

Taming of the Shrew

William Shakespeare

By: Sandra (Alexandra) Hatzisavva

Plot

Baptista lived in Padua with his two daughters. The eldest, Katharine, was very cross and ill-tempered that no one ever dreamed of marrying, Bianca, was sweet and pretty that more than one suitor asked her father for her hand; however, Baptista proclaimed that the elder daughter must marry first. This is where the plot begins when Petruchio arrives in Padua in search of a rich wife. His friend Hortensio sets Petruchio's sights on the shrew. Although Katharina repeatedly insults Petruchio, he woos, wins, and tames her by insisting that she is actually the soul of gentleness and patience. After their marriage, he deprives her of food, sleep, and fancy clothing, and he outdoes her mean tongue by abusing the servants. In the final scene, Katharina gives a speech commending the virtues of wifely subservience and Petruchio wins a bet that his wife is the most obedient. The play's secondary plot follows the courtship of Bianca by Hortensio, Gremio, and Lucentio. Hortensio and Lucentio both pose as tutors to gain access to Bianca. However, Lucentio, aided by his sly servant Tranio, gains the upper hand and wins Bianca's admiration. Tranio, posing as Lucentio, persuades a scholar to pose as Lucentio's father, and they together then meet with Baptista and make the formal arrangements for marriage. While Tranio's tricks are later revealed, enough distraction has been caused to allow Lucentio and Bianca to elope. Hortensio, in the meantime, has forsaken his pursuit of Bianca and married a wealthy widow. Needless to say, as all good stories end, they all live happily ever after!

Themes and Issues

Role of deception: creating new personas and identities
Battle of the sexes: status, attitudes, behaviour, society
Love: courtly vs. true, fathers/children, love at first sight
Marriage: romantic vs. economics, relationships
Family: father/daughter, husband/wife, father/son, sister/sister
Power relationship: father/child, master/servant, husband/wife

Language and Structure

- Induction
- Play within a play structure
- Proverbs
- Prose vs. Verse
- Puns: dialogue with double meaning, verbal banter
- Imagery related to hunting and taming of animals or birds

Extended Resources

Kiss Me Kate. 1953, 109 min. Directed by George Sidney. Starring Kathryn Grayson and Howard Keel.

10 Things I hate about You: Gil Junger

Gender WebQuest: Stereotypes Through Shakespeare

<http://valnet.mtvalleyhs.sad43.k12.me.us/MVHS/Bailey/genderwebqstudent.htm>

How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days: Donald Petrie

Taming of the Shrew: Zeffirelli

Groups Small Group (SG) Whole Class (WC) Pairs (P) Individual (I) Formal or Informal Assessed or Not Assessed	Skills Reading Writing Listening Speaking Viewing	Activities
SG Informal, not assessed	L, S, W	Brainstorm ways society expects teenagers to behave. Do you ever feel torn between the expectations of others and your own expectations for yourself? Do teachers expect unfair or uncomfortable behaviour from you? When faced with peer, society, or school pressure to conform, how do you react?
WC, I, INF, NA	L, S, W	Discuss the title <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> . Define shrew. What images do you get from the word taming? What is suggested by the word domesticated? That idea alone ought to prompt a lively classroom discussion.
I INF, NA	R, W, V	Choose a character to study in depth by keeping a list of words used to describe that character or what the character uses to describe himself/herself.
I F, A	R, W, V	Develop a character sketch for the character you chose. Use three or four of the words from your list, explain each word, and give examples of the character's actions to support your interpretation of the character.
I F, A	W, V	Suppose that Kate and Petruchio each decide to write an advice column. Write a letter from a modern figure (JLo) who asks for advice on marriage or dating, and then write the reply that Kate and Petruchio might give.
SG, I F, A	R, W, V	What advice do women and men receive nowadays on "how to get a man/woman"? Survey some current magazines offering advice on this topic. How might this advice relate to Kate or Bianca, Petruchio or Lucentio?
WC, INF, NA	V, S	Use the collected advice to compare with clips from movie "How to lose a guy..." Compare and discuss themes and issues.
SG, F, A	W, S, L	Is it possible to tame the opposite sex? In groups produce an instruction manual.
I, F, A	W, V	Choose a TV sitcom or movie couple; view their banter and then compare it with Kate and Petruchio's.
SG/I, F, A	W, S, V, L	Write a last scene for the play explaining what happens to Sly, or as Sly, tell a newspaper reporter what happened.
WC, INF, NA	L, S	Debate Katherina's speech "Thy husband is thy lord..." Is he?
SG, F, A	W, R, V	Working in small groups, select lines from each act emphasizing important actions, plot elements, and characters. Condense the action and speeches to include the most important points. Prepare the script and rehearse it to present to the class with the girls playing boys and boys playing girls. What effect does the gender change create?
I/SG, F, A	L, S, V, W	Using pictures from magazines or newspapers, construct a collage representing one of the characters. Explain how each of the pictures relates to the character.
WC, INF, NA	V, W	Watch "Ten things I hate about you" and draw comparisons between the two contents.
SG, INF, NA	L, S, V	Consider each male character and write one sentence for each stating the opinion each has of women. Choose a character and create tableaux to show that man's point of view. The class will guess which character it is.
SG, INF, NA	W, L, S	Boys vs. Girls each team must compose a list of 10 pick up lines and be prepared to present. Also, be prepared to naturally respond to the other teams banter.

Bibliography: <http://www.teachervision.com/lesson-plans/lesson-4097.html>
<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/shrew.html>