

Richard Brinsley Sheridan was an Irish playwright and poet, known for writing satire and comedies of manners. He owned the London Theatre Royal and served as a Whig MP in the British House of Commons. His plays are considered central to the Western dramatic canon and are still performed regularly throughout the world.

Sheridan was born in Dublin in 1751 to Thomas and Frances Sheridan, the youngest of three children. Both of Sheridan's parents were writers: his mother wrote plays and novels, and his father wrote treatises on education. Sheridan was educated near his home until age 11, when he was sent to Harrow School, where he was generally successful and especially well-liked by the other students. He left this school at age 17 to receive individualized tutoring in English.

During this same time, Sheridan began to aspire to a literary career. Along with his friend N.B. Halhed, he wrote a farce called *Jupiter* that, though unsuccessful, is seen as a precursor in some ways to his later work, *The Critic*.

In the early 1770's Sheridan became involved in a dispute over the hand of a young woman named Elizabeth Ann Linley, leading to two formal and public duels with a man named Thomas Mathews. Though he was injured severely, he recovered and was able to marry Miss Linley in 1772. Following their marriage and move to London, Sheridan quickly became a successful playwright.

In the next three decades, Sheridan published nine successful plays, the most famous of which were *The Rivals*, *The School for Scandal*, *The Duenna*, and *A Trip to Scarborough*. Sheridan was also a Whig MP in the British House of Commons later in his life, from 1780-1812.

Sheridan's plays are still performed widely and are seen as a link in the history of satirical comedy-of-manners plays between the 17th century and the form's revival in Oscar Wilde's plays of the 19th century.