 and contains four distinct plays, each a gem of Edwardian social drama. These are not light-hearted comedies; they are serious, often bleak, investigations into the human condition under pressure. The collection includes:

- The Silver Box (1906) – A searing indictment of class-based justice.
- Joy (1908) – A lighter, though still poignant, comedy of manners about youth and freedom.
- Strife (1909) – A powerful drama about the human cost of industrial labor disputes.
- Justice (1910) – The most famous of the four, a direct attack on the prison system and solitary confinement.

The Silver Box: A Tale of Two Crimes

The opening play of the **Justice Second Series Plays By John Galsworthy** sets the tone for the entire volume. *The Silver Box*presents a simple premise with a devastating conclusion. A wealthy man's son, Jack Barthwick, gets drunk and steals a prostitute's purse, while a poor, unemployed man, James Jones, steals a

silver cigarette box from the Barthwick home. The thefts are parallel, but the justice meted out is anything but equal. Jack is protected by his family's wealth and social standing, while Jones is ruthlessly prosecuted.

Galsworthy uses this stark contrast to expose the hypocrisy of the legal system. The title itself is symbolic: the silver box is a trivial object, yet it becomes the catalyst for a profound injustice. The play asks a question that echoes through the entire **Justice Second Series**: is justice truly blind, or does it simply look the other way when the rich are involved? The naturalistic dialogue, free from melodramatic flourishes, makes the social commentary all the more biting and real.

Joy: The Interlude of Youth

It is important to note that the **Justice Second Series Plays By John Galsworthy** is not uniformly grim. *Joy* serves as a deliberate interlude, a delicate comedy that explores the theme of personal freedom versus domestic constraint. The play centers on a young girl, Joy, who longs to escape the stifling atmosphere of her parents' troubled marriage. While it lacks the overt legal critique of the other plays, *Joy*fits thematically within the series because it examines a different kind of injustice—the emotional and psychological prison of a loveless home.

This play demonstrates Galsworthy's range, showing that he could craft nuanced, character-driven pieces as effectively as he could write polemical social tracts. It provides the reader with a moment of relief before the heavier punches of *Strife* and *Justice*land, making the volume as a whole a more balanced and thoroughly human collection.

Strife: The War at Home

Perhaps the most technically brilliant play in the **Justice Second Series Plays By John Galsworthy** is *Strife*. This drama is set during a bitter industrial strike at a tin-plate works. Galsworthy does not take sides in a simplistic manner. Instead, he presents two equally stubborn, equally admirable, and equally tragic figures: Anthony, the chairman of the company, and Roberts, the union leader.

The "justice" in *Strife* is not legal but economic and emotional. Galsworthy exposes the terrible cost of inflexibility. Neither man will bend, and the result is starvation, death, and ruin for the workers and financial loss for the company. The play is a masterclass in dramatic tension, with the private dining room of the Trenartha works becoming a battlefield of wills. The lesson of *Strife*is that justice is often the first casualty of pride, and that no legal system can remedy a broken human heart.

Justice: The Centerpiece of the Collection

No discussion of the **Justice Second Series Plays By John Galsworthy** would be complete without a deep dive into the title play itself, *Justice*. This work is the linchpin of the collection and the reason the volume is so frequently cited in legal and literary studies. The play follows the story of William Falder, a young, mild-mannered clerk in a law firm who forges a cheque for £9 to help the woman he loves escape her abusive husband. He is caught, prosecuted, and sentenced to three years in prison.

The Critique of Solitary Confinement

*Justice*is famous for its specific and powerful attack on the penal practice of solitary confinement, known at the time as the "separate system." Galsworthy based his depiction on extensive research, including visits to prisons. The most famous scene in the play is Act III, which takes place in Falder's cell. The dialogue is minimal, but the stage directions and the emotional impact are devastating. Falder, a sensitive soul, deteriorates rapidly in isolation. He begins to talk to himself, hallucinate, and lose his grip on sanity.

Galsworthy's argument is clear: the purpose of justice should be reformation, not destruction. The **Justice Second Series Plays By John Galsworthy**argues that the law, in its rigid application, often creates more

criminals than it reforms. Falder enters prison as a man who made a mistake; he leaves as a broken, psychologically damaged individual. The play was so effective in its social commentary that it is widely credited with influencing the Prison Commission's eventual relaxation of the solitary confinement rules in Britain.

