



# Set Text Guide: The School for Scandal

**AS and A Level Drama and Theatre**

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**Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Advanced GCE in Drama and Theatre (9DR0)**

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**Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE in  
Drama and Theatre (9DR0)**

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# GCE Drama 2016: The School for Scandal

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## Summary

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### A Portrait & Prologue

The play begins with two prologues which set up the theme of scandal. The first, *A Portrait*, is an address to Mrs Crewe, a friend of Sheridan. It is a tribute to her, stating that she is such an exemplary character that even the scandalmongering characters of the play can do nothing but praise her. Mrs Crewe has been Sheridan's inspiration.

The Prologue follows, and was written by David Garrick, an actor and co-manager of the Drury Lane Theatre, London, where the play had its première in May 1777. It sets out the theme of scandal, describes how scandal runs rife through both word of mouth and the written word, and says that it is very hard to stem the flow.

### Act One

#### Scene 1

##### *Lady Sneerwell's house*

Act one begins with Lady Sneerwell, a wealthy widow and chief gossip, talking with her servant, Mr Snake. We learn that she has had her reputation tarnished in the past, and this is what has led her to a life of gossiping. Snake asks her about the plot she has employed him in, involving Sir Peter Teazle. She informs Snake that Joseph Surface loves Maria, Sir Peter Teazle's ward, but that Maria loves Charles Surface (Joseph's brother), who Lady Sneerwell herself also loves. She is plotting with Joseph Surface to spread a rumour that Charles is having an affair with Lady Teazle, Sir Peter's wife.

Joseph Surface enters. (Entrances and exits are very formal in the play, and this is a prime example of how structure and etiquette provide humour. The characters would have performed elaborate bows and curtseys, and there is an exercise in the Practical Exploration Activities to help explore this. The language of formal greetings also changes through the play, for example, Joseph first greets Lady Sneerwell as her *most obedient*, then soon after Snake as his *very devoted*.)

While Snake is out of the room, Lady Sneerwell expresses concern to Joseph that Snake is not being entirely faithful, and that he has been in conversation with Rowley. Suspicion is rife among the scandalmongers, as they suspect everyone to be as deceitful as they are themselves.

Maria enters, fleeing the attentions of Sir Benjamin Backbite and his Uncle Crabtree. She does not like the way they speak ill of all their acquaintances, which is ironic given that is what all the characters in the play have done so far. Maria shows that she is different from all the others; she represents innocence and purity.

Mrs Candour enters, with Sir Benjamin Backbite and Uncle Crabtree. They bring gossip that Sir Oliver, the Surfaces' rich uncle and benefactor, will shortly return to England from the East Indies. Talk turns to Charles and his dire financial situation. Maria states that *their malice is intolerable* and exits, citing that she feels unwell. She is followed by Mrs Candour who looks to help her, then in turn by Sir Benjamin and Crabtree.

#### Scene 2

##### *Sir Peter's house*

This short scene opens with Sir Peter Teazle soliloquising about his wife and her excessive spending habits. Rowley enters, and they discuss how Maria has rejected Joseph in favour of his brother Charles. Rowley himself favours Charles and defends him. He also delivers the news that Sir Oliver has arrived from the East Indies. This news troubles Sir Peter, as he fears his friend will mock him for having married Lady Teazle.

## Act Two

### Scene 1

*Sir Peter Teazle's*

The second act opens with Sir Peter and Lady Teazle arguing about money. Sir Peter feels his wife spends too much. She was born and grew up in the countryside, where she led a simple life. In London, however, she has acquired a taste for the finer things. The debate moves to the company Lady Teazle keeps, specifically the scandalmongers. She leaves for Lady Sneerwell's, and Sir Peter agrees to follow later.

Sir Peter admits in a soliloquy how beautiful his wife is when she is angry. Lady Teazle feels if Sir Peter had wanted power over her he should have adopted her instead of marrying her. We see in this scene the incompatibility of the two newlyweds, in both their age and their social class. Being from a lower, more rural class, Lady Teazle's spending habits could be accredited to her desire to fit in. However, Sir Peter's monologue gives us a glimpse of the romantic interest which brought them together.

