

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

by Richard Brinsley Sheridan



THE AUTHOR

Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816) was born in Dublin to a mother who was a playwright and a father who was an actor. He thus came by his talents honestly, though he far exceeded the modest accomplishments of his parents. Already one of the most brilliant and witty dramatists of the English stage before the age of thirty, he gave up his writing and went on to become the owner and producer of the Drury Lane theater, a well-regarded Whig member of the English Parliament, and a popular man-about-town.

Despite his family's poverty, he attended Harrow, a famous prep school, though he appears to have been unhappy there, largely because the rich boys at the school looked down on him because of his humble origins. The bitter taste of his school years drove his later ambitions, both for literary and political success and for acceptance in the highest strata of society. He used his profits from his writing to buy the theater and his profits from the theater to finance his political career and socially-active lifestyle.

Sheridan was a tireless lover and a man who, no matter how much he earned, always managed to spend more. In 1772, he married a lovely young singer named Elizabeth Ann Linley; she had already, before her twentieth birthday, attracted the attention of several wealthy suitors twice her age, but she and Sheridan eloped to France without the knowledge or permission of either set of parents. Though she loved him deeply, he was not a one-woman sort of man, and his constant infidelities led to a temporary separation in 1790. She died of tuberculosis shortly thereafter, and Sheridan married Hester Jane Ogle, a girl half his age, three years later, though again he was frequently unfaithful to his long-suffering wife.

As a writer, Sheridan leaped to the attention of the theater-going public in 1775, when *The Rivals* and *The Duenna*, a light opera, reached the stage. In 1777 he produced his most famous comedy, *The School for Scandal*. After the debut of *The Critic* in 1779, he gave up writing and turned to producing, politics, and high living. As a result of a complete inability to handle money or follow a budget, a lifestyle that far exceeded his income, and lifelong bouts of drunkenness and debauchery, when Sheridan lost his seat in Parliament, he was left as a sick old man, carted off to the poorhouse by the local constabulary. His second wife stayed by his side to the end, and he died in poverty in July of 1816, but was buried with honors in Westminster Abbey.

The School for Scandal is considered by many to be the finest comedy of manners ever written in the English language. The witty dialogue, exaggerated characterizations, and confusions associated with mistaken identity place the play on the same level as the best of Moliere's works. On a more serious level, the play deals very effectively with themes such as the corrosive nature of gossip, the fragility of reputation, and the differences between appearance and reality. Like all of Sheridan's work, *The School for Scandal* assumes a certain nimbleness of mind on the part of the audience, along with an ability to follow a sometimes-confusing plot and fast-paced twists of language.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

- Sir Peter Teazle - A benevolent and wealthy gentleman who has a young wife and a ward, Maria. He took Joseph and Charles Surface under his care after the death of their father, but they are now independent because of the inheritance received from their uncle. Sir Peter favors Joseph as a future husband for Maria and disapproves of Charles.
- Lady Teazle - Sir Peter's wife, she is much younger than he is; they have only been married for six months. She is a simple country girl who has been spoiled by her husband's wealth, so that she squanders his fortune and the two quarrel constantly.
- Maria - Sir Peter's ward, she is beloved by both Joseph and Charles Surface, but loves only Charles.
- Joseph Surface - An upright young man in appearance but in reality a hypocrite, he is in love with Maria, but, being rebuffed by her, seeks the help of Lady Sneerwell to obtain her affection.
- Charles Surface - A dissipated rake with a good heart, he is beloved by both Maria and Lady Sneerwell.
- Sir Oliver Surface - Uncle to Joseph and Charles, he has given them an inheritance that has allowed them to become independent since they have come of age. He returns incognito after sixteen years in India and decides to test the characters of his nephews.
- Lady Sneerwell - A widow who loves to create and spread gossip, she is a neighbor of Sir Peter and is secretly in love with Charles Surface, thus desires to help Joseph obtain Maria's affection.
- Snake - Part of Lady Sneerwell's circle who helps her in her schemes, but is out for his own interests.
- Sir Benjamin Backbite - Also in love with Maria, he fancies himself a poet and is a dreadful gossip.
- Crabtree - Sir Benjamin's uncle; also a gossip.

