

John Hoadly

Nathan Fu, Simon Fraser University

John Hoadly was born in Broad Street, London in 1711. He was the youngest son of the Right Reverend Benjamin Hoadly, Bishop of Winchester, and Sarah Curtis, a portrait painter. John Hoadly was educated at Dr Newcome's school where he grew to love theater and writing. He grew up as the youngest with two older brothers. Being the son of a bishop, Hoadly was raised as a devout Christian and became a clergyman in 1735. His roots as a poet and playwright began after assisting his older brother, Benjamin Hoadly, in writing *The Contrast, or, A Tragical Comic Rehearsal of Two Modern Plays*. The play saw moderate success, being performed several times at the Lincoln's Inn Fields theatre, before being discontinued at the request of his father. The play drew the attention of many critics due to its ridicule of living authors. This satiric style of writing would persist through his career as a playwright and poet.

The poem below, titled "The Indolent," was written in 1758. Indolence, or to be an indolent person, refers to a person's "disposition, action, etc.: averse to toil or exertion; slothful, lazy, idle" (*OED*). Not much is known of the public's perception of the poem as it is one of Hoadly's lesser-known works. The poem is in two verse paragraphs of heroic couplets, and, as the title suggests, it discusses the life and mindset of an indolent man. The first verse paragraph ridicules indolence, while the second delves into the mind of the indolent man. During the eighteenth century, ideal men were to value honour, family, and class, and to shun indolence. Because Hoadly was known as a satirist, readers would likely have seen this as a simple satire of a lazy and sloth-filled life that implicitly reinforced their ideals of what it meant to be a man.

Hoadly was a successful upper-class man known for his charity. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Hoadly made bequests in his will to apprentice the poorer children of his diocese. He was known as a loyal, humorous, and modest man.

Further Reading

Adelman, Richard. "Idleness and Creativity: Poetic Disquisitions on Idleness in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries." *Idleness, Indolence and Leisure in English Literature*, edited Monika Fludernik and Miriam Nandi, 2014, pp. 174–194.

References

- A.B. "Memoirs of the Late Dr John Hoadly." *Annual Register*, printed by Robert Dodsley, 1776, pp. 38–43.
- Aston, Nigel. "Hoadly, John (1711–1776), Poet and Playwright." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004.

John Hoadly

The Indolent⁸⁰

WHAT self-sufficiency and false content⁸¹
 Benumb⁸² the senses of the indolent!
 Dead to all purposes of good, or ill,
 Alive alone in an unactive will.
 His only vice in no good action lies, 5
 And his sole virtue is his want of vice.
 Business⁸³ he deems⁸⁴ too hard, trifles⁸⁵ too easy,
 And doing nothing finds himself too busy.
 Silence he cannot bear, noise is distraction,
 Noise kills with bustle,⁸⁶ silence with reflection; 10
 No want he feels, — what has he to pursue?
 To him 'tis less to suffer, than to do.
 The busy world's a fool, the learn'd a sot,⁸⁷
 And his sole hope to be by all forgot:
 Wealth is procur'd⁸⁸ with toil, and kept with fear, 15
 Knowledge by labour purchas'd costs too dear;
 Friendship's a clog,⁸⁹ and family a jest,

⁸⁰ First published in 1758; version used is Robert Dodsley's *A Collection of Poems in Six Volumes by Several Hands*, vol. 6, 1763; *Eighteenth-Century Poetry Archive*

⁸¹ *Content* to be in a state of satisfaction or happiness

⁸² *Benumb* "To render (the mental powers, the will, or the feelings) senseless or inert; to stupefy, deaden" (*OED*)

⁸³ *Business* busyness

⁸⁴ *Deems* thinks or judges

⁸⁵ *Trifles* ways of spending time idly or frivolously

⁸⁶ *Bustle* excited and/or audible movement

⁸⁷ *Sot* a foolish or stupid person

⁸⁸ *Procur'd* the act of acquiring or obtaining

⁸⁹ *Clog* a heavy object, typically wood, tied to something to impede movement, anything that impedes action or progress

John Hoadly

A wife but a bad bargain at the best;
Honour a bubble,⁹⁰ subject to a breath,
And all engagements⁹¹ vain since null'd by death; 20
Thus all the wise esteem,⁹² he can despise,
And caring not, 'tis he alone is wise:
Yet, all his wish possessing, finds no rest,
And only lives to know, he never can be blest.

⁹⁰ *Bubble* a soap bubble, but also “a protected or fortunate situation which is isolated from reality or unlikely to last” (*OED*)

⁹¹ *Engagements* not only agreements to marry, but other financial and legal matters

⁹² *All the wise esteem* everything that wise people admire



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