The Legal Machinery and Human Failure

Beyond the prison cell, *Justice* critiques the entire legal apparatus. The lawyers in the play are not villains; they are professionals doing their jobs. But their professionalism strips Falder of his humanity. They see a case, a precedent, a legal argument. They do not see a desperate man in love. This is the core tragedy of the **Justice Second Series Plays By John Galsworthy**: the system is not malicious, but it is mechanical. It processes human beings without compassion.

The final act of the play is a masterful conclusion to this theme. Even after his release on license (parole), Falder cannot escape his criminal record. He is hounded by the police, loses his job, and is driven to suicide. The message is chilling: the justice system does not rehabilitate; it marks a man for life. The play ends not with a bang, but with a whimper of utter despair, leaving the audience to question the very foundations of their society.

Thematic Analysis of the Second Series

When viewed as a whole, the **Justice Second Series Plays By John Galsworthy**reveals a coherent and deeply pessimistic worldview regarding the nature of justice in an unequal society. Several overarching themes emerge.

The Class Divide and Institutional Bias

Throughout the series, Galsworthy demonstrates that justice is a luxury often reserved for the wealthy. In *The Silver Box*, the rich boy walks free while the poor man is imprisoned. In *Strife*, the struggle is between capital and labor, with the justice of the market favoring the owners. In *Justice*, Falder is a clerk—a lower-middle-class man—caught between the powerful forces of the law and the wealthy solicitor who employs him. The **Justice Second Series Plays By John Galsworthy**consistently argues that the law is a tool of the ruling class, used to maintain social order rather than to achieve true equity.

The Dehumanizing Effect of Institutions

Galsworthy is not just a critic of the law; he is a critic of all large institutions—the corporation in *Strife*, the family in *Joy*, and the prison in *Justice*. Each of these structures operates according to its own logic, and that logic is often indifferent or hostile to the needs of the individual. The **Justice Second Series Plays By John Galsworthy**is a cry for humanity against the machine of modern society. Falder is crushed not by a villain, but by the prison system. Roberts is broken not by an evil boss, but by the economic system. This systemic critique is what gives the plays their enduring power.

The Tragedy of the Sensitive Man

Perhaps the most poignant thread running through the **Justice Second Series Plays By John Galsworthy** is the fate of the sensitive, emotional male character. Falder is the prime example: he is not a hardened criminal but a romantic, a man driven by love. He is incapable of the brutality required to survive in the prison system. Similarly, in *Strife*, the character of Underwood, the managing director, is a man caught between the two warring factions, suffering from the stress of the conflict. Galsworthy suggests that in a harsh world, gentleness is a liability, and the justice system is designed to crush the weak.

Historical Context and Influence

To fully appreciate the **Justice Second Series Plays By John Galsworthy**, one must understand the

Edwardian context in which they were written. The early 1900s were a time of intense social and political ferment. The women's suffrage movement was gaining momentum, labor unrest was growing, and the Liberal government was beginning to introduce social welfare reforms. Galsworthy was part of a generation of writers, including George Bernard Shaw and H.G. Wells, who used their art as a platform for social change.

The impact of *Justice* was immediate and tangible. After attending a performance, the Home Secretary, Winston Churchill, was deeply moved. He ordered a copy of the play and subsequently initiated reforms to the prison system, including the reduction of solitary confinement. This is a rare and remarkable instance of a work of art directly influencing government policy. The **Justice Second Series Plays By John Galsworthy**thus stands as a testament to the power of drama to effect real-world change.

Relevance for Modern Readers

Over a century after they were written, the **Justice Second Series Plays By John Galsworthy**remain strikingly relevant. The issues Galsworthy grappled with are still central to public debate today.

Related Articles

- **Are James Blunt And Emily Blunt Related**
  URL: https://signage.openstack.org/are-james-blunt-and-emily-blunt-related.pdf
- **Was Remember Me Based On A True Story**
  URL: https://signage.openstack.org/was-remember-me-based-on-a-true-story.pdf
- **Ess Employee Self Service Costco**
  URL: https://signage.openstack.org/ess-employee-self-service-costco.pdf
- **The Case For Christianity By Cs Lewis**
  URL: https://signage.openstack.org/the-case-for-christianity-by-cs-lewis.pdf

TOPIC INDEX

#justice • #second • #series • #plays • #john

DIGITAL EDITION

justice-second-series-plays-by-john-galsworth

DIGITAL EDITION

justice-second-series-plays-by-john-galsworth

DIGITAL EDITION

justice-second-series-plays-by-john-galsworth

DIGITAL EDITION

justice-second-series-plays-by-john-galsworth