- Mrs. Candour - A professedly kindhearted woman who speaks well of everyone in such a way as to ruin their reputations in the process.
- Rowley - The steward of Joseph and Charles' deceased father, he plots with Sir Oliver to unveil the true characters of Joseph and Charles.
- Moses - A Jewish man to whom Charles owes a great deal of money.
- Trip - Charles' servant.
- Careless and Sir Toby Bumper - Friends of Charles.

NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“To my knowledge, she has been the cause of six matches being broken off, and three sons being disinherited; of four forced elopements, and as many close confinements; nine separate maintenances, and two divorces.” (Snake, Ii, p.235)

“There is no advantage in not knowing him, for he'll abuse a stranger just as soon as his best friend.” (Joseph, Ii, p.238)

“Wit loses its respect for me when I see it in company with malice.” (Maria, Ii, p.238)

“Tale bearers are as bad as the tale makers.” (Mrs. Candour, Ii, p.240)

“When an old bachelor marries a young wife, he deserves - no - the crime carries its punishment along with it.” (Sir Peter, Iii, p.246)

“What though I was educated in the country, I know very well that women of fashion in London are accountable to nobody after they are married.” (Lady Teazle, Iii, p.247)

“But I bear no malice against the people I abuse: when I say an ill natured thing, 'tis out of pure good humor; and I take it for granted they deal exactly in the same manner with me.” (Lady Teazle, Iii, p.249)

“True wit is more nearly allied to good nature than your ladyship is aware of.” (Sir Peter, Iiii, p.253)

“If he suspects me without cause, it follows, that the best way of curing his jealousy is to give him reason for't?” (Lady Teazle, IViii, p.279)

NOTES

Act I, scene 1 - After a prologue spoken by Sir Peter Teazle, the play begins in the dressing room of Lady Sneerwell. She is speaking to Snake, her servant, about his success in spreading the latest gossip among her acquaintances. She apparently was injured by scandal in her younger days and has spent her life taking revenge on whomever is unlucky enough to come within the reach of her venom. She is presently targeting her neighbor, Sir Peter Teazle, and the two young men under his care, both of whom are in love with his ward Maria. Lady Sneerwell loves Charles, a rake who loves Maria and is beloved by her; Joseph, on the other hand, has a reputation for uprightness, but is secretly a scoundrel, and seeks Lady Sneerwell's help to obtain Maria's affections. Joseph arrives and informs Lady Sneerwell that Charles is as dissipated as ever and is unable to spend time with Maria. He warns her against trusting Snake, who has been spending time with Rowley, his father's former steward. Maria arrives, trying to avoid the attentions of another suitor, Sir Benjamin Backbite; she hates him because he is a terrible gossip, abusing friends and strangers alike, as is his uncle, Crabtree. Mrs. Candour then comes in; she speaks well of everyone, but her defenses of their characters are worse than the gossip of the slanderers. She immediately begins reporting all the latest gossip while trusting that it is not true. Sir Benjamin and Crabtree then arrive, and begin talking about the scandals of their acquaintances. When the conversation turns to Charles and his impending bankruptcy, Maria gets fed up with the whole thing and leaves, followed by Mrs. Candour. Lady Sneerwell and Joseph agree to continue their plotting against Charles and Maria.

Act I, scene 2 - In Sir Peter Teazle's house, he speaks to the audience of his recent marriage to a much younger country girl. He thought she enjoyed simple pleasures, but she has been spoiled by sudden wealth, and the two quarrel constantly. When Rowley, old Surface's former steward, comes in, Sir Peter pours out his woes - a quarrelsome wife who is always wrong about everything and a ward who refuses his choice of a husband for her (Joseph) in favor of his profligate brother Charles. Rowley differs from his assessment, arguing that Charles, though undoubtedly having his problems, will soon overcome them, even as his father had done before him. Rowley tells Sir Peter that Sir Oliver Surface has returned from the East Indies, not having been in England for sixteen years, but wishes his return to be kept secret from his nephews because he wants to learn something of their characters. Because Sir Peter and Sir Oliver are old friends and have sworn for years that they would never marry, Sir Peter insists that he and his wife must put on the appearance of a happy marriage before him.

Act II, scene 1 - Sir Peter and Lady Teazle are quarreling, both about her extravagance and about her expenses, though he can't help but love her dearly. They prepare to visit Lady Sneerwell.

