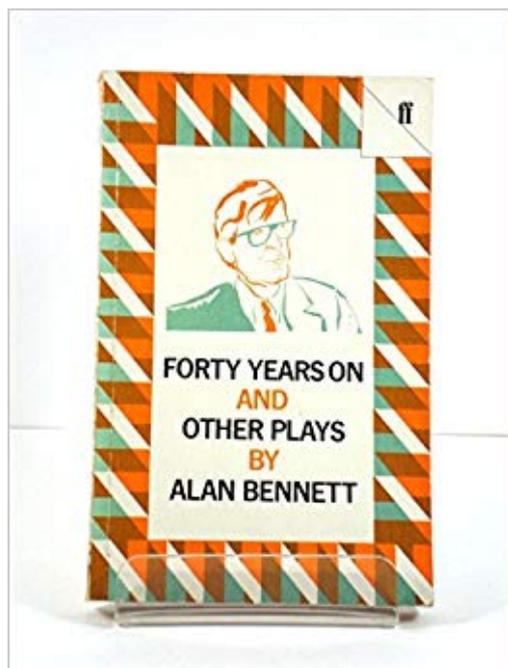


Forty Years on *by* Alan Bennett



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Bennett stars in a new production of his own acclaimed satirical comedy. In this play within a play, the Headmaster of Albion House takes part in the end-of-year entertainment for the last time before his retirement. It exposes the timeless misunderstanding of one generation by another.



Reviews of the *Forty Years on* *by* Alan Bennett

- **Kemath**

Pure nostalgia for me with a plus of "Brit" wit.

- **Asyasya**

(4.5 stars) The Headmaster of Albion House has no idea, when he utters these words, just how entertaining this school play will be. Entitled *_Speak for England, Arthur_*, this play within a play is intended to honor the Headmaster, who has announced his retirement and imminent departure after a forty-year career. The play features the faculty, including the new Headmaster, who created and

directed it, the Matron, the nurse, and a few of the students, and is intended to remind these (typical) teenagers of the school's traditions. A boys' choir provides musical commentary on the action. Extended vignettes of important events in British history, many of them from war times, provide Bennett with ample opportunity for satire, as the action moves through Edwardian England, the Bloomsbury group, and the two world wars and their aftermath.

Nothing is sacred, as Bennett looks backward from his vantage point in 1968, when this play was first produced, to take aim at specific politicians, the Conservatives, the attempts to appease Hitler, the upper classes, traditional religion, hush-hush attitudes toward sexuality, the prejudices and social inequities tolerated in the country, and, ultimately, the values of the past which have changed as times have changed. The new Headmaster, whose values are as liberal as the former Headmaster's are conservative, uses the school play to reflect his own (and Bennett's) point of view, and as scenes change and the faculty converses, the viewer/reader/listener--and the old Headmaster--quickly see how much values have changed. The Headmaster feels that the values by which he has lived are being mocked, while the students and new Headmaster feel that the old Headmaster is out of touch, however well-meaning and upright.

Forty Years On, Alan Bennett's first full-length play, has an enormous scope, which is both its glory and its limitation. Bennett satirizes a whole panoply of subjects as he explores seventy years of British social and political history. The satire is pointed--and hilarious--and the reactions of the faculty, students, and Headmaster are indicative of generational changes. The scope is so broad, however, that the impact is diluted and there is no grand climax, other than the Headmaster's reaction, to bring together all facets of the play. The fact that the vignettes do not come in chronological order is also distracting. The play is delightful in its humor, however, and relevant even now, forty years after it was first produced--a sensational debut for a man who has become one of England's most successful and prolific dramatists. n Mary Whipple

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Talking Heads

- **Avarm**

Wonderful play with wonderful cast. Spans remembrances of the end of WW One over to the beginning of World War Two, on the occasion of retirement of headmaster at English public school,

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