### Scene 2

*At Lady Sneerwell's*

Here we see a group encouraging Sir Benjamin Backbite to share more of his poetry. He feigns modesty, but quickly agrees to read his poem, which is hilarious in its simplicity.

Lady Teazle and Maria arrive and the guests begin to gossip about unseen characters. Their gossip is both witty and mean, and Maria, in her innocence, refuses to join in.

Sir Peter arrives and is also against the gossip. He states that he wishes there were laws to govern gossip, to protect the reputations of individuals. As he exits, Sir Benjamin informs Lady Teazle that he could tell her some stories about her husband, were he not her husband. This is inconsequential to Lady Teazle, and she encourages him to tell her as they retire to the next room. This shows contempt for her husband and his views. It is comical how quickly after Sir Peter has left that the gossip begins about him.

Joseph is left alone with Maria, the object of his desire. He desperately seeks her attention, though she is uninterested. He is eventually on his knees in front of her, but is interrupted by Lady Teazle, who sends Maria to the next room, asserting her status by calling her *child*. Realising he has been caught, having been previously flirting with Lady Teazle, he quickly pretends he was begging Maria not to tell Sir Peter of the affair she suspects between himself and Lady Teazle. Though this seems unbelievable, he seems to just about get away with it.

Lady Teazle exits and Joseph explains in a soliloquy that he has been spending time with her in the hope she will support his efforts to woo Maria, since her husband is Maria's guardian. Now, however, he admits he has become seriously involved with Lady Teazle.

This scene can be very funny, as we begin to see the results of scandal. Joseph having to squirm his way out of the mess he has created for himself is only a taste of what will follow.

### Scene 3

*Sir Peter Teazle's*

In this short scene we see the returned Sir Oliver talking with Rowley about Sir Peter's marriage. As Sir Peter predicted, his old friend is mocking him. Sir Peter arrives, and conversation turns to Sir Oliver's nephews, Charles and Joseph. Sir Peter is full of praise for Joseph, but Sir Oliver is rightly suspicious that he may be a hypocrite.

## Act Three

### Scene 1

*Sir Peter Teazle's*

Act three opens with Sir Peter, Sir Oliver and Rowley. Rowley is talking about Mr Stanley, a relative of the Surfaces who has fallen on hard times. Charles has helped him, but Joseph, though he has promised much, has contributed nothing. He also explains that Mr Moses, a *friendly Jew* who has been helping Charles out with his dire financial situation, is to meet with them. He says that Moses has information from Snake regarding the rumours about Charles and Lady Teazle. Note that when the play was written, Judaism was the only faith that allowed moneylending, hence the reference to Mr Moses being a *friendly Jew*. In recent times this has sometimes been omitted, and it is at the discretion of the director whether to leave this reference in. The play does not suffer if it is omitted.

Mr Moses enters and is introduced to Sir Oliver. He informs Sir Oliver of Charles' extreme spending and the extent of his debts. He says that this evening he is bringing a man from the city, *Mr Premium*, to lend Charles money. Sir Peter hatches a plan: Sir Oliver will disguise himself as Mr Premium to discover what Charles is really like. Sir Oliver agrees, and decides to go to Joseph disguised as Mr Stanley. They all find it amusing that Sir Oliver will have to prepare for these roles, and he leaves with Moses to do so.

Sir Peter sends Rowley to fetch Snake so that they can find out what he knows of the rumour regarding his wife and Charles.

Maria enters, and Sir Peter tries to persuade her that Joseph is the better of the two brothers, and worthy of her affections. An argument results and Maria storms off, leaving Sir Peter to lament his relationship with both his wife and his ward. Sir Peter's soliloquies are moments of real comedy throughout: the audience see an ageing and wealthy man struggling to handle the women in his life, and misjudging the men.

He is interrupted by Lady Teazle, who hopes that her husband has not been quarrelling with Maria. The husband and wife maintain a veneer of pleasantness for a good while, though it becomes apparent that they cannot help but argue. The nature of the quarrel is absurd, as they debate who starts their arguments. They decide, in conclusion, that it is best for them to separate. Lady Teazle knows exactly how to push her husband's buttons, and she is totally in control in these exchanges. After she exits, he even curses the fact that he cannot even make her angry.

### Scene 2

*Charles Surface's house*

Here we see Mr Moses and Sir Oliver, dressed as Mr Premium, arrive at the house of Charles Surface. They meet Trip, one of Charles' servants, who tries to do business with Mr Moses. Sir Oliver remarks how Charles' servants do not look like the employees of a man in financial turmoil. Trip describes his master's lavish and decadent lifestyle, then leads the men inside to where Charles is relaxing with friends.

### Scene 3

*Charles Surface, Careless etc. at table with wine*

Charles and his guests are drinking while complaining about those who won't drink. The conversation turns to love, and after a little persuasion, Charles reveals his love for Maria. They sing a raucous song about loving all sorts of women.

Trip enters, informing Charles of the guests who have arrived, and then brings in Sir Oliver – as Mr Premium – and Mr Moses. Soon the other guests retire to the next room through boredom, as the new visitors will not drink as they do. Charles talks with Mr Premium, and ironically informs him of his rich uncle Sir Oliver. Mr Premium asks how else he might guarantee the money, perhaps by selling items in the house. However, it becomes apparent that Charles has already sold most of them. Charles suggests he could sell him his family portraits, which shocks Sir Oliver. When in disguise, Sir Oliver has

many asides to the audience, which expose the dramatic irony of the play. Charles' friend Careless enters and decides to play auctioneer for the portraits. The men exit to go and look at the portraits. Sir Oliver has given up on Charles after this insult to the family.

## Act Four

### Scene 1

*Picture room at Charles's*

The men have gathered for the auction. Charles sells every one of his family portraits to Mr Premium, to Sir Oliver's disbelief. Careless even uses the rolled-up family tree as the gavel. The last portrait is of Sir Oliver himself, and Charles refuses to part with it, citing that his old uncle has been very kind to him and he cannot sell it. Sir Oliver, delighted, states in an aside that the rogue is his nephew after all, and forgives him everything. Sir Oliver and Moses exit, Sir Oliver buoyant after his nephew's defence of him.

Rowley enters, and Charles instructs him to send £100 of the money he has just made from the portraits to his sick relative Mr Stanley. Despite Rowley's protestations, he insists on this generous action. The audience has witnessed Charles' morality, and despite not knowing who has been observing him, he has remained loyal to his living family members.

### Scene 2

*The parlour*

In a very short scene, Sir Oliver and Mr Moses discuss what has just transpired. Rowley emerges with the money sent by Charles to Mr Stanley. Sir Oliver decides to present himself to Joseph in the guise of Mr Stanley, to observe his other nephew's behaviour.

### Scene 3

*A library*

Joseph is visited by Lady Teazle. He persuades her that to secure her reputation amidst the scandalous rumours, she must commit a sin. Just as he takes her hand, a servant announces that Sir Peter has arrived to see him. Lady Teazle hurries behind a screen.

Sir Peter enters and tells Joseph of his suspicions of an affair between his wife and Charles. He urges Joseph to try harder in his pursuit of Maria. This is to the chagrin of Joseph, as although it is his ultimate aim, he is aware that Lady Teazle is listening and he has just been trying to persuade her to have an affair with him.

The scene gathers pace as the servant reappears, this time announcing the arrival of Charles. Joseph tells the servant to say he is not in, but Sir Peter suggests he lets him in to see if the rumours of the affair are true. Sir Peter goes to hide behind the screen, and finds there is a woman behind it. Thinking fast, Joseph tells him it is a French milliner who plagues him, and persuades Sir Peter to hide in a closet instead.

Charles enters, and he and his brother begin discussing Lady Teazle. Charles believes, rightly, that Joseph and Lady Teazle are having an affair. Joseph frantically tries to change the subject, aware that all concerned parties are within earshot. Eventually, Joseph whispers to Charles that Sir Peter is in the room. Charles summons Sir Peter out of his hiding place, and Sir Peter apologises for assuming him to be a part of the infidelity. The two are reconciled, though by now Joseph is pulling his hair out.

Things get worse, as the servant returns and whispers in Joseph's ear. We can assume that this is to announce the arrival of Lady Sneerwell. Joseph exits to go and stop her from entering. While he is gone, Sir Peter tells Charles about the woman hiding behind the screen. He suggests, as a joke, that they reveal her. Just as the screen is dropped, revealing Lady Teazle, Joseph re-enters. Charles is appalled at the revelation, rails at his brother's behaviour and leaves. Through this, both Joseph and Lady Teazle have been silent. Joseph begins to stagger his way to an explanation, stalling as he does so. Lady

Teazle interrupts him, and comes clean to her husband. She asks for his forgiveness, leaving Joseph to chase off after Sir Peter, still trying to worm his way out of it.

This scene has the potential to reduce the house to tears of laughter. It is vital that all the actors are aware of the ramifications of each hidden party hearing anything they say. At the moment of the reveal, it is worth noting the initial silence of Joseph and Lady Teazle: what are they both thinking? Might Joseph be frozen solid in the pose in which he enters, while he thinks of how to escape the situation? As the style is that of heightened comedy, and this is the most significant comedic moment, really explore the extremes physically and emotionally. How far away from naturalism can you go?

## **Act Five**

### **Scene 1**

*The library*

Sir Oliver, as Mr Stanley, arrives with Rowley to visit Joseph. Joseph, though overtly pleasant, refuses to help Mr Stanley with his finances, claiming to have no money. Sir Oliver knows this to be a lie, as he has sent his nephew a large sum of money from the East Indies. Sir Oliver is outraged, and in an aside declares Charles his heir, before exiting. Rowley returns with a letter for Joseph, which tells him that his uncle, Sir Oliver, is in town. Joseph feigns delight at the news, though in asides is incredulous at the misfortune of the timing.

### **Scene 2**

*Sir Peter Teazle's*

The scandalmongers are gossiping about a supposed duel between Sir Peter and Joseph. The rumour escalates, as the imagined duel took place with swords, and then with guns. Lady Sneerwell excuses herself, not wanting to be exposed for her part in the situation.

Sir Oliver arrives, and the gossipers assume him to be the doctor come to tend to Sir Peter's wounds. Sir Oliver assures them that he is not a doctor. Sir Peter arrives soon after, putting an end to the rumour of the duel, and throws them out of his house.

Sir Oliver informs Sir Peter of the results of his incognito visits to his nephews. He also tells him he is aware of the story involving the screen, and laughs at his friend. Sir Oliver eventually leaves and the scene ends with Rowley and Sir Peter discussing Lady Teazle and how guilty she feels about what happened. Sir Peter has forgiven her, but wants to let her sweat it out a little longer before telling her so, though Rowley persuades him to go and make peace with her right away.

### **Scene 3**

*The library*

Lady Sneerwell is chiding Joseph for ruining their plan. Joseph clings to the hope that they may be able to salvage the situation, assuming that Snake is still faithful to them. There is a knock at the door, and Joseph, thinking it to be Sir Oliver, encourages Lady Sneerwell to hide.

It is Sir Oliver, though he is disguised as Mr Stanley. Joseph is not interested in his requests, and goes to push him out of the door. As he does this, Charles enters, and assuming the man to be Mr Premium, joins his brother in trying to eject him from the room. As they do this, Sir Peter, Lady Teazle, Rowley and Maria enter.

Sir Oliver's true identity is revealed. He announces his intention to leave his wealth and fortune to Charles. Maria refuses to marry Charles, having heard the rumour of the relationship between him and Lady Sneerwell. Joseph now reveals the hiding Lady Sneerwell. Though it seems their plan has worked, Snake enters and reveals all, betraying the conspirators. In light of the truth, Maria agrees to marry Charles.