Act II, scene 2 - Meanwhile, at Lady Sneerwell's house, Maria has regained her composure and comes in with Lady Teazle, who immediately joins the never-ending gossip of the gathering. When Sir Peter arrives, he is disgusted by the conversation, in which the group tears apart their closest friends and relations. After the others leave, Joseph tries again to press his suit with Maria, who shows no inclination to favor him. When Lady Teazle comes in, Joseph speaks in such a way as to lead her to believe that Maria is spreading gossip about Lady Teazle and Joseph. No such relationship exists, but the conversation gives them both ideas. When Joseph is left alone, he wonders how long he can keep up the pretense of honor before his true nature is found out.

Act II, scene 3 - Rowley is talking with Sir Oliver, telling him about Sir Peter's recent marriage. He notes that one reason why Sir Peter dislikes Charles is that he suspects a certain tenderness between him and Lady Teazle - a rumor that has been fanned by the local scandalmongers. Sir Oliver is determined to support the otherwise-friendless Charles if he finds him deserving. Sir Peter comes in and the two old friends are reunited. Sir Peter tells Sir Oliver about his nephews, insisting that Charles is a scoundrel and Joseph a paragon, but Sir Oliver wonders if Joseph can be as good as advertised and still manage to avoid the rough tongues of the gossips. Sir Oliver tells Sir Peter that he intends to remain incognito while determining the characters of his nephews.

Act III, scene 1 - Back at Sir Peter's house, Rowley unfolds his scheme to him. An unfortunate man named Stanley, an old friend of the family, has come upon hard times and has been writing to Joseph and Charles asking for help. Joseph has put him off, while Charles has promised to do what he can given his straitened circumstances. Rowley proposes that Sir Oliver introduce himself as Stanley, and thus test the qualities of the two boys. Soon Moses comes in - he is a Jewish man to whom Charles owes a great deal of money. Moses tells them that he has offered to help Charles by introducing him to a moneylender in the city named Premium. Sir Peter then suggests that Sir Oliver pretend to be Premium and talk with Charles, and later present himself as Stanley to Joseph. Moses and the others coach Sir Oliver about how a moneylender acts and speaks [Sheridan uses this opportunity to satirize the English financial world]. After they leave, Sir Peter decides to talk to Joseph to get the truth about the rumors concerning Lady Teazle and Charles. Maria arrives first, and Sir Peter again badgers her about marrying Joseph, which she resolutely refuses to consider. Lady Teazle then comes in, and Sir Peter tries to cajole her into a good mood, reminiscing about the days of their courtship. She simply asks for more money and the two soon start quarreling about who is responsible for their quarrels. He finally loses his temper and accuses her of dallying with Charles, then threatens separation or divorce. She says that separation is just fine with her, for then they will for once be happy in their marriage.

Act III, scene 2 - Moses and Sir Oliver, pretending to be Premium, arrive at Charles' house, where Charles' servant, Trip, attempts to wheedle more money out of Moses. This gives Sir Oliver an immediate bad impression about the household and the way it is run.

Act III, scene 3 - Charles is hosting a dinner party for some of his friends, and they bemoan the lack of wine and wit in a society that cares nothing for money; all are somewhat inebriated. His friends tease him to reveal the name of his true love, and he tells them he loves Maria. Sir Toby Bumper leads the group in a song in praise of women of all sorts. Moses and "Premium" come in, and the men try to get them drunk. Premium refuses their drink, and the two get down to business. Charles admits he needs money badly, but the only security he can offer is the expectation of wealth from his rich uncle in the Indies (who is, of course, the man with whom he is speaking). Charles suggests a life insurance policy on Sir Oliver, to be paid out after he dies. Premium objects that he might not see his money for years, but Charles assures him that his uncle is in remarkably bad health and can't last much longer. Premium says that he has heard that Sir Oliver is doing very well, and in fact might arrive in England soon, but Charles insists that he is still in Calcutta. In the course of the conversation, Sir Oliver finds that Charles has already sold the family heirlooms and his father's library, and offers to sell the family portraits in the sitting room. Sir Oliver, inwardly fuming and swearing never to forgive him for his carelessness, agrees to buy the pictures.

