

GOOD SATIRE IS ALWAYS CRUEL

For satires to be good they need to fulfil the features of satire. 'Volpone' can be considered to have more of the cruel satirical comments whereas 'The School For Scandal' has more of the light hearted satirical comments as opposed to cruel ones. This however doesn't make one satire better than the other because they both have different aims and at the time had different audiences. They both meet the features of satire, a good satire does not always have to be cruel but a cruel satire can still be considered good as it will meet certain features a non-cruel satire will not.

A good satire should be morally didactic, if the satire was cruel it could be seen as more effective as it will hit the audience harder and will make them want to change. Jonson's darker tone in 'Volpone' makes the audience want to distance themselves from characters such as Corvinio, Volpone and Corbaccio as much as possible. Jonson exposes the character's corruption and makes it appear more sinister as the play progresses. Corvinio in the beginning is used to create humour with the use of dramatic irony in Act 1 when Mosca convinces him to criticize Volpone, believing Volpone can't hear him he says, "His nose is like a common sewer, still running." A shift in the play's tone can be seen when Sheridan characterises Corvinio as an abusive husband who prostitutes his wife to fulfil his own greed, "show yourself obedient and a wife". Due to Jonson's use of the unity of time the audience sees how greed and corruption escalates and how repulsive it is. This teaches the audience to not start down the path of such corruption and to correct their behaviour. 'The School For Scandal' can also be seen as morally didactic. Sir Oliver calls the school a "set of malicious, prating, prudent gossips... who murder characters to kill time" The murder imagery used creates a darker tone but it is still not at the level Volpone is. Sheridan is making a satirical comment on gossip in society and how powerful it can be, this allows the audience to see the error of their ways and to come to the realisation of how destructive gossip can be. This shows how sometimes for a satire to be good they have to be cruel in order for them to meet the features of satire.