## Epilogue

The epilogue was written not by Sheridan, but by Mr Colman, and is delivered by Lady Teazle. As the outsider, being from the countryside, she is able to present to the audience the pressure one is put under by society to conform to the world of scandal and lies. Ultimately, the epilogue reinforces the play's themes and drives home the message that though fun has been had, if the play has a moral it is to not engage in gossip.

## Characters

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### Sir Peter Teazle

An elderly gentleman of prominent social standing. He has recently married Lady Teazle, who is much younger than him. He is foolish and naïve, though he does not like to engage in gossip, and this is his redeeming quality.

### Sir Oliver Surface

Charles and Joseph's wealthy uncle and benefactor. He has been in the East Indies for 16 years. On his return, he disguises himself as Mr Stanley and Mr Premium in order to discover whether his nephews are worthy of his inheritance.

### Joseph Surface

A young bachelor who presents a charming façade but is in fact a scoundrel and is party to much of the intrigue of the play. He is willing to do almost anything to get his way, which is ultimately to marry Maria.

### Charles Surface

Joseph's brother. Although he also leads a decadent lifestyle, at his core he is a good person and worthy of the love of Maria. He could be seen as the protagonist.

### Crabtree

Uncle to Sir Benjamin Backbite.

### Sir Benjamin Backbite

A hopeless poet, and suitor to Maria.

### Rowley

Servant and friend of Sir Peter Teazle. An moral man who sees through the scandal and lies.

### Moses

A moneylender who helps Sir Oliver in his scheme to find out the truth about his nephews.

### Trip

A servant of Charles Surface

### Snake

He helps Lady Sneerwell to spread the gossip and realise her plots. He is loyal to no one however, and eventually betrays her and reveals all in the final scene.

### Careless

A boisterous friend of Charles Surface.

### **Lady Teazle**

The young wife of Sir Peter Teazle. She was brought up in the countryside, and feels the pressures of upper-class society in London. Her spending causes her to argue and fall out with her husband, though finally they reconcile their differences.

### **Maria**

Sir Peter Teazle's ward. She has many suitors, including Charles, Joseph and Sir Benjamin Backbite. She has strong principles, and will not be drawn into any gossip.

### **Lady Sneerwell**

A wealthy young widow. She is the instigator of much of the gossip, and in conspiracy with Joseph she sets in motion the plot to ensnare Charles.

### **Mrs Candour**

A prolific gossip.

### **Sir Harry Bumper**

A friend of Charles Surface.

## Social, cultural and historical background

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Richard Brinsley Sheridan was born in Dublin in 1751. He was a satirist, playwright, and poet. He also owned the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, where this play was first performed. He was also a member of parliament, and Treasurer of the Navy.

In the 1770s he became involved in a dispute over the hand of Elizabeth Ann Linley, a young woman he desired to marry. He and a man named Thomas Mathers twice duelled publicly for her hand, and despite being severely injured, Sheridan eventually won and married her in 1772.

He published nine successful plays, including *The Rivals*, *The Duenna*, *A Trip to Scarborough* and, of course, *The School for Scandal*.

His plays are still widely performed, and are seen as a link in the history of satirical comedy-of-manners plays between the seventeenth century and Oscar Wilde's plays in the nineteenth century.

Written in 1777, *The School for Scandal* is considered one of the greatest comedy-of-manners plays. It became successful almost immediately and is a prime example of restoration comedy.

The play satirises the high society of the day. It shows that corruption, lies and deceit are rife. Through witty dialogue and complex webs of lies, comedic situations emerge, exposing the rotten characters' shortcomings. Characters are representative of bold stereotypes, and this is seen most clearly in their names: Joseph Surface presents a charming surface while plotting constantly and playing many deceitful games.

Unlike many plays of the day, *The School for Scandal* does not lean heavily on the sentimental and romantic. Though ultimately Charles does marry Maria, this is not the overriding theme.

Much of the play's humour comes out of the exposed hypocrisy of the scandalmongers. However, there is also scope for much physical humour. It is worth investigating the costumes of eighteenth-century high society and how they might have informed the stances and physicality of the characters. It would have been customary to bow or curtsy when greeting other members of nobility; given the number of entrances and exits in the play, this can lead to much physical humour.

## Themes

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### Politics

Though Sir Peter sees politics as being a quest for moral decency, Joseph Surface sees politics as being the practice of lies and plots with which to achieve one's desires.

### Appearance

As the name Surface suggests, the way in which characters present themselves can often be deceitful. The scandalmongers gossip about unseen characters wearing too much make-up, which is ironic, given their own abilities to present themselves as something other than what they are.

### Gossip

As the word 'scandal' is in the title this is unsurprisingly a major theme. In a simplistic way, you could assume that the characters who do not engage in gossip are morally good, and those who do are not. However, Sheridan creates a world where society is riddled with gossip, and even though Lady Teazle is not from this society, even she is drawn into the web of their games.

### Wit

The characters joust in battles of wit all the time. One could ask when wit turns to malice. Lady Teazle seemingly enjoys the arguments she has with her husband, though at one point it escalates so far that they even agree to separate.

### Sex

Sex is a significant driving force for many of the characters. It is also a tool that they use to achieve what they want. Though there is no explicit sex in the narrative, innuendo is rife.

### Money

The other leading motivation for the characters. Sir Peter argues that Lady Teazle spends too much of his money. Charles has spent almost all his money on his decadent lifestyle. Sir Oliver is deciding whether to give more of his money to his nephews. There is even a character, Mr Moses, who is a moneylender.

### Class

Though the general plot takes place among the upper classes, there is also the contrast between them (the knights such as Sir Oliver and Sir Peter) and the servants. There is also a tension between Sir Peter and Lady Teazle, as she was not raised in such a high class.

### Gender

The play was written in a time when gender roles and stereotypes were more pronounced than they are now. The women thwart these conventions though, as they rail against the oppression they face from the men. Lady Teazle, Lady Sneerwell and Maria are able to control the men around them.

## Resources

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### Recommended edition

*The School for Scandal* by Richard Brinsley Sheridan

### Further reading

*Restoration comedy in performance* by J.L. Styan

*Acting in Restoration Comedy* by Maria Aitken and Simon Callow

### Online resources

<https://www.britannica.com/art/comedy-of-manners>

<https://resource.acu.edu.au/trsanders/units/comedy/comedyofmanners.html>

[http://www.barbican.org.uk/scandal/media/teaching\\_resource.pdf](http://www.barbican.org.uk/scandal/media/teaching_resource.pdf)

### Useful soundtracks to use in the classroom

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9IXYmqLsIE>

## Practical exploration activities

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### Actors

The following exercises are designed to help theatre makers practically explore some of the key characters, themes and ideas that are central to *The School for Scandal*. Some of the exercises may help actors to consider how key roles might be communicated and realised from 'page to stage'.

**Off-text improvisation** is a useful explorative technique to consider the 'before and after' life of the play. You might explore moments that are alluded to but not seen, for example:

- Charles and Joseph with Sir Oliver before he left for the East Indies
- Snake alone with Maria
- Sir Peter and Lady Teazle after the end once they have been reconciled
- Charles and Maria on the day of their wedding.

**Hot-seating** is a valuable and exciting method to develop characterisation. It helps actors to 'flesh out' their understanding of the characters. Using their imagination and the information provided in the given circumstances will allow the actors to consider the voice, attitude and physicality of the character they are exploring.

A more theatrical way to explore hot-seating might be to combine this exercise with an off-text improvisation. For example, following on from the examples above, after we have watched a scene play out, we could immediately interview the character and ask them probing questions to discover thoughts the actor may not have considered.

**Exploring accent and dialect** can also help actors to consider character choices. As the play is set in England in the eighteenth century, the accents would have likely been RP, and for the higher-class characters Heightened RP. It could be helpful to listen to some very old film, maybe Pathé news features from the early part of the twentieth century, to get an idea of RP. You could also listen to the Queen's speeches. Nothing is set in stone, and your production does not have to feature RP accents, but be aware that much of the language and dialect used arose from this.

**Non-verbal communication** is often a highly effective way to explore character, subtext, tension and silence. How does each character behave in moments of silence? For example, you might see how different characters behave when they are on their own. How does this differ, if it does, from the way they behave when they are around other characters?

### Key scene work / alternative viewpoints

Another useful exercise to consider involves **staging and rehearsing a key scene with a particular focus** and then trying it in an alternative style. For example, the actors might explore status in conjunction with the director. The director calls out numbers from 1 to 20 for the actors in the space: 1 is the lowest status, that of a slug, if you will; 20 is the highest status, the king, perhaps. By playing this game we can begin to discover how bodies in space can signify status, and this might give us a good indication of how to stage certain pivotal moments in the play, where status plays a crucial role. This is particularly useful for the relationships between men and women, as at the time the play was written, men held absolute power over their wives and daughters. However, in the play, both Maria and Lady Teazle thwart this authority. Does it change at all over the course of the play, as plots unravel and lies are exposed?

As the play is a comedy of manners, it may be worth **developing the conventions of the world of your production**. For example, as a company, can you develop a specific way in which characters greet each other that can be repeated throughout to comic effect? For example, an extravagant bow. There are so many exits and entrances that this might prove to be a useful tool to maintain the humour through the play.

## Designers

The following exercises and ideas are designed to help theatre makers explore some of the opportunities, themes and ideas that are central to *The School for Scandal*. Some of the suggestions may help designers to consider how key aspects of the play might be communicated and realised from 'page to stage'.

It might be useful to set up a **production meeting and pitch** for your student designers, as this will help them to consider the play as a whole and root their practical ideas in aims and intentions. Remember that audience impact is key, and that setting up small groups of potential theatre makers might help students to consider the text in a holistic way. For example, a group could consist of a set, costume, sound and lighting designer; smaller groups simply take on more than one area of responsibility. It is important that each designer questions the aims and intentions of the others, so that each member of the production team is able to think in a holistic and collaborative way. The design 'pitch' could then be offered to the teacher (producer). This is a useful discussion exercise that also lends itself to research, images and presentations. It can work at the start of a scheme of work to initiate ideas/contextualise themes and key moments, or at the end of a scheme of work as a way of ensuring all aspects of production are considered. It would also make an excellent 'active' revision session in time for the exam. TIP – each member of the production team should justify their ideas with key moments from the play.

**Creating a model box of a potential set design** is a useful exercise and can be as simple or as elaborate as required. It is often useful for students to see how each scene will be played in a potential space, and by creating a model box they will be able to refer more easily to their ideas in a specific space. *The School for Scandal* has several scene locations, so if you were on a tight budget, how might a designer create multiple spaces within a limited set? It may be worth remembering that the famous and pivotal moment in the play is the screen scene. How can the set enable this moment to achieve the level of comedy it deserves? Might a designer look at this moment first and then work backwards?

**Exploring different music and sound effects for key scenes** is another effective way of considering how design can play an important role in the development of a key idea or theme. How might sound be used to announce the arrival of different characters? Can the sound add to the comedy?

How can lighting help to create shadow and suspense? Have a **look at previous productions and lighting designs** to see how other theatre makers have used lighting to create impact. If you don't have access to lighting, you might want to consider the effect of torches or candles. (Safety first!)

Another useful exercise that helps to build the world of the play and develop ideas for performance is **sourcing and designing potential costumes**. Research is key, and will help students who are initially daunted about the thought of 'designing'. They don't have to be great artists to create great designs. The main thing is that they approach the design of the production in a holistic way. Is their costume design expressionistic, representational, or more naturalistic? What is their aim and intention? Does their costume design root the production and performance in a particular time period or style? The costumes in comedy-of-manners plays were traditionally lavish. Be sure to look up pictures of these costumes, even if the design takes the production in a different direction. Make-up was painted on excessively, and the characters themselves even talk about how much make-up is being worn by others in society.

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ALWAYS LEARNING

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