Act IV, scene 1 - Charles takes Sir Oliver and Moses up to see the pictures and makes unpleasant comments about their quality. He then auctions them off to “Premium” for relatively low prices. Finally they come to a portrait of Sir Oliver himself. After further unpleasant comments, Charles refuses to sell the picture since his uncle has been so good to him, even when he is offered more for that than for all the others combined. Sir Oliver is now in a fine mood, and decides to forgive Charles all his extravagance. He leaves without Charles knowing his identity. Charles tells Rowley that he will use some of the money to help his friend Stanley, but refuses to pay his debts to tradesmen, arguing that such a thing will only encourage them to expect payment in the future.

Act IV, scene 2 - Rowley tells Sir Oliver about what Charles intends to do with the money, but Sir Oliver is so pleased that he refused to sell his picture that he decides to pay his debts and send money to Stanley, too. Trip tries again to borrow money from Moses.

Act IV, scene 3 - This scene takes place in Joseph’s library. Lady Teazle comes in and Joseph tries to convince her that he is in love with her and not Maria, and that she should get revenge on her husband by establishing a relationship with him. A servant announces Sir Peter, and Lady Teazle hides behind a screen in panic. Sir Peter sits down and unburdens his heart to Joseph about his concern for his wife. He is afraid she is fooling around with Charles. Joseph, of course, denies knowledge of any such thing. Sir Peter tells Joseph that he intends to give his wife a large allowance and leave most of his estate to her when he dies. Joseph is sorry that Lady Teazle, from behind the screen, hears all this; things get even worse when Sir Peter brings up the subject of Joseph’s affection for Maria. A servant announces Charles’ arrival, and Joseph tells him to bring him up, hoping to cut short Sir Peter’s conversation. Sir Peter, however, suggests that he hide himself so that Joseph can question Charles about his relationship with Lady Teazle. He goes to duck behind the screen, but finds it already occupied. Joseph pulls him away before he can see who is behind the screen, and tells him it is a little milliner who has been plaguing him with her attentions. Sir Peter hides in a closet instead. The two poke their heads out several times, each always missing seeing the other, before Charles enters. Joseph asks him if he has any interest in Lady Teazle, and he denies it, insisting he loves Maria, but he then says that he knows of Joseph’s interest in Sir Peter’s wife. He keeps trying to give examples of their tender feelings, but Joseph stops him, finally telling him that Sir Peter is hiding in the closet. Charles pulls him out of hiding, and Sir Peter expresses his new good opinion of Charles, having heard him deny any interest in Lady Teazle. A servant tells Joseph that Lady Sneerwell has arrived, and he goes to send her away. Meanwhile, Sir Peter tells Charles that Joseph is not such a saint as he had imagined, since he had a girl in the room when he arrived, and that she was at this moment hiding behind the screen. Charles insists on looking behind the screen, but Sir Peter says that he should not, since Joseph is on his way upstairs again. Just as Joseph reenters the room, Charles takes down the screen, revealing Lady Teazle. Joseph stammers out an explanation, which Lady Teazle immediately contradicts. She tells Sir Peter about Joseph’s attempt to seduce her, and swears that Sir Peter’s expressions of love for her had changed her attitude completely. Sir Peter denounces Joseph and stomps out of the house in anger.

Act V, scene 1 - Still in Joseph’s library, the servant announces the arrival of Mr. Stanley. Joseph has no desire to see him, knowing that he intends to ask for money, but tells the servant to show him up. Sir Oliver enters in the character of Stanley, and Rowley along with him. After Rowley leaves, Joseph greets “Stanley” warmly, but says he has nothing to offer him, since he has little money. Stanley says that surely he might share some of the bounty he has received from his uncle, but Joseph

claims that Sir Oliver has given him nothing but a few paltry gifts. In fact, Joseph insists that he is poverty-stricken because he has lent so much his money to his wastrel brother Charles. Sir Oliver swears to himself that Charles, rather than Joseph, will be his heir. After “Stanley” leaves, Rowley reenters and tells Joseph that his uncle Sir Oliver has arrived. Joseph prepares himself for another piece of bad timing.

Act V, scene 2 - Meanwhile, at Sir Peter’s house, Mrs. Candour, Lady Sneerwell, Sir Benjamin, and Crabtree have gathered. All have different stories about what happened in Joseph’s library: some say the lover was Joseph, some Charles; some insist that Sir Peter fought a duel with swords with the culprit, and some say the fight was with pistols and that Sir Peter is seriously wounded. When Sir Oliver enters, they think he is the doctor and begin plying him with questions about Sir Peter’s condition. At that moment Sir Peter himself walks in, clearly in perfect health. All begin to jabber at him at once, and he throws all the gossips out of his house. Sir Peter asks if Rowley and Sir Oliver know of his scandalous discovery, and they admit that they do, and have a great deal of trouble restraining their laughter while discussing it. Sir Oliver begs Sir Peter to forgive his wife, and as the scene ends, he prepares to go to her and restore the relationship. Meanwhile, Sir Oliver heads back to Joseph’s house to reveal himself in his true character to both his nephews.

Act V, scene 3 - Back in Joseph’s library, he and Lady Sneerwell are quarreling. She regrets the fact that now Charles will surely obtain Sir Peter’s permission to marry Maria (when she wanted him for herself), and accuses Joseph of being a great blunderer; he, of course, wanted Maria for himself, and now sees no way of obtaining her. He sees one glimmer of hope in the possibility of putting Snake up to producing forged letters affirming Charles’ prior relationship with Lady Teazle. When Sir Oliver is announced, Joseph insists that Lady Sneerwell hide. Sir Oliver enters, but Joseph thinks he is Stanley. “Stanley” insists on meeting Sir Oliver and asking him for charity, but Joseph, refuses, trying to push him out of the room. Before he can do so, Charles enters and demands to know why Joseph is manhandling his broker Premium. The two brothers argue over the man’s identity, but both agree he must leave before Sir Oliver arrives; they then both try to push him out the door. Before they can do so, Sir Peter enters with Lady Teazle, Maria, and Rowley, and all identify Sir Oliver. He, Sir Peter, and Lady Teazle all denounce Joseph. Charles expects the same treatment, but is amazed to find Sir Oliver benevolent toward him because of his true gratitude for his uncle’s generosity. Sir Peter is now prepared to give Maria to Charles. Joseph makes one last attempt to blacken Charles’ name with Lady Sneerwell’s introduction of Snake’s forged letters, but Snake, having been paid twice as much by Rowley, admits they are forgeries. Lady Sneerwell leaves the room in a huff, followed by Joseph. Sir Peter and Sir Oliver announce that Charles and Maria will be married the following morning, and Charles determines to reform his dissolute ways. The play ends with an epilogue spoken by Lady Teazle.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. Discuss the view of human nature pictured in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*. Does the playwright believe that human nature is fundamentally good or evil? Focus your attention especially on the ending, and be sure to relate Sheridan's ideas to those of the Enlightenment era in which he lived. Are his views of human nature biblical? Why or why not?
2. One of the central themes in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* is gossip. Note that the characters in the story who engage in gossip constantly argue that they are only speaking in fun and are doing no real harm. For instance, Lady Teazle says, "But I bear no malice against the people I abuse: when I say an ill natured thing, 'tis out of pure good humor; and I take it for granted they deal exactly in the same manner with me." Do you agree? Why is gossip so harmful? Discuss the subject from the point of view of Scripture as well as that of the play.
3. Evaluate the character of Charles in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*. In your opinion, is he really a good man, as Sir Oliver and Rowley claim, or do they ignore real faults that should be given greater attention? Be sure to support your arguments with Scripture as well as specifics from the script.
4. In Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*, do you find the character of Joseph credible? Could someone who is such an awful hypocrite really fool so many of the people close to him? Why or why not? Support your answer with specifics from the play.
5. In Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*, Joseph is presented as a man known for his *sentiment*. What is the meaning of this word in the context of the play? How would you describe such a trait in contemporary terms? Why is this characteristic admired by so many? Why does it wind up being the target or ridicule? Be sure to support your argument with specific quotations from the play.
6. Evaluate the marriage of Sir Peter and Lady Teazle in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*. What is Sheridan trying to say about what makes for a happy marriage through their trials and tribulations? Do you believe that their marriage will change for the better? Why or why not?
7. Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* is clearly a satire targeted at the problem of gossip, but to what extent is it also more broadly aimed at the lives of the members of the British leisure class? Evaluate the play as a work of social criticism. What does Sheridan believe is wrong with the leisure class, and what ought to be done to change the situation? Be sure to use details from the play as you answer the question.

8. Discuss the characterization in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*. Are the characters believable, or are they mere caricatures put on stage to communicate the humor and satire of the playwright? Choose three of the major characters in the play and discuss the extent to which they are credible, or mere cardboard figures.
9. Discuss the characterization in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*. Do any of the characters undergo significant change in the course of the play? Choose one character who displays growth and development and discuss how Sheridan makes this change convincing. If you believe that no one really changes, explain why you arrived at that conclusion and why the playwright may have chosen to portray his characters in that way.
10. Compare the language in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* with that in his play *The Rivals*. Which, in your opinion, makes greater demands on the audience? Why do you think so? Include specific quotations from the two plays to support your conclusion.
11. Compare and contrast the characters of Joseph in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* and Jack Absolute in *The Rivals*. Both spend most of the play pretending to be something they are not. Which is the more sympathetic character? Which is more credible? Why? Support your answer with details from the two plays.
12. Compare and contrast the characters of Maria in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* and Lydia Languish in *The Rivals*. Both girls are the objects of the affections of many men. How are they different? Which is more admirable? Do you believe that they will enjoy happy marriages with the men of their choice? Why or why not?
13. Compare and contrast the characters of Lady Sneerwell in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* and Mrs. Malaprop in *The Rivals*. Both are old battle-axes who interfere in the love lives of others and have romantic aspirations themselves. Concentrate on the key features that make them different characters. Does either woman elicit sympathy from the audience? Why or why not?
14. Compare and contrast the characters of Sir Peter in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* and Sir Anthony in *The Rivals*. Which of the two is more of a cartoon figure? Why do you think so? Does this fact add to the humor of the play or detract from its credibility? Why?
15. Compare and contrast Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* with Moliere's *Tartuffe*. Though the two were written a century apart, they have much in common. Choose three key elements shared by the plays and discuss ways in which they are similar.
16. Compare and contrast Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* with Moliere's *Tartuffe*. Concentrate on the cultural differences between the two. How does the fact that one is English and the other French affect the two stories that are being told and the characters that are used to tell them? Use specifics from the two plays to answer the question.

17. Compare and contrast Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* with Moliere's *Tartuffe*. Give special attention to the scene in Sheridan's play where Lady Teazle is concealed behind the screen and the one in *Tartuffe* where Orgon is under the table. Which scene is funnier? Why do you think so? Be sure to use specific supporting detail and not simply share your opinion.
18. Compare and contrast Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* with Moliere's *Tartuffe*. Give special attention to the scene in Sheridan's play where Lady Teazle is concealed behind the screen and the one in *Tartuffe* where Orgon is under the table. In what ways are *Tartuffe*'s seduction arguments similar to those used by Joseph, and in what ways are they different? What about the responses of Elmire and Lady Teazle?
19. Compare and contrast Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* with Moliere's *Tartuffe*. Give special attention to the role played by hypocrisy in the two stories. Which treatment do you consider the more effective critique of hypocrisy? Why? Support your conclusion with details from both plays.
20. The character of the Jewish moneylender was a staple of the stage for many centuries. Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* has often been criticized for being anti-Semitic. Do you believe the criticism is valid? Why or why not? Consider not only the character of Moses, but also specific lines in the play that speak of or make insinuations about Jews.
21. One aspect of effective characterization is the use of dialogue to distinguish one character from another. Different people are different partly because they speak using different words, different rhythms, and different accents. One critic of Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* complained that Sheridan does not deserve to be considered in the top rank of playwrights simply because of this shortcoming: "Not only are all the characters witty, but they all talk alike. Their wit is Sheridan's wit, which is very good wit indeed; but it is Sheridan's own, and not Sir Peter Teazle's, or Backbite's, or Careless's, or Lady Sneerwell's." Do you agree or disagree with this criticism? Use specific quotations to support your arguments.
22. In Act I, scene 1 of Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*, Mrs. Candour says, "Tale bearers are as bad as the tale makers." Do you agree? Why or why not? Support your answer from the play and from Scripture.
23. Compare and contrast the roles played by gossip in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* and Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*. Consider the ways in which gossip is treated in the two stories, the extent to which it is looked at from a serious or comic perspective, the consequences of the wagging tongues in the two tales, and the ways in which the gossips do or do not learn the lessons they so richly deserve. Which more effectively portrays the evils of gossip as taught in the Bible? Why